

Team Prefix Forges Ahead To One-Lap Podium Finish

by Irena Granaas

After competing in 20 races covering 12 different racetrack venues in eight days, it was a triumphant podium finish at One Lap of America for Team Prefix USA and the team's supercharged, modified SRT-10 Dodge Viper.

Owner and driver Steve Loudin and co-driver Tom Drew collected a well-earned trophy for finishing third out of more than 60 teams. The Viper was also the only American-made car represented among the top five finishers.

"We finished up strong . . . The guys did a great job," said Jhan R. Dolphin, president of marketing/public relations firm J. Robert. Dolphin started the "Forge Ahead USA" campaign.

The One Lap of America is basically the grandchild of the historic Cannonball Run, made famous by the movie of the same name. However, today's event is a legal event where all competitions are held to professional race tracks.

Loudin and Drew may not have finished first, but from the start, Team Prefix was successful at winning the hearts and minds of Americans. All along the 4,000-mile route, at every stop, people really resonated with the team's main mission, which was to use

high-profile automotive events like this one to promote the importance of buying American, supporting American companies and products, and putting more U.S. citizens back to work.

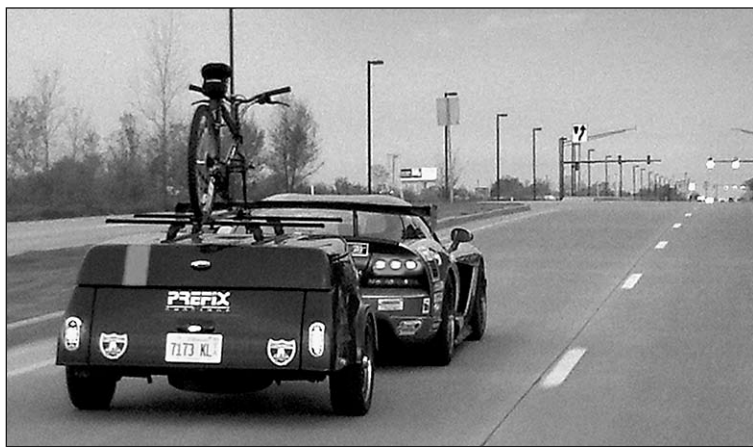
The route took the cars from Tire Rack, Ind., through Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and east to Daytona, Fla., and back north through Georgia, South and North Carolina, Virginia and Pennsylvania, before the cars turned west back to their starting point.

In cities and towns across the route, virtually everywhere the team went, if they stopped to fuel up or to take a coffee or meal break, they were surrounded by people wanting to know what "Forge Ahead USA" is all about.

Dolphin said the Prefix/Forge Ahead USA team drivers drove the ultimate American muscle car, their attention-getting modified Dodge Viper SRT-10, effectively putting their message in front of thousands of Americans in more than a dozen states and at a dozen race tracks.

Fans also stayed in touch with the team via social media like Facebook, with thousands getting their daily updates, photos, and video clips.

Meanwhile, back at the home base of title sponsor Prefix in



The Team Prefix Viper SRT-10 heads down the highway to its next event during the eight-day One Lap of America motorsport event.

Auburn Hills, there was a definite post-event celebration.

Prefix, which opened its doors last August in the former Kmart site on Joslyn Road, won the contract to produce its show-quality paint finish through its 100 percent manual process for the 2013 Viper.

"We are so proud of the team and the way they promoted Made in the USA," said Prefix owner Kim Zeile. "We combined the products from a variety of American companies to create a very powerful car, but the message we sent about buying American products was even more powerful. American-Made is back, in a big way!"

Dolphin said Forge Ahead USA is the first national campaign created to assist companies to effec-

tively market their "Made in the USA" advantage.

"With such an amazing response to their message, and their competitive racing abilities, there's a good chance we'll see the team in additional events in the near future," Dolphin commented.

Other team sponsors include: Whelen Engineering, Archer Racing, Forgeline Wheels, American Racing Headers, Arrow Racing, Tricel Corporation, K&N Engineering, CORSA Performance, PartsRack, Thule, & Jason Industries.

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Warmer Weather Marks Return of Farmers' Market

Downtown Auburn Hills will mark the return of its Farmers' Market on Thursday, May 30.

The Farmers' Market will run every Thursday 3-7 p.m. through Oct. 10 in downtown Auburn Hills on the southeast corner of Squirrel and Auburn roads. Once again, the presenting sponsor is Genisys Credit Union.

The 2013 Farmers' Market will feature a variety of Michigan-grown produce, baked goods, flowers and unique items from local artisans, according to Market Master Leigh Wilson.

"The goal is to bring people together and give them access to affordable and healthy foods and handmade products that highlight the colors, fragrances and tastes of Michigan's growing season," said Wilson.

Music from Michigan bluegrass group Petal Shop will be part of the festivities on opening day, as well as soups and sandwiches from Green Zebra New American Street Food, kids' activities courtesy of Home Depot and a variety of other vendors on hand with goods for sale. The market will accept payment via SNAP. Additional vendors who wish to participate should contact Wilson via email at lwilson@auburnhills.org.

It Takes a Village for Successful Vehicle Designing These Days

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that each market has its own rules and regulations, and that vehicles must be designed and made to fit these rules, increasing the complexity of the whole process.

So for OEMs to stay competitive, they are relying more than ever on new technologies and softwares, he said, technologies they might not be that familiar with.

It's now possible to change the performance of new cars just by changing the software used to operate the vehicle, Przybylinski said. He has a friend who designs hydraulic brakes. When he last spoke with his friend, he was told that he's not a brake designer, he's a software designer.

But achieving quality isn't as simple as embracing the concept of quality, Przybylinski said, adding that OEMs must have systems in place throughout the entire design process and these systems must be embraced by everyone, from in-house engineers to contractors to suppliers who make the parts and design their own systems that they supply to car companies.

"PLM is a strategy that must support the product from ideation to the end of the life of the product," Przybylinski said. "That means when you design something, you have to know how the vehicle and its parts will be recycled at the end of the car's life."

That's part of "designing for everything." The batteries of electric cars just can't be thrown in a landfill. OEMs must have some sense of what to do with those batteries when designing electric cars.

Jim Staargaard, president of Plasan Carbon Composites, said his company is only a few years old. Its first plant is in Vermont and makes carbon fiber parts the traditional way, which takes them about 90 minutes to convert carbon fiber into parts like a hood or roof. On the other hand, their new Grand Rapids plant uses a new method that allows them to shorten that time to 17 minutes.

Staargaard said the company is working on making that time even shorter by coming up with new formulas for carbon fiber that will be easier to press and mold.

He said they didn't wait until they could reduce processing times of carbon fiber production further, because it's important to have revenue now while developing better materials and processes for the future.

With the emphasis on lightweighting by OEMs, suppliers will continue to work in improving substances like carbon fiber. The problem, Staargaard said, is that people don't know as much about carbon fiber as they do about steel or aluminum. It's easy to program the characteristics of steel into a computer so that engineers can design parts on computers.

They can't do that now with carbon fiber. So having a company like Dassault Systemes, with its processes helps companies like his, Staargaard said.

The future of the car business will depend on separate companies being on the same page when developing complicated vehicles that use more computer code than today's F-15 fighter, he said. "We're the Marines on the beach," Staargaard said. "We're educating the OEMs on just what can be done."

Michael LaLande, director of Transportation and Mobility for Dassault Systemes, said reaching a target of zero defects means starting at the beginning of the design process.

It's now possible to create 3D computer constructs that can accurately show how parts and vehicles will perform in real life without having to build expensive prototypes. That's done by all parties being connected at every stage of production. Dassault specializes in that, LaLande said.

By being connected in real time, OEMs and suppliers can communicate quickly and get the turnaround times they need to stay competitive in a global market that is constantly introducing new players. That's the future and it's here now, said LaLande.

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