

Garage Unlimited opens doors for collectors, racing enthusiasts



Ralph Borelli competes in the Historic Stock Car group in the Maxwell House 1992 Ford Thunderbird that NASCAR driver Sterling Marlin won the pole with at the 1992 Daytona 500. T.M. Hill — Contributed

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SALINAS >> Ralph Borelli has successfully combined real estate and racing.

Borelli parlayed the family's real estate business that began in 1957 into a development company that shares his passion for racing. That passion has resulted in an automotive condominiums complex located just north of the raceway in Ryan Ranch.

"We were fortunate enough to partner with the raceway to have our Garage Unlimited development the official storage solution for Mazda Raceway," Borelli said. "I needed a place to store and work on my car, and I thought there might be others like me."

Borelli started with Club Auto Sport in San Jose. His grand opening for Garage Unlimited of Monterey was Thursday night.

"Most business professionals entertain their clients with a round of golf or a nice dinner," he said. "I do it with a race event or a track day."

This weekend he's part of the Historic Stock Car division in the Spring Classic at Mazda Raceway. Borelli is driving a 1991 Ford Thunderbird, No. 22. It's the Maxwell House-sponsored car that campaigned in the Winston Cup series between 1991-93.

"This car qualified on pole position for the 1992 Daytona 500," Borelli said. "It is one of a small group of super speedway cars that were converted to road race cars. The car competed for three years in Winston Cup and then was raced in the ARCA Series until 1999."

The car was originally owned by Junior Johnson and was driven by Sterling Marlin. Borelli purchased the car in '99 and had it restored by Fast-Lap restorations out of Charlotte, N.C.

"I've been campaigning the car since '99, Borelli said. "This car has been driven competitively without a break since 1991. In relative terms, the car is cheap to buy but expensive to maintain."

The World Sportscar Challenge cars and LeMans Prototypes between 1983 and 2007 take on the Can-Am cars of the 1966 to 1972 era in one-hour endurance race as the final event Saturday afternoon.

The Audi R8 LMP driven by Travis Engen of Weston, Conn., will challenge the Porsche 962 driven by Michael Sweeney Sr. of Carmel.

The Can-Am contingent includes Dan Gallucci of Danville driving a Lola 163 and Greg Mitchell of Coos Bay, Ore., driving the 1969 Lola T163.

David Gunn of New London, N.H., is part of the McLaren contingent driving a 1971 M8E. Nick Colonna of Palos Verdes brings a 1970 McLaren M8C to the party and Eric Haga of Renton, Wash., will use the 1965 McLaren MK1A. It's one of the small block versions from the initial start of the series.

Formula One, historic stock cars, Trans-Am, Formula Atlantic, Formula B, Under Two 2.5-litre Trans-Am and Production GT cars will each have a pair of races Saturday afternoon.