

# Showroom Stock Racing

## It's Very Name Is Misleading

By Rick Titus

In all of motorsports it's a consent battle of theory verses application. From driving techniques to the rule book it's all a matter of interpretation. No truer than when applied to the Sports Car Club of America's (SCCA) "Showroom Stock". Well meaning in intent but miles misplaced when it came to driving cars off the dealer's showrooms and onto the track, well, not if you had any designs on winning.

The theory was to give household-budget racers a class they could buy a car, still drive it to work and yet race with it on the weekends. But racers being races that approach lasted about 10-minutes. SCCA required the installation of an approved "Bolt-in roll bar, competition quality driver restraints, fire bottle, window net and the removal of anything in the interior that might come flying loose and hit the driver in a hard crash. Weight reduction was limited to removing the spare tire which, at the time, was usually carried inside the passenger compartment. All else was to remain "stock" or as the SCCA saw it, as delivered from the manufacturer.

Nearly overnight the Showroom Stock fields were huge and, as it usually goes, the cream-of-the-crop, both in terms of drivers and vehicle prep wizards, ran at the front. For the most part the largest body of entries ran in a tight pack from about sixth back, but the super-serious labored late into the night polishing, tweeting, aligning and massaging every nut, bolt and component on the car. Speed secrets came down to one-hundredth of second but add up enough of them and soon you had a car that was a second faster than the other guy. Now cheaters were different story and it wasn't hard to spot those cars.

Tire wars broke out, driveline oils became far more important and learning how to tune the engine within an inch of its life were all part of the game. Surprisingly many still drove their "race car" home and to work. In less than a decade professional "Showroom Stock" racing was started and the game took on a whole new face. Club racing was still the home of most Regional/National level racers but it wasn't long before factory teams and professional drivers were being hired to lay claim to championship titles. At this level the cars were about as "showroom stock" members of Congress are honest — in short: NOT.

Speeds went up, lap times came down (way down) and hardball pro-racing was the norm. Because the cars were fast yet still very reliable the races grew longer, no more thirty minute battles; instead twenty four hour wars were being fought. Honestly, it was wonderful. These "stock" cars were now longer, lower and wider and faster than any magazine story (including Car & Driver) could ever match in a road test. A couple of my favorite quotes from certain unnamed team owners: "These cars are showroom stock and it cost me \$60,000 to make them that way." or "The problem with rules it cost so damn much to get around them." That pretty much sums up that state of the game at the time. And there was no shortage of big name drivers on the payroll to ensure every ounce of performance was extracted from these cars for twenty four hours.