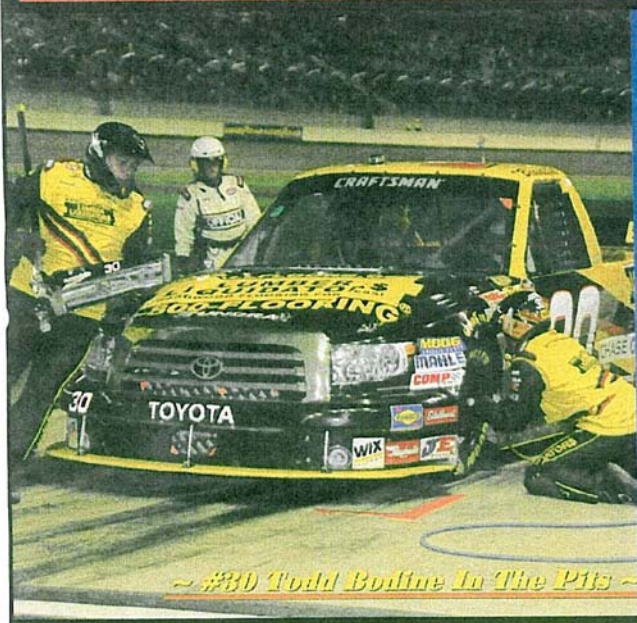


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WORLD *of* RACING



~ #30 Todd Bodine In The Pits ~



Lots of Fall action
at Las Vegas
Motor Speedway

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Reno 2008 Speed Fest

Report and images by Joe Gonzalez

The annual migration of speed seeking fans and racers alike was held under perfect weather conditions. Cool mornings and warm afternoons made Reno 2008 extra special. What a difference a year does make!! After the tragedy and shock of Reno 07 everyone was breathing a sigh of relief. Racers did have the usual variety of Mayday difficulties. All pilots made the trip back to terra firma safely. Attendance was good to excellent each day. The crowd, for example, was estimated at 80,000 strong on Sunday alone!! The vendors frequently had race fans waiting in line to purchase food and beverages, official race merchandise, and a variety of memorabilia. The Federal Aviation Administration was well represented, the County of Washoe, the City of Reno, the local police all clearly present. Needless to say that crowd control, and cooperation of all agencies was excellent. Think about putting together an event of this importance and size!! Think about having to start with a minimum of 5 million dollars up front! The well known teams and pilots truly love this sport, not for the money, (they are lucky to break even), but for the love of speed!! Prize money alone of 1.1 million dollars!! With outstanding attendance, and very busy vendors, all concerned departed Reno a little greener with a positive cash flow!

The well known pilots and teams involved in aircraft racing could be seen lined up. The pit areas for each class of competition were a delight to visit. Where else can you talk with your favorite pilot, and see your favorite race plane up close and personal? Beside the spectacular race planes, from the Formula I to the heavy weight unlimited racers, the modern military, and the heritage area offered several aircraft from the late 1920's and moving forward to about 1950.

Reno 2008 was the last year for the unlimited, well known pilot, Bill "Tiger" Destefani to race. Look for Strega (a beloved highly modified P-51 Mustang) to be flown next year by an up and coming star like Steve Hinton Jr. (having Bill "Tiger" Destefani and legendary pilot Steve Hinton as teachers can't hurt!). This legendary Mustang flown by the Tiger took home to Bakersfield Calif, the unlimited gold championship (seven times) in 1987, 1992, 1993, 1995, 1996, again in 1997, and now in 2008 !!

Some classes established a new record winning speed in 2008. To



T-6
McDonald Racer

highlight the results at this year's Reno Speed Fest by class. The popular Formula I Gold was taken home by Steve Senegal in an Arno 246.119MPH. Sliding into the cockpit of these tiny racers is like sliding down into a very tight fitting shoe. The Silver Medal was earned by Swensen JR in a Cassutt III, and the Bronze was taken home by Ad Cooper in a Cassutt known as Miss t' Witchie. The widely used World II trainer known as the T-6 is always close, loud, and thrilling to observe canopy to canopy racing. This year's Gold Medal was earned by Dwelle at 244.523MPH in the T-6 known as Tinkertoy. The Silver Medal was earned by John Lohmar, and the Bronze level medal went to J Krawczyk.

The sport class is an up and coming class that features composite and fiberglass construction (helping to save rare and valuable WWII era aircraft). This year's Gold Medal went to Lee Belhel in a Lan Legacy at 335.464 MPH. The Silver was earned by Anthony Crawford in a Questair Venture. The faster versions known as Super Sport class dominated by legendary builder and pilot Jon Sharp flying his Nem NXT at 392.252 MPH.

Former military jet trainers fly in the Jet Class. Curt Brown took home Gold Medal at 507.124 MPH in a L-29 Delfin #77 known as Viper and the Jet Class Silver.



"Bad Kitty"









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