



American Road Race Specials, 1934-70: Glory Days of Homebuilt Racers

Allan Girdler

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Once upon a time, there was a guy named Max Balchowsky who decided he wanted to beat Ferrari and Jaguar at their own game-road racing. The trouble was, he didn't have the cash for a factory racer. So he built his own. Using a Ford homemade tube frame, a souped-up Buick V-8 and running on recapped whitewalls, Ol' Yaller whipped them all.

Welcome to *American Road Race Specials 1934-70*. These were the glory days of road racing in the United States, from the first races between imported MGs to the world-winning Made-in-the-USA Scarabs and Chaparrals, and on to the downfall of the Shadow.

This is the story of the men who built and ran their own homemade cars in pioneer SCCA and Cal Club races on town streets, airports and then the first purpose-built American racetracks. Here is Jim Hall, Lance Reventlow, Ken Miles, Carroll Shelby, Ak Miller, Balchowsky, Troutman and Barnes, Phil Hill, Dan Gurney, Roger Penske, George Follmer, and all the rest. . . .

And the cars: Ol' Yaller, Cunningham, Scarab, Chaparral, Kurtis, Devin, Zerex Special, Bocar, Caballo de Hierro, Pooper, Shadow, Ferraries with Chevy V-8s and every other possible chassis-engine combination a racer could think of. Some were crude, others deceptively homespun; most were half hot rod, half sports car—all of them were unique and built with passion.

Historian Allan Girdler's straight-talking technical writing and colorful storytelling brings to life the homebuilts' history as no other could. Girdler is a former *Car Life* and *Cycle World* editor and is currently an editor-at-large for *Road & Track*. His other books include *Harley-Davidson Racing 1934-1986* and *Harley-Davidson XR-750*.

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