

Reflections of John Bishop, ex-SCCA official on ARRC (Runoffs)

Jan,

The SCCA board decided to join the international motorsports world in mid-1961. It didn't take a brain surgeon to foresee that the established system of determining a national champion in each class would have to change. Beginning in 1962 we spent a good deal of energy securing the professional events pioneered by USAC, the USGP at Watkins Glen and the FIA makes endurance championship events like Sebring and including new ones at Daytona, Watkins Glen and Bridgehampton. In 1963 we set up the US Road Racing Championship with just two classes of "modified" cars. It was obviously successful in promotional terms and welcomed by the track owners and promoters. However, it left the old championship looking kind of peaked, since the best teams gravitated to the new professional series.

A few years prior to all this, the SCCA changed the method for classifying production cars to a performance formula instead of the traditional engine displacement system. This put the Porsche Carrera, Corvette and Ferrari Berlinetta in the same class. Some felt that this was a sad step towards socialization. It did create a heap more competitiveness, though, and with some give and take to hone the rules, was welcomed generally.

With this precedent and the inevitable weakening quality of the entry lists in national amateur events, it seemed logical to open up the title chase even further by establishing divisional club (amateur) champions followed by a year-end national runoff. Daytona and Riverside provided the venues for rotating this event every other year. I think it was sometime in early 1969 that Bill France was passing through an airport, bought a paper and read that SCCA had decided to hold the annual championship runoff at Road Atlanta for a number of years.

I was gone by early 1969 and so I can't help you much with the rationale for this change. Nor can I fathom why SCCA would announce such an important decision without any discussion or by-your-leave with the tracks which had stepped up to the plate to promote the runoff for several seasons.

Hope this helps some,

Cordially, JOHN  
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