

MOROSO

January 15 – 16, 2005:

One week later, West Palm Beach. The track, the weather, the event couldn't be more different. Where Sebring is long, wide and fast, Moroso is short, narrow and technical. While Florida had been warm and clear, Florida is now wet and cool. While last week the majority of cars were in pristine condition from a winter off, they now exhibit battle scars from the first race. Even the car transporter breaks down, scratching the first day of practice.

On Friday, the wet track presents an onset of challenges. On top of that, my motor is flat, as though we are on a slippery slope to failure.

During the last lap of practice, my motor unloads a gush of fluid on the tires. As I exit the last turn, I do a fast loop on the straight and then slide into the grass. While I slow the car quite a bit, it is not enough to prevent me from slamming the inside wall. This succeeds in mangling the front suspension and further chewing up the bodywork, but it is nothing the crew cannot fix. I look forward to a better qualifying.

Qualifying is uneventful, except for the fact that the motor is definitely going. I manage a 33rd, out-qualifying Steve Lewis, so I have \$10 back.

Race day is cold and rainy, but we are not out first, so we hope for better weather. Oddly enough, it stops raining during the second group's race. As we grid, it is overcast and cold, but the track's surface is pretty good.

Steve starts two cars behind me. Despite a stern warning from Race Control not to repeat the Sebring fiasco, the race start is chaotic and crazy, with several cars off before turn 3. However, none are seriously damaged, only generating a local yellow.

The race runs all 45 minutes without interruption and I run as well as I can. Initially, I make great progress forward, but the dying motor is giving up on every lap. First, it just won't accelerate down the straight. As long as I draft, I can run with the pack, but as they gap me, it is all I can do to late break to retain my position.

Rather than block traffic, I fight the good fight, letting the others pass me on the straight. Then the motor begins to miss coming out of the chicane, making me a sitting duck for most of the people I have passed, including Steve.

I resign myself to run the motor until it blows, driving the best that I can.



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Sometimes, effort pays off. On the last lap, on the next to last turn, I see Steve's car at the Apex. Sideways. He has spun. I decide not to go around him and wave. Gloating is not good sportsmanship.

The motor is shot. The best race I have driven in six months has been used to hold off, not advance. But, I am up \$20.00. I will take it.