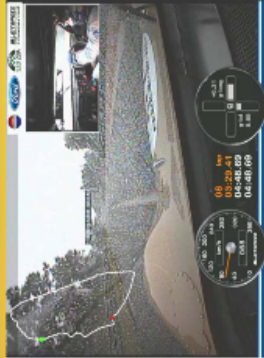


<< 1016 and the Le Mans Classic - Part 2



further down the track, going towards Indianapolis, I was obliged to drop my speed by nearly 60kph, then at Indianapolis I had to take severe corrective action to keep the car on track. Look at the steering wheel/arm movements at Indianapolis as the car is sliding to the right.

At the end of that lap, just as I was passing the Ford Chicane, the race was stopped at 39 minutes because of an accident; all flags and lights went to red. I had started in 71st position and ended 25th. 67 cars finished the race, and therefore I had overtaken 42 in the process, since 4 cars had not finished. Bernard finished in second position with the T70 and I had caught up and passed all the GT40s except one, driven by Philippe Vandromme and Paul Belmondo. Belmondo has made a career as a race driver, including F1 and participating 12 times in the Le Mans 24 Hour race from 1985 to 2005; he's the son of the famous French actor Jean-Paul Belmondo. They had finished 21st.

The car was fine and needed no more than an overall check to make sure nothing had been damaged or was loose. We left the cars to the care of Trevor, Sylvain and the other mechanics and caught another few hours' sleep in the caravan.

Pre-grid for the last race was at 1443 on Sunday, which meant we had to be back at the paddock around 12 if we wanted to grab a plate of pasta before the race.

Sleep was difficult, as it started raining heavily for quite some time, but I had some rest before we went back to the paddock and the Drivers' Club.

Back at the car, and with not much to do except chat with members of the Club who were visiting, I wondered where Belmondo or Vandromme were, to find out which chassis their GT40 was, since I didn't know the car.

Belmondo was speaking with Emanuele Pirro, another famous Le Mans 24 Hours driver with 10 podiums with Audi, 5 of them wins.

by Claude Nahum

I passed 3 cars - another Corvette, a Lola 210 FVC and a Porsche 96b - including a number of cars that I lapped, which slowed me just a little bit. In this race I was about 1½ to 2 seconds slower than in race 2.

On the last lap, just before the first chicane, I was passed by Hart's Lola T70 Mk2b as I was entering the corner in such a way that, had I not taken evasive action, the rear of the green Lola would have hit the front of my car as he pulled sharp left to position himself for the right hand corner. I had passed something like 50 cars on this edition of the Le Mans Classic and never needed to do it dangerously.

Bernard and the car following him overtook me just as fast, but without drama.

It was about then that I saw the Belmondo/Vandromme GT40 ahead of me, so I pushed to try and catch them before the end of the race, but that was not to be.



Into the first race lap, the 1971 Chevrolet Corvette C3 of Marc Godfrey overtook me and spun before the Dunlop Bridge. I overtook him, he passed me again in a rage and it then took me the best part of 2 laps to overtake him again.

I finished only 14 seconds in front of him, although I was trying hard to catch as many cars as I could.



They finished the race in 45:44.294 while I passed the line at 45:44.772, just 0.478 (less than half) second behind them in 22nd position.

What was more important than the result was the fact that I had finally seen the chequered flag at Le Mans from the track and not from the stands. Trevor and I had kept the promise we'd made each other.

For those interested, statistically I had clocked a maximum speed of 307 kph (4 less than 2 years ago) and had cornered at a maximum continuous lateral g of 1.14 at the Corvette curves after the Porsche and Pont curves.

Finally, Bernard finished third, but the car in front of him was penalised for non-conformity, giving him second place.

He has thus 2 outright wins, a second and 2 third place finishes, making our T70 the car that has won the most podiums at Le Mans Classic.

Mission accomplished.
Photos: Claude Nahum