



SOLO'S SEASON
EVALUATING THE
2012 COMPETITION



RALLYCROSS
BATTLE FOR
THE TOP TITLE

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**THE BEST OF THE BEST
COMPETE AT SCCA'S ULTIMATE
ROAD RACING CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT**

THE RUNOFFS!

BETTER THAN THE LAST

The Touring 2 battle has always been one to watch at the Runoffs. The variety and parity among the modern muscle cars that populate the class has always made for great action on the track. The cars in T2 build lap times in different ways, each having its own strength and weakness, and the racing often comes down to who best manages their tires and brakes. T2 is a high-speed game of chess.

Two-time Champ Marty Grand has shown his AMS/UCS Performance/TRE/Hoosier/Carbotech Mitsubishi Evo can get the job done in the wet or dry, but if not managed, the car can leave him with used up tires and a slowed pace in the closing laps. And, if any car can push Grand, it's the Ford Mustang. In 2011 it looked to be a contender for the T2 title, but a wet track sidelined the pony car, and much of the field. Should the 2012 race not see rain, many were looking for this to become an epic battle.

As hoped, T2 saw mostly clear skies all week. In qualifying, Ford convert Don Knowles showed that Grand would once again have to deal with a Mustang if he wanted to stand at the top of the podium. After a rough first qualifying session, multi-time Champion Knowles showed that he would be the one to challenge Grand as he put his Phoenix/Hawk/Hoosier Ford Mustang GT on the Gumout pole with a lap of 2:27.938.

On the start, Knowles seemed to catch the rest of the class sleeping as he got away quickly. Grand jumped up from third on the grid to take second away from Todd Napieralski in Turn 1. As the first lap began to unfold, it appeared as though Grand was struggling to get his car up to speed, as both Napieralski and Steve Jenkins were looking to get around him. At Canada Corner Jenkins took advantage of the great brakes on his 911 Porsche, making the move past Napieralski for third.

As the field crossed the line at the end of lap one, there were five different makes in the top six: Ford, Chevrolet, Mitsubishi, Porsche, and BMW. This diversity is what makes T2 so great.

Jenkins was strong in the braking zones and in the corners, and appeared to be getting frustrated by Grand's pace – and Jenkins let Grand know on lap two when Grand could not match the corner speed of Jenkins he received a bump at Turn 8. While the battle for second place raged, Knowles was quietly extending his lead.

At the start of lap four, Napieralski tired to make a run on Jenkins into Turn 1, but could not close the deal. This opened the door for Pratt Cole to make a gutsy run around the outside of Turn 1, moving Napieralski back to fifth place – this move earned Cole the GoPro Hero Move of the Race.

By Turn 8 of the same lap, Napieralski took fourth back from Cole, at which time John Kachadurian



JEFF LOEWE

QUALIFYING ▶ Pos. Driver/Region (Car) Time
Session 1/Time Session 2/Time Session 3; 1. Don Knowles/NCR (Ford Mustang GT) 2.29.176 / **2.27.938** / 2.48.818; 2. Todd Napieralski/DET (Chevrolet Camaro Z-28) 2.28.705 / **2.28.253** / No time; 3. Marty Grand/WDC (Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution Evo) **2.28.319** / 2.28.762 / No time; 4. Steve Jenkins/CHI (Porsche 996) **2.28.980** / 2.29.452 / 2.59.919; 5. Pratt Cole/RENO (Ford Mustang GT) No time / **2.29.014** / No time; 6. Cooper I MacNeil/CHI (Ford Mustang GT) No time / **2.29.329** / 3.10.159; 7. John Kachadurian/CHI (BMW M3) 2.29.797 / **2.29.779** / No time; 8. Brian Kleeman/WDC (Ford Mustang GT) 2.31.463 / **2.30.059** / 3.04.381; 9. Alan Kossow/CHI (BMW M3) **2.31.393** / 2.31.841 / 2.48.844; 10. William Moore/NEO (Pontiac Solstice GXP) No time / **2.33.088** / 2.51.628; 11. Bill Baten/IND (Ford Mustang GT) 2.35.152 / **2.33.189** / No time; 12. James Leithauser/COLO (BMW Z4 M Coupe) 2.33.701 / **2.33.272** / 3.19.010; 13. Randy Tauro/NER (Nissan 370Z NISMO) 2.34.758 / **2.33.888** / 3.19.188; 14. Chris Outzen/NER (Nissan 350Z) **2.34.019** / 2.34.404 / 3.35.603; 15. Dan Spirek/COLO (BMW Z4 M Coupe)



RICK CORWINE

Race 21
Touring 2
Don Knowles
North Carolina Region
Ford Mustang GT

2.36.073 / 2.36.327 / 3.25.604; 16. John H. Baker/ORE (Nissan 350Z) **2.40.293** / 2.38.190 / 2.49.681; DNS. Tom J Wickersham/SFR (Honda S2000) No time / No time / No time; DNS. Bill Steinhoff/FLA (Nissan 350Z) No time / No time / No time; DNS. CJ Moses/NCR (Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution Evo) No time / No time / No time;



DENNIS WOOD



*Baten - Loss of Qualifying 3 times per Chief Steward - GOR 9.3.26.B
Cole - Loss of Qualifying 3 times per Chief Steward - Supps 9.12*

RACE ► 13 laps, 52 Miles: **Pos. Driver (Laps)**; 1. Don Knowles (13); 2. Marty Grand (13); 3. Todd Napieralski (13); 4. John Kachadurian (13); 5. Alan Kossof (13); 6. Pratt Cole (13); 7. Brian Kleeman (13); 8. Bill Baten (13); 9. William Moore (13); 10. James Leithauser (13); 11. Tom J Wickersham (13); 12. Dan Spirek (13); 13. Chris Outzen (13); 14. John H. Baker (13); 15. Randy Tauro (12); 16. Steve Jenkins (7); DNS. Cooper I MacNeil; **Overall Time of Race**: 32.21.628; **Average Race Speed**: 96.414 mph; **Margin of Victory**: 2.984 seconds; **Hawk Fastest Race Lap**: 2.28.248 (97.135 mph); **Lap Leaders**: Knowles, Laps 1-13; **Sunoco Hard Charger**: Tom J Wickersham

pounced in his BMW and passed Cole in the Carousel.

On a mission to get to the front, Napieralski drove his Chevrolet Performance/TPR/Back Street Performance/SKF Chevrolet Camaro to the Hawk Hot Lap of the Race on lap five, with a T2 record setting lap of 2:28.248.

Knowles, meanwhile, had managed a comfortable gap over the rest of the field. Grand was far too busy fending off Jenkins to even

think about the leader, and the battle for fourth between Napieralski, Cole, and Kachadurian had caused them to momentarily lose touch with the top three.

Unfortunately, the race would come to an end for Jenkins on lap eight with his Porsche parked on the outside edge of the gravel trap at Turn 14. Shortly after, Cole started to fall back with electrical issues.

Now Grand and Napieralski were unchallenged for second and third, and while Knowles was in sight of both it was unlikely either had enough car left to challenge for the lead. And to add another problem for Grand, the battle with Jenkins had taken its toll on the Evo's tires, and Napieralski started to reel him in.

Napieralski gave it all he could in the closing laps, but the brakes on his Camaro were staring to suffer, and would give out on him as he entered Turn 5 for the final time.

"I was experiencing some brake problems in the second half of the race, like all of us were," said Napieralski. "I started closing on

Marty [Grand] late in the race and went over the hill into Turn 5 and the [brake] pedal went to the floor. I just started downshifting and pumping the brakes, trying to scrub speed. I went into the sand, but had enough momentum to get out of it and get back on track and nurse it home for third."

Grand was now alone in second, with no hope of catching Knowles, who would go on to collect his seventh National Championship.

"Once I got a good start, I just tried to focus on running good laps," said Knowles. "Once I got in the lead, I started talking to myself. 'You don't get into this position very often! Don't mess this up, just hit your marks. Just do your job. Just shut up and drive.' From my point of view, I never looked in the mirror after the first lap in Turn 5."

Knowles collected his first National Championship title in 1978 driving an SAAB in SSB. "It never gets old," beamed Knowles after taking his sixth title. "Every time is better than the time before."

Jason Isley

(ABOVE) This year Don Knowles claimed his sixth National Championship title, his first coming in 1978.

(LEFT) Marty Grand (43) had a race on his hands defending the second position from a determined Todd Napieralski (33).