

POLE POSITION

Pay Comes Early For Joe Leonard

Eighteen years ago, Joe Leonard was doing wheelies on a motorbike when he slipped and went into a 17-day sleep. The two-time national motorcycle champ, who almost lost his life when the front wheel dropped off his motorbike in the middle of a wheelie and sent him into the long coma, is \$20,000 richer and the holder of both the one lap (171.953) and four-lap (171.559) qualifying records at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

"This is something I've always dreamed of," he says with his crooked grin and soft voice. "I've listened to Indianapolis races since I was 7 years old and this has to be the most satisfying achievement I've ever had in automobile racing."

"But this is only part of the battle—and I'm not about to forget it. I've always felt that to truly win a

race you've got to go out and get the pole spot, then outrun everyone else to the flag. So I've got 200 laps to go."

A year ago, Leonard, driving a piston-driven racer, was one of the most vocal opponents of the STP turbo-car with which Parnelli Jones almost won the 500-mile race.

"I said what I thought then, that the turbine was a superior machine. Nobody wanted to believe me and instead of fighting city hall, I joined 'em. It's a tribute to Andy Granatelli that he came up to me last month in California and shook my hand and said he respected my taking a stand I really believed in."

"Like everyone else, I didn't know what to expect from the turbines this year. I came here with a car I felt would have a good chance at winning the pole. But it didn't work out. I was scaring myself going 164 in that car."

"And when Parnelli Jones and Vel Miletich helped me get a ride in one of the STP turbines, I knew this was my chance. The car is simply fantastic. I'd like to take it to Milwaukee next month and run it. I think I'd put it on the pole and run away from everyone on that mile track."

It's hard for a man of Joe's honesty to look at the fastest qualifying run any speedway buff ever dreamed of and be a bit disappointed. But Leonard is.

"If I had run as many laps in this No. 60 car as I did in the No. 40, I think I could have picked up another two miles an hour. I could not have had more than 30 laps in all with the car before qualifying."

"Things didn't go just the way I had hoped in qualifying, either. I wanted to go out early before the track got slippery and the wind came up. When I did go out the first time, I guess I was running over 171 but someone had dumped oil on the turns and it was slippery."

"Knowing that between 4 and 6 p.m. you pick up at least a mile an hour, we decided to wait for then."

"I was back in the garage and someone came in and said it was clouding up and the weatherman said a storm was coming in so we scooted right out and lined up for our attempt."

"After being shut up in a room for awhile, I like to go three or four laps to get my reflexes reoriented. This is what I had planned to do, take three or four laps, then come in get in line and qualify."

"There wasn't time for this so I took two warmup laps before taking the flag. Andy Granatelli said I was going 173 the lap before I took the flag."

"I'm like everyone else in this business, I guess. The harder you press, the slower you go and there's no doubt I was pressing myself to go as fast as I could—and I didn't."

JOE LEONARD

Indy 500 Qualifiers

FIRST ROW

Joe Leonard (Car 60), STP Oil Treatment Spc., Lotus Turbine.
Graham Hill (Car 70), STP Oil Treatment Spc., Lotus Turbine.
Bobby Unser (Car 3), Rislone Spc., Eagle Turbo Offy.

SECOND ROW

Mario Andretti (Car 2), Overseas Nat. Airlines Spc., Hawk Turbo Ford.
Lloyd Ruby (Car 25), Gene White Spc., Mongoose Turbo Ford.
Al Unser (Car 24), Retzoff Chemical Spc., Lotus Turbo Ford.

THIRD ROW

Roger McCluskey (Car 8), G. C. Murphy Spc., Eagle Turbo Offy.
A. J. Foyt (Car 1), Sheraton Thompson Spc., Coyote Ford.
Gordon Johncock (Car 4), Gilmore Broadcasting Spc., Gerhardt Turbo Offy.

FOURTH ROW

Dan Gurney (Car 48), Olsonite Harvey Alum. Spc., Eagle Gurney Ford.
Art Pollard (Car 20), STP Thermo King Spc., Lotus Turbine.
Wally Dallenbach (Car 54), Valvoline Spc., Finley Turbo Offy.

FIFTH ROW

Jim McElreath (Car 82), Jim Greer Spc., Coyote Ford.
Jim Malloy (Car 27), Jim Robbins Spc., Vollstedt Turbo Ford.
Jerry Grant (Car 78), Bardahl Spc., Eagle Turbo Ford.

SIXTH ROW

Jochen Rindt (Car No. 35) Graham Spc., Repro.
Mel Kenyon (Car No. 15) Thermo King Spc., Turbocharged Offy.
Bud Tingstad (Car No. 10) Federal Eng. Spc. Turbocharged Offy.

SEVENTH ROW

Ronnie Bucknum (Car No. 45) Eagle Ford.
Denis Hulme (Car No. 42) Freidkin Enterprises Spc., Ford.
John Rueterford (Car No. 18) Ford

EIGHTH ROW

Gary Bettenhausen (Car No. 11) Thermo King Spc., Turbocharged Offy.
Bill Vukovich (Car No. 98) Agajanian, Turbocharged Offy.
Bob Veith (Car No. 16) Gerhardt Spc., Turbocharged Offy.

NINTH ROW

Bobby Grim (Car No. 6) Rislone Spc., Turbocharged Offy.
Ronnie Duman (Car No. 59) Turbocharged Offy.
Mike Mosley (Car No. 90) Turbocharged Offy.

TENTH ROW

Carl Williams (Car No. 84) Turbocharged Ford.
George Snider (Car No. 29) Vel's Parnelli Jones Ford.
Jim Hurtubise (Car No. 56) Turbocharged Offy.

ELEVENTH ROW

Sam Sessions (Car No. 94) Turbocharged Offy.
Arnie Knepper (Car No. 21) Turbocharged Ford.
Larry Dickson (Car No. 64) Ford.

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