

Corvettes and conversation across the Lone Star State

November 2007

Vol.1 No.2

Vetteexas™

CUTTING LOOSE

Lou Gigliotti splits with the SCCA to move to ALMS GT2



TECH TIPS

Putting a stop to myths about your brakes.

BIG WINNER

NASCAR's Jeff Gordon gives away his Z06 at TMS

FALL SHOWTIME

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Drop us an email at driver@vettexas.com. We're trying to cover the whole state, and if this were Massachusetts that'd be one thing, but since most of New England will fit in the space between Big Bend and Big Tex, we can always use some help. Send us your ideas and info we'll holler back at you as quickly as we can. And if you have pictures you'd like us to consider, let us know and we'll tell you how to submit them.

On the Cover

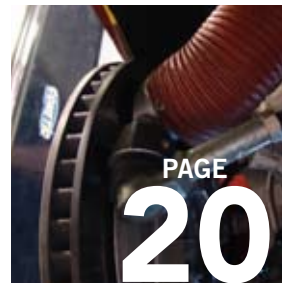
Lou Gigliotti talks about moving from the World Challenge to the world stage and running a business while racing. It's where P&L meets R&D and the bottom line is always to win.



Luck of the draw. Here, take the keys to Jeff Gordon's Z06.



The show must go on. Behind the scenes at the biggest show in Houston.



Stop the madness. Upgrade your brakes.

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BEHIND THE WHEEL JIM HOLMES

**Winning improves the breed.
That's a good thing, right?**

Corvette Racing has a problem that's become all too obvious. The C6.R wins too much. And it should. You have some of the biggest engineering resources in the world. A fantastic, dedicated, factory-underwritten fabrication shop in Riley and Scott and a Pit Crew that is as cohesive and well-trained as any world champion football or baseball team. Add in a stable of the sports car world's best tin-top drivers and you're set.

Yes, there were teething problems, but those were eight years ago – in the C5.R. The C6 has been lightning in a bottle since it rolled onto the grid.

Now, no one comes to challenge the Corvettes. GM is the sheriff of a GT1 ghost town. Petite Le Mans saw only a privateer Maserati roll out to challenge the Yellowcars -- three cars in the whole class. In 2007 the only real questions for Team Corvette have been: Will something break so they can practice repairs? Will the 4 car best the 3 car, or vice versa? And, finally, as was proven a couple of times this season, will a car from another class take out one of our guys? That left hanging the bigger question: What does Sheriff Doug Fehan have planned for 2008?

GM marketing needs Corvette at Le Mans because that shows the flag for Europe, and shows that the C6.R can run with any-



Wearing unique "Jake Skull" graphics, the GT1 manufacturers champions roll through Laguna Seca.



Team Corvette celebrates the 2007 Championship after the Monterey Sports Car Championships at Laguna Seca. Left to right: Bib the Michelin Man, Olivier Beretta, group manager Steve Wesoloski, Oliver Gavin, Johnny O'Connell and Jan Magnussen.

thing out there, as long as the playing field is level. The excellent racers at ProDrive in England have shown they can bring the fight, but between races they do need a little help from the rules writers to make their Aston Martins competitive with the Vettes. Even back when Corvette Racing was getting cranked up and ProDrive was fielding Ferraris, the difference in lap times was as much due to the superiority of the

Michelins worn by the ProDrive cars over the American's Goodyears. Sadly, instead of Goodyear becoming more competitive, Team Corvette was forced to switch to French rubber, and then the race was on.

So does this mean that we'll not see the C6.R in GT1 in ALMS next year? A tune-up at Sebring and a run at Le Mans and then the team disappears? Perhaps. But as this month's cover story shows – there is

hope. And it comes straight out of Texas.

When it was announced at Road Atlanta that long-time Corvette racer Lou Gigliotti of Wylie, Texas, was going to campaign a Riley-prepped C6.R in GT2, more than a few eyebrows went up. One, LG is a great racer and his record in World Challenge Corvettes is impressive to say the least; 116 starts, 22 wins and only a handful of DNFs. Two, Lou adds color. The feisty Italian is known for speaking his mind and letting officials and sanctioning bodies know what he thinks about rules changes and midseason tweaks to the regulations. I'm sure someone in ALMS is already starting to sweat.

But the big advantage is that LG is as competitive as there is. He's beaten the GM juggernaut at its own game, out-running the factory Cadillac CTSVRs in SCCA's SPEED World Challenge. He'll need that, because at the same press events where his 2008 plans were unveiled, a Viper team and a Ford GT team were added to the GT2 ranks. And there are a couple of Ferraris and Porsches that already own the division. ALMS GT2 could become what Trans Am once was in the U.S. – the dominant form of sports coupe racing.

Let's hope that Team Corvette has as much success in GT2 as we've seen in GT1. I think the competition is tougher for the sheer number of entries, but this is also Porsche's home turf. Much like its legendary 917-dominated Le Mans in the '60s and '70s, the 911 in its most recent variants set the bar for production-based sports cars on the world stage.

And that is a gunfight for the newly deputized Corvette Racing teams that we cannot wait to see.

Exotic Vette's precut insulation package means that even the pickiest librarian can find quiet and bliss inside your Corvette. How quiet? They say it's as much as 12db less at 60mph in a vert.



I always wanted a Lexus. Sorta.

I remember several years ago, I was buying my first home. The Realtor was a young, well-coiffed fellow who was a serious “up-and-comer” in the local real estate business. He was a very good agent, and one



There are several kits available to handle the back of the car, the cockpit or the entire vehicle.

of the perks of his success was a new Lexus LS400 sedan. This was 1990, the second year of the sedan was in production, and I marveled at it. The way the dash lit up, the way everything adjusted around you. But the one thing that impressed me the most was the way the doors closed with a distinct “thud” and at that moment, the outside world went away. It was silent. Like a tomb silent. And I loved it. Being young and poor, it was such a departure from the various rattle traps I had driven. For a time, I actually thought that “interior noise” was an option package that my cars were ordered with. Someday, I told myself, I’d have a car THIS quiet.

No, I am not on performance enhancing steroids, so I never really thought that my 2001 Corvette Coupe would approach the silence of a Lexus sedan. But those of you who read my article in last months premiere issue know that I like to try and make my car “just a little bit better,” and it’s worth a shot if I can get it better without spending a fortune. When the Corvette was engineered, Chevrolet sacrificed comfort and quiet in favor of weight savings, and indeed, pulling back the carpet reveals those sacrifices. There is practically nothing in the way of insulation, and being that the floor is basically a sheet of balsa wood, there isn’t much between you and the pavement, and that close proximity to road noise makes itself very evident.

I started searching for various makers of interior soundproofing insulation. There are many to choose from: Dynamat, Brown Bread, etc. All with their own merits...and costs. After searching my favorite internet

Corvette sites, I found a package from a small vendor called Exotic Vette. The material used is comprised of a layer of neoprene foam sandwiched in between sheets of foil that are advertised to be heat resistant. Exotic Vette offers this insulation package two ways: full vehicle, at \$220 and half vehicle (front or rear) for \$160. All sheets are pre-cut and numbered and



You'll become intimately familiar with the interior of your Corvette as you remove carpet, seats, insulation and the console. If you're ambitious, you can also tear into the doors.

come with complete instructions, which make installation very easy. Aside from basic hand tools to remove the interior pieces, the only other items you’ll need to complete the job are a utility knife, a few cans of spray adhesive and some aluminum tape, all available at your local hardware outlet.

Of course, my install assistant “Bucky” was around to lend a hand. Two alleged minds are better than one when it comes to solving sticky problems and, well, Bucky works for beer. I will caution those who are first-timers: This installation can be very scary, because with the exception of the dash, you’ll be removing



Spray adhesive and patience will be rewarded as soon, your car too can look like something from NASA.

nearly all of the car's interior. Some of the connectors and fasteners can be confusing or downright difficult to work with, specifically those that deal with the power seats. My advice? Proceed slowly, and don't be upset at yourself if you break a piece of interior trim. There isn't a piece of trim that cannot be replaced either from the dealership or the aftermarket. Be generous with the spray adhesive (and spray OUTSIDE AND AWAY FROM your vehicle or any others). One thing that I did do was use the opportunity to give the interior a vigorous cleaning, taking a vacuum to the car and shampooing the various carpet pieces while they were out of the vehicle. After all, you'd like the adhesive to stick to something other than French fries and old parking stubs.

Another caution: Although Exotic Vette's website says that the material is 3/16" thick and will not interfere with the interior's reassembly, my experience was slightly different. The added material will alter the fit geometry of the interior pieces to a small degree. For the most part, it isn't a big deal, but there are situations where you'll have to force and press a bit more than you should to get things to go back together. You



Product: C4, C5 & C6 Insulation Kits

Manufacturer: Exotic Vette

Cost: Ranges from \$160 - \$220 for half and full vehicle kits. Kits are available for C4 Coupes, and C5 and C6 coupes and verts.

Install difficulty: Not technically difficult but there's a LOT of detail work.

Good to know: The pieces are numbered, which helps, you'll need some room to spread out.

Overall: It won't turn your Vette into a Rolls, but the quiet is noticeable and the car seems to feel more solid.

may have to do a bit more cutting and slicing around fasteners, but this is by no means a deal breaker.

So you ask...how did I like it? Was it worth the work? In a word, absolutely. I was very impressed by the reduction in sound. Having a Borla Stinger exhaust

system on my vehicle, the new insulation significantly reduced the sound of the exhaust to a pleasant rumble, and then only under hard acceleration. Tire noise was also reduced, but not as much as I would have liked. I firmly believe that this is directly related to the Goodyear F1's as they are SO noisy due to the hard compound. You can now hold a pleasant conversation with your passenger or listen to your stereo without turning it up to ear-shattering levels to hear it over the road noise. I can't honestly report a significant drop in cabin temperatures except around the center console area. It is noticeably cooler and more pleasant to lean my leg against while driving.

Is this a perfect solution? Nope. There really isn't one without going into a great deal more cost and professional installation. And lest we forget, this isn't an Aston Martin DB9 we're talking about here. It is, after all, the Corvette. An American sports car which is designed to be many things to many people at a somewhat obtainable price. In order to do that, there have to be compromises. But for the do-it-yourselfer who's looking for a great bang-for-the-buck improvement in interior comfort, you'll be very pleased with the results of your efforts. Here's another nice thing: I've met Exotic Vette's owner, Dan Keogh, at a Corvette event. He's a great guy who stands behind his product and genuinely wants to make sure his customer base remains satisfied.

And guess what! Now I have that cool "thud" when I close my doors too. I just think my version of a Lexus looks a lot cooler.



MAN ON THE MOVE

BY JIM HOLMES

Lou Gigliotti is all about speed. Hauling butt in a Corvette is what he does. Whether that is his move from the SCCA World Challenge to the American Le Mans Series or hustling a new product to market, it happens fast.



Lou Gigliotti has won 22 times in the SCCA's World Challenge Series. He's built a very successful Corvette performance parts business and his shop has a reputation for doing excellent quality tuning. What would make a man with so much invested in the winning tradition he's built in his SCCA Corvette walk away from the series that made him a household name among Corvette racing fans? His final race in the series was a microcosm of why he's moving on to ALMS GT2 next year.



Lou and the LG Motorsports crew work to repair the No. 28 LG Pro Long Tube Headers C6 for its last race in the SCCA World Challenge.

After a season spent fighting weight penalties and what he considers some "challenging" rules interpretations, Lou had qualified his No. 28 LG Pro Long Tube Headers Corvette in the 6th spot on the starting grid at Road Atlanta. Then, in Tech Inspection, his exhaust system was found to be one-eighth inch too low. Lou reasonably pointed out that a bolt had loosened, and that with a slight push the clearance stick would move past the loose pipes. It wasn't an intentional infraction, and it definitely wasn't a performance enhancement. No dice, the SCCA steward said, and Lou was banished to the back of the grid.

This wasn't Lou's first run-in with the SCCA hierarchy. Or his second. Or his 15th. The battle between the privateer and the sanctioning body has been a long and impressive debate. The saying that you can't fight City Hall also applies to the folks who make racing-series rules. The rules can be arbitrary, seemingly inept, can reek of blatant favoritism and even reduce the quality of the competition, but they are The Rules. If you want to race, you must play the cards you're dealt.

Taking up his position at the back of the starting grid on the rain-dampened track at Road Atlanta, Lou waited for the lights to trigger the field's standing start. The green flag waved, the lights blinked and the field lurched into mayhem. Somewhere toward the back, a mid-pack car stalled and competitors scattered across the racetrack and into one another.

Blocked by the entire grid, Gigliotti's final SCCA race ran about 50 feet before the front of his Corvette crumpled into a spinning competitor. With his radiator holed and coolant bleeding to the Road Atlanta pavement, Lou climbed out and walked away from the SCCA World Challenge series.

It would be easy to dismiss Lou's disgust with the SCCA's powers that be as sour grapes, but he's won his share of races. Real racers want little more than predictability and consistency from a sanctioning body. One needed only to watch the remainder of the Road Atlanta event to see what a comedy of errors the SCCA created.

The race started in the dry, but once the cleanup from the starting-line wreckage was complete, clouds had moved in and rain was at hand. It poured. The entire field, which had started on shaved tires, now waited for the yellow flag to fly so they could dart

to the pits to change to rain tires. They waited and waited and waited. A lap transpired without incident, and then the wet conditions took their toll. Under a full-competition green, cars went spinning, sliding, pirouetting, crashing, and a half-dozen machines settled, strewn all across the track. Hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of racecars were bent, broken and battered, with bodywork and bits of carbon fiber scattered in the pouring rain.

Still the SCCA didn't throw the yellow. Only with half the field wrecked and the remaining cars all but idling through the monsoon, leaving visible wakes through the standing water, did someone finally dig through the back of the SCCA trailer, past the orange cones and old entry blanks, to find the dusty yellow flag to advise caution to the racers. The remaining cars pitted,

with the exception of the lead Porsche, gambling that the time allotted for the event might expire before the rain would quit and the green could fly. Then, with just a couple of minutes remaining in the scheduled racing time, the SCCA red-flagged the race.



Crew Chief Louis Gigliotti Jr. and driver Lou Sr. watch the race replay from Road Atlanta as the debacle unfolds.

But not to end the event. The SCCA simply held the field. Then the stewards bizarrely allowed some cars to make changes to suspensions and the lead Porsche to change tires without sacrificing positions in the field -- effectively giving a few selected teams a free pit stop. Then the stewards lengthened the event by 10 minutes. Then they decided everyone should wear a bright red clown nose.

If you ever wondered about Lou G pointing out the

apparent lack of consistency in SCCA adjudication, this was a textbook case presented in just under an hour. How can you win a race if you don't even know when it's going to end?

A week later, in the relative quiet of his 15,000-square-foot shop just northeast of Dallas, Lou and his crew watch the race replay with dismay, wonder, aggravation and relief. They are hard at work on a Saturday, prepping the team's two cars for the season finale in California, but Lou won't be behind the wheel of the car. He's moved on. Mentally, he's been gone for a while now, but this will be the physical manifestation of the transition. His black-and-gold-flamed No. 28 car is leased for this race to a driver whose car was among those destroyed in the Road Atlanta melee. The car and its teammate the 87 are for sale, and Lou Gigliotti is not looking back.

Welcome to the World Stage

Corvette Racing exists to sell cars. Its budget comes not from the Performance Parts division but from GM Marketing. Lately that has created a problem. Although most all of this season's winners podiums in the American LeMans Series GT1 division have featured Team Corvette drivers – it's as much a function of the lack of competition as the quality of the cars and team. In short, it's hard to prove you're terrific if everyone else is scared to come play. What to do? Moving up a class to the LMP Prototype ranks would cost the team the signature silhouette of the street car and the marketing equity gained from a winning racecar that looks like the showroom model. Changing series wasn't an option. The international appeal of the

ACO's Le Mans event makes staying in the ALMS GT and the French summer spectacular across the pond a no-brainer from a European marketing standpoint.

Plus, GM has factory-backed models in most other domestic series in which a Vette could run, and the General wants Corvettes to best Ford and Porsche and Ferrari, not Cadillac or Pontiac. There is GT2, but

moving the famous C6.R 7-liter Yellowcars "down" a division might be viewed as a step backward.

Gigliotti had already decided to make his move – he was getting out of World Challenge and going to GT2. He'd build his own cars, rework his motor program and show up in Sebring to face down the Porsches and the Ferraris. The GM racing impresarios got wind of his



The LG team brings a tremendous book of knowledge to its GT2 operations thanks to numerous days of test time at Motorsport Ranch in Cresson in the World Challenge car.

plans and asked Lou to hold off on a decision. Patience is a difficult virtue for most racers, especially a feisty Italian, but the LG team held off for a bit. It was worth the wait.

The day before Lou's disastrous Road Atlanta event, Corvette Racing, ALMS officials, LG Motorsports and Riley Technologies held a press conference and announced that for 2008 they'd field a Riley-prepared Corvette in GT2 with Lou as the primary driver. Riley's cars are dominant performers in whatever series they are found – the Daytona Prototypes in GrandAm have brought home four straight Constructors Championships, and the Riley record at the 24 hours of Daytona will bode well as LG moves from timed-event 50-minute sprints to the endurance ranks of 12 Hours at Sebring, the 9-hour effort that is Road Atlanta's Petite Le Mans and of course the famed 24 Hours of Le Mans.

Taking Racecar Tech to the Street

The LG Motorsports mantra is “We Race, You Win,” and it's not a hollow slogan. What the team finds in its racecar development makes its way into a broad range of proprietary performance products developed exclusively for Corvettes.

The foundation of LG's aftermarket business comes from the LG Pro Long Tube Headers. Splashed boldly across the racecar, they are also under the hood, and they're more than just another set of headers. Louis Gigliotti Jr., the Crew Chief of the racing team (who also happens to be the son of the driver), tested dozens of tubing combinations, diameters, collectors and lengths to find the combination providing the best range of torque and horsepower improvement. An

So what can Corvette Racing fans expect for the 2008 season?

In GT2, LG will race a C6 bodystyle with a 6.0liter LS3 engine. That's not a typo. To find the sweet spot in the rules, the basic 6.2-liter LS3 will have a couple of variations. Depending on the venue, the block may be sleeved or the stroke shortened as necessary to generate the best combination of torque and horsepower for the track while keeping displacement less than 6 liters.

Riley will engineer the cars and the engines will be built by CRD, but all of the equipment will come home to Texas, where the magicians at LG will work their particular voodoo. GM will provide no money to the team. But the team will receive engineering support, wind-tunnel time and assistance on a seven-post shaker table to help beat parts into submission. LG maintains its own dyno at the shop in Wylie, so it can test, test and retest combinations and mechanical setups. It also has a deep book of research on its SCCA car at Motorsports Ranch south of Fort Worth to benchmark the new GT2 car.

The bar is high for this 2008 team, but there is a depth of talent, experience and resources that should make Corvette Racing in GT2 a force to be reckoned with.

In GT1, the C6.R may undergo a slight branding change, making the car's Z06 roots more visible compared to the more sedate C6 image that will be portrayed in GT2.

The big change may be in scheduling. Expect to see less of the Yellowcars if no other teams come to race. Obviously, the team should be on the grid to defend the traditional turf of Corvette at Sebring and Petite LeMans. The trip to France for LeMans is a given. What is less clear: Where else will we see the GT1 Corvettes? Does this potentially abbreviated schedule mean that we might not see GT1 Corvettes in Houston in April for the Lone Star Grand Prix? Only time and Doug Fehan know for sure, but even then, if an adversary wants to bring the fight to GT1, Corvette Racing could be ready to thaw out Johnny O'Connell and the team and show up to defend the day.

As a driver, Lou Gigliotti isn't worried about the move to endurance racing. He's run distance events before; one of his early races was a 24-hour race, and the team won it. Of course, that was early in the Bush administration – the first Bush administration. It was 1991 to be exact. But Lou's working out, looking to lose weight through the winter and arrive for February testing in fighting shape. He also points out a relatively new LeMans requirement that he believes will make his transition easier: air conditioning. Whereas the typical racecar cockpit reaches running temps of 120 to 140 degrees in competition, the GT1 Corvettes use a stock GM AC unit configured to best fit the car for weight distribution. The result is a driving compartment that stays a nice 75 degrees. As Bill Riley told Lou, "You may need a sweater."

in-house dyno and a range of Corvettes available for testing allowed LG Sr. and Jr. to spend a good chunk of 2000 working to uncover some unique properties of exhaust flow, and to create a system that improved performance across the entire powerband, rather than just another collection of plumbing. The result was an entire exhaust system for the car with 3" pipe and an integral X-pipe; their hard work resulted in an increase of 22 hp and 27 foot-pounds of torque over the headers they had been running.

Spend a few minutes talking headers with Lou Sr. and you come away with a great appreciation for the art and science of exhaust-system design. LG's Long Tubes consider the entire length of the header to be a system, all the way to the back of the collector flange. The unique venturi design of the LG merge collector

allows the header system to help pull the exhaust gases out of the tubes, resulting in horsepower increases through accelerated flow. This same testing allowed the X-pipe Lou-

is developed to provide similar benefits. With repeated dyno runs, the shape of the Siamesed pipe was maximized, and the optimum exhaust-flow angle was achieved. This removed the potential for harmonic turbulence at certain points in the powerband and gave the system a true advantage over traditional headers and bolt-on X pipes.

When Lou put these pipes on the racecar, the result was impressive. Double digit gains in horsepower and torque over the headers he had been running. As word got out, people asked, "That's great, but where can we get a set?" Louis began bending tubing and welding up sets at an agonizingly slow pace. It took



LG Pro Long Tube Headers aren't just on the side of the racecar, they are under it as well.

18 months to hand-build 70 sets. Lou, who seems to be in constant motion, got on the phone with Borla, which does this kind of thing for a living. An arrangement was made: Borla would manufacture LG Long Tubes to his specs, but only if Lou could buy the first production run of 500 sets. That's a lot of cash for a guy who is spending all his money making his racecar go fast, but Lou, a savvy businessman, saw a market for a better product. He mortgaged the house and placed the order. Borla began to deliver, but keeping up with demand wasn't possible, as that first 500-piece purchase order found 800 customers wanting pipes.

That began a successful series of racing-inspired and track-proven products for the Corvette and a business model of prototype testing on the racecar and dyno, then working with quality manufacturers to bring new LG performance products to market.

A case in point is LG's relationship with Bilstein and the work the two organizations have done to develop the LG coilover shock package. Lou needed a stable, predictable shock package for his racing Corvette. Of his 22 World Challenge wins, Lou estimates 18 came after they finalized the gas-pressurized coilover shock package with Bilstein. The shocks, he says, are as good at the end of the race as they are in qualifying. He expects to look for similar innovations on the GT2 car.

The dyno and track testing regimen is now standard procedure as the team engineers new street performance products. The new LG line of G5X camshafts



LG's Bilstein Coilover shocks are a direct result of his racing in SCCA. He has eighteen of his 22 wins in the series came on the Bilsteins, and he expects similar results and improvements to his products with the move to ALMS.

was developed on the in-house dyno with profiles ground to create a line of five cams with five different steps in performance increases that begin with "Hey, that feels nice" and go all the way to "Are you sure you can handle this?" The cams are manufactured to Lou's specs by Comp Cams and available exclusively from LG Motorsports. And LG has these for C5, C6 and Z06 covering LS2,3,6 and 7 engines.

Those are just the high spots of the outfit that's becoming one of the country's leading Corvette parts and performance manufacturers and tuners. Other items

include new silicone hose packages, custom hoods and bodywork, Wilwood and StopTech brakes, custom-designed LG wheels, plug wires, throttle bodies – the list is long. To complement the manufacturing end of the business, LG Motorsports also does tuning. His garage area adjacent to the showroom and race shop is filled with Corvettes, F-bodies and, on the day we were there, an old Chevy Monza coupe stuffed full of V8 goodness. High on the lift is a C5 Z06 from a local performance-driving school. LG handles the work on those machines, which see serious day-in, day-out abuse from drivers and wanna-be racers.

It adds up to a very busy Corvette and performance-centered world for Lou Gigliotti. He is arguably the most successful Corvette racer in Texas, and that is the touchstone for all his other endeavors. By continuing to improve his racecar, he's built a unique business dedicated to leveraging that winning effort and spreading the wealth to the Corvette community. As he moves forward into 2008 and a new series, with new cars, new products, new manufacturing partners, co-drivers and racing on two continents, Lou continues to be a man on the move.

You can try and keep up with Lou through his website at <http://www.lgmotorsports.com>



[Click here to post a comment about this article.](#)

Here. Take my Corvette.



What do a black Z06 with North Carolina plates, a four-time NASCAR Champion, a guy from Alabama and a Texas children's charity have in common? They all came together in Victory Lane at Texas Motor Speedway before the start of the Dickies 500 as Jeff Gordon handed over the keys to his own personal Z06 to contest winner Robert Marian of Daphne, Alabama.

The giveaway raised \$350,000 for the Jeff Gordon Foundation to help support a number of charities around the country and included a \$75,000 donation to the Texas chapter of Speedway Children's Char-



ties, which was received by local SCC Board President Pam Minick.

Gordon hopes to make the program an annual event, continuing to help kids and fund research. He didn't mention it at the presentation but there's also a side benefit – by giving away his personal car, Jeff has a great excuse to get a new Z06 every year.



Above left - Robert Marian of Daphne, Alabama looks to be quite happy for a guy who just received the keys to a used Chevy. The even better news? Gordon's Foundation will also pick up the tab for the taxes, title and license.

Above right - Just in case no one would believe that it was really Jeff Gordon's personal car, the driver of the #24 signed the visor.

Below - Gordon, Marian and his sister present a \$75,000 check to Pam Minick of Speedway Children's Charities of Texas.

Every year, Corvette clubs all over the state put on a Fall Show - here's how the Barney Brigade of the Corvette Owners Club of Houston does it and raises more than \$5,000 for the Houston Food Bank

BY CHRIS JOHNSON

How it's done in Houston

I was standing in a parking lot at 7:30 a.m. on a Saturday, not quite sure what I had gotten myself into. I was meeting six other Katy-area Corvettes from the Corvette Owner's Club of Houston to caravan to our Fall Corvette Show at Hooters Willowbrook. This was my first time to volunteer and I was clueless on what to do – but I was on time and ready to roll! I simply knew our goals: put together the biggest club-sponsored show of the year and surpass our Fall 2006 show's \$3,000 donation to The Houston Food Bank.





(Left to right) Maria Johnson, Denise Bentham and Elise Bentham prepare for the onslaught of ballots.

We had increased the charitable donations from our Spring Corvette Show significantly over the previous year and wanted to do the same for The Houston Food Bank with our Fall 2007 show.

In past years, about a dozen members had carried the brunt of the work. Because our shows had grown, it was time to share the wealth.

This time we recruited almost half the club – more than 50 members volunteered, including myself. Organizing a group of volunteers this big is never an easy task. Though there was a ton of work ahead of us the day of the show, club members had been working for months to ensure everything ran smoothly. More than a dozen members had

solicited donations from almost 50 sponsors. The majority of the businesses solicited were Corvette-related, but we also solicited donations from other places we frequented, including restaurants, coffee shops and retailers. PD Auto Concepts in Houston donated more than \$600 worth of discounts and products to the show. “We nearly doubled our contribution from COCH’s spring show and brought two cars to the show. said Dave Wells, PD Auto Concepts’ general manager. “COCH puts on a great show and we were excited to be a part of it and help a great charity.”

We also sold 25 sponsor awards, which were given to a Corvette of the sponsor’s choice. This helped set our show apart from the other club-sponsored shows in Houston and gave sponsors a chance to personally choose their favorite Vette.



Volunteers were organized into groups for work assignments during the show. Richard Coons, COCH vice president, organized the show and the work assignments. The assignments and work groups were posted on the COCH Community Forum in advance so members could check their assignments prior to arriving at the show. Richard also ordered shirts for the volunteers, selecting a lovely shade of purple that led us to be dubbed “the Barney Brigade” by some.

Volunteers -- such as us in the Katy crew -- started arriving around 8 a.m., two hours before registration. Ray Gonzales and his parking/set up crew greeted many of us and quickly directed us to our parking spots. Maria Johnson and her volunteers set up the

registration paperwork and tables, and Michael Joseph and his volunteers stuffed goodie bags and organized donations. T.D. Jefferson, a club member and DJ, arrived early to set up his equipment, and we were soon working with music in the background.

As anticipated, cars showed up early. With beautiful weather and a lot of positive feedback from the other Corvette clubs, we were expecting a large turnout. As more show participants arrived, more volunteers swung into action. Milton Brown led his team of volunteers in selling \$2,400 in tickets for the raffle items and the 50/50 pot. Hooters girls strolled through

the parking lot, checking out the cars and providing entertainment for the participants. They rivaled the loudest-exhaust contest as one of the most popular parts of the show.

Voting for awards was done differently than at our previous shows: Club members voted for non-members' cars, and vice-versa. To streamline the process, ballots were color-coded to match the entry forms on each car's windshield. Steve Mahler and his ballot-counting volunteers did a great job tallying the results and making sure the show did not run late.

Thanks to our hard-working volunteers, we put together a great



Paul Barley and Milton Brown take a break from selling raffle tickets.

show and met our goals. With 112 Corvettes entered, this was the largest club-sponsored Corvette show in Houston this year. We handed out more than 60 awards, gave away donations from almost 50 vendors and found the surrounding parking areas full of visiting Corvettes.

Most importantly, we will be donating at least \$5,000 to The Houston Food Bank – a huge increase from our donation last year! Based on the early feedback, we will continue to seek out large numbers of volunteers to spread the work around and help the show run smoothly. We look forward to building on this experience and putting together an even bigger show in the spring! I know I'll be one of the volunteers you'll see working that show. Here's hoping for a better nickname than the Barney Brigade.



Registration and ballot tables - staffed and ready for business.





COCH holds its meetings the second Saturday of every month and hosts a Street Meet the fourth Friday of every month at various restaurants around Houston. More information about these and other events can be found at COCH's website, www.corvetteownersclubhouston.com, or on its Community Forum, www.corvetteownersclubhouston.com/forums.



*Clockwise from top left -
 Dale and Cheryl Vickers' 2007 Z06, Hooters' Choice Award Winner.
 Jose and Veronica Henriquez's 2003 C5 - Best of Show Winner
 Brittani and Candice serving up hospitality, Hooters Style.
 DJ T.J. Jefferson watches over the goodie bags while spinning some tunes.*

Q

I'm looking to upgrade my brakes for track days. What's the best way to go about it?

One quick thing to keep in mind: Brakes don't stop your vehicle, tires do. Brakes, through friction, simply slow down the rotation of the tires. With good tires,

a

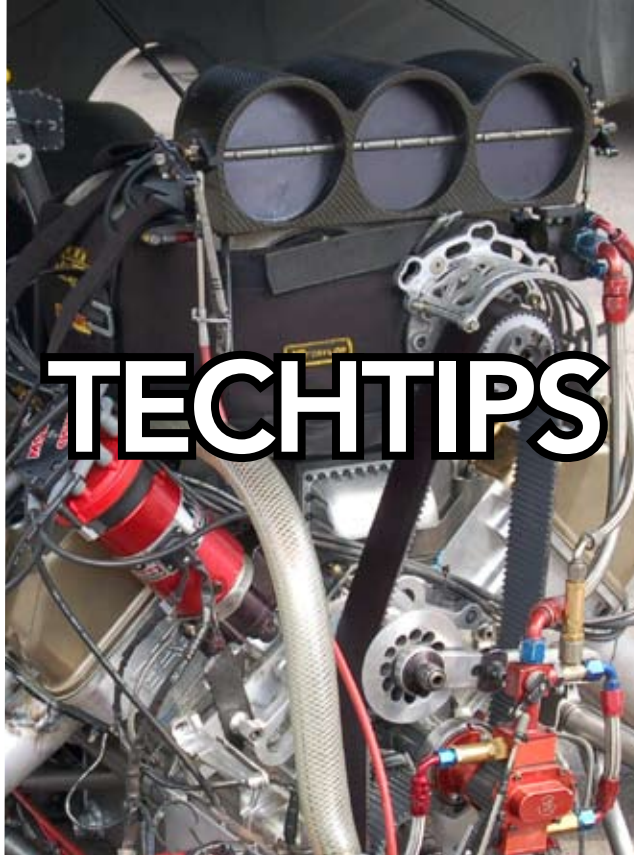
which are a must, you also need to optimize the efficiency of heat transfer through the brake system and have the correct suspension.

There are many options on the market when it comes to brake and suspension systems, and you certainly get what you pay for. A customer can spend upwards of \$10,000 on a brake system, if not more. And with those big brake systems come bigger costs for pads. The better the pad, the better the stopping, the more expensive, the less time they last ... you get the idea: It's expensive!

A lot of us will not spend the big bucks on a brake system with calipers, so there are a couple of avenues for improving braking performance while keeping in mind the basic components of braking: tires, pads, and rotors.

Good tires are a necessity when it comes to racing! And there is nothing like having a good compound race tire, but keep in mind that some of these are not meant for the street and will wear them thin quickly if run there.

Brake pads are one of the easiest fixes for better braking at the track. Let's use Hawk Performance pads as an example to get an idea of different pads. The Hawk



Jason "Cajundude" Theriot on brakes, pads, rotors, tires and everything else that makes your go-fast machine come to a stop.

HPS series is designed for the street and gives some performance on and off the track. This is one of the top sellers; its increased performance can give up to 40% more stopping ability, and occasional track use is no problem. The next street pad is the Hawk Ceramic. Ceramics are, more or less, OEM-pad replacements that will last quite a long while and be virtually free of noise and dust. They're not, however, designed with racing in mind. The HP Plus is a borderline race pad that's still usable on the street. With it you will see a very high

friction output. In other words, this pad will bite.

Hawk has all-out race pads, too, but they're not usable on the street. These pads can get into the \$500-\$600 range and provide unbelievable stopping power; however, keep in mind that there are always tradeoffs. These pads perform well, but they also decrease rotor life and give off mounds of dust. The more dust, the better you stop. Furthermore, race pads are a harder compound than street pads and need to be raised to a certain temperature – not one reached in street driving – before they function properly.

Now we can talk about rotors. Rotors are a very important component of the braking system, and a big rotor can be very useful at the track. The brakes convert the kinetic energy (rotation) into thermal energy

(heat), which is where the rotor comes into play. The rotor absorbs the heat, the heat is dissipated, and the process starts again at the next braking event. Rotors can see temperatures of 1,000 degrees F. under repetitive braking! Larger-diameter rotors provide more brake torque and dissipate heat faster. Be careful when choosing, because if you go too big they won't fit your wheels. And upgrading to rotors that function correctly can be extremely costly. Many road racers use NAPA brand rotors, which are cheap enough to be essentially disposable and provide great surface area for the pads. (More on rotors, on the next page.)

// One quick thing to keep in mind: Brakes don't stop your vehicle, tires do. //



Q

Is there an advantage to drilled or slotted rotors? I hear it both ways.

Yes and no.

Cross-drilled rotors dissipate heat faster, but the disadvantage is less surface area for pad contact.



a

Slotted rotors retain heat longer, but have the slots to exhaust the gas build-up; the slots help pull glazing, should there be any, off the pads and allow more surface contact. Unless you are buying

\$1,000-each titanium rotors, stay away from cross-

drilled rotors for road racing or auto crossing.

Drag racing, however, is a different story. One very important thing to know about the rotors flooding the United States is that practically all cross-drilled rotors are made from Chinese blanks that are an inferior steel and casting process. If you get a full set of cross-drilled rotors for less than \$1,000, all you are getting is bling. Don't get me wrong, these rotors do look great! However, they will crack under racing conditions, so if you are using them, check them constantly (minute cracks will start to form). Slotted rotors are a little bit better in this regard, but you are kind of in the same boat as far as quality. If you get a complete set of rotors for less than \$300, be logical, don't race

them! These are made from inferior steel and casting. A decent set of American-steel rotors will set you back at least \$400. My first vote would be to have slotted rotors so you can use them at the track and on the street. Eventually, the more you race, you will see that rotors wear pretty quickly after several road-race sessions. This is why many people are choosing to use NAPA brand rotors, which are made from good North American steel. At \$40 to \$50 each, they are a steal!



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THE REAR VIEW

A Vettexas subscriber just happened to be trackside when Corvette Racing decided to take the prototype "Blue Devil" (ZR-1?, SS?, Z07?) out to play at Laguna Seca.

Rumors indicate the new SuperVette will boast 650 horsepower and could debut at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit in January 2008.



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