

Two things traditionally have kept motor-racing the second top banana among spectator sports in the United States: (1) regionalism, as in big-time stock car racing, and (2) failure of the public to identify the race car with the family sedan, as in modified sports car racing or Indy.

Then along came the Sports Car Club of America with a nifty little series of professional road races for "sedans" from coast to coast — "The Trans-American Sedan Championship" — and tradition was shattered.

In the first place, the series was run on circuits in Florida, Missouri, New Hampshire, Virginia, Maryland, Texas and California. And, second, the leading contenders for overall honors were readily recognizable cars — Mustangs, Barracudas and Darts. Cars are limited to 305-cubic-inch displacement and a wheelbase of less than 116 inches.

The potential for this kind of automobile racing was recognized quite early in the season by Keith Bryar, the impressario of Bryar Motorsports Park in Loudon, N.H., who billed his event as "International Late Model Stock Car Racing." This billing wasn't really lived-up-to by the T/A series until a few weeks later at Virginia International Raceway, Danville, Va., when a bunch of NASCAR super-stars showed up as drivers: Curtis Turner in Mustang, Richard Petty in Barracuda, Davey Pearson in Dart, and Wendell Scott in Mustang. Even then, the results were disappointing, as all the "good old boys" failed to finish.

Despite this failure, the handwriting was clearly on the wall. Old sports car pro Bob Johnson went on to win the championship in the over-2-liter division for Ford's Mustang; then, in November, the bombshell everyone had been waiting for was exploded.

The bomber was Leo C. Beebe, the man who led Ford to their 1-2-3 victory at Le Mans last year and then moved to Lincoln-Mercury, where the Cougar was to be unleashed.

"If you're not in automobile racing, you're not in the automobile business, and we're in the automobile business right up to our ears," said Beebe.

He announced that Mercury would campaign a team of Mercury Cougars prepared for competition by Bud Moore Engineering of Spartanburg, S.C.

Dan Gurney is the captain of the Mercury Team, and the lead driver will be Parnelli Jones. A third driver named to this new team for the Trans-American series was veteran sports car star Ed Leslie of Carmel, Calif.

It is known that Shelby American plans to campaign the Mustang again in 1967, and that Camaros will be run by experts such as sports car racing's Roger Penske, and NASCAR's Bobby Allison. Innes Ireland, the Formula 1 star, is expected to mount a Camaro, also. And Chrysler's "Team Starfish" certainly will be back with its Barracudas. Dodge Division can be expected to return Darts to the circuit, and rumor has it that American Motors may get into racing with a team of Rebels. In short, the 1967 Trans-American Sedan Championship series is shaping up to be the greatest crowd pleaser in the history of American competition.

The SCCA's schedule of races is not yet firmly established, but chances are there will be at least 10 races, starting with a 300-miler at Daytona on February 3, and 4-hours at Sebring on March 31.

With almost the total geography of the North American continent to be covered by the series, and with the leading drivers from NASCAR, USAC, SCCA and the Grand Prix circuit at the helm of "sedans," there shouldn't be any shortage of spectators. In fact, the day may soon be at hand, when sedan racing will be the biggest spectator draw in motorsports competition, as it is in Europe, South America and Australia.

And the best part of it all is that sedan racing combines the sophistication and beauty of modified sports car racing with the genuine gutsiness and pizzazz of stock car racing. All of this, and more, with race cars that clearly can be identified as kin to Sister Kate's.

COUGAR GOES RACING

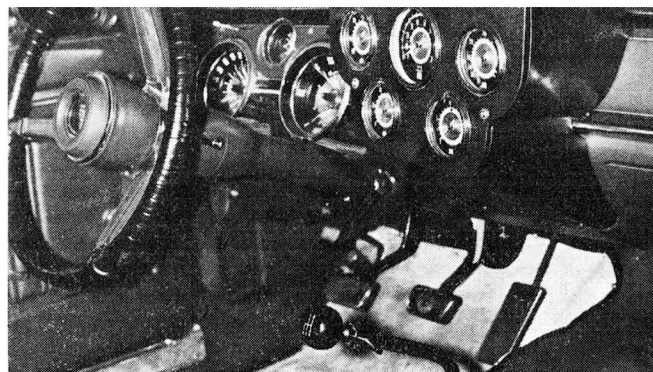
A PRIDE OF FACTORY CATS WILL PROWL ON THE EXPANDED 1967 TRANS-AMERICAN SEDAN CIRCUIT



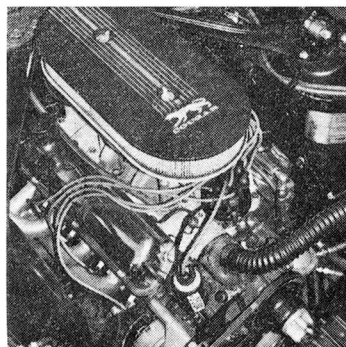
Homologated fender flaring is helpful to house ever-widening tires used on Trans-American circuit.

Bucket design is optional but there must be two. The rest of the interior except for side panels can be and is cleanly gutted.

PHOTOS BY BOB D'OLIVO



Direct-reading instruments include (l. to r.) transmission oil temperature, tach, engine oil temperature, oil/fuel pressures.



Spring-tower strut installation is sanitary, prevents camber change under stress conditions.



37-gallon fuel tank is assured of ambient pressure by this extra-large vent.

How the Mercury team converts a Cougar to "Group Two" configuration for Trans-American Sedan Racing...

■ Equipment installed by factory at extra cost

■ Equipment added by team after delivery

Direct-reading tach, oil temperature,
oil pressure, water temperature, ammeter
and transmission temperature gauges

Chrome-moly strut between spring
towers to prevent camber change

Group Two 289-cu.-in. engine

Performance cam; 2 Holley 4-barrel
carburetors; steel-tube headers;
high-performance distributor;
aluminum intake manifold;
lightweight, ported iron heads;
10.5:1 compression ratio or higher

Heavy-duty radiator

Flip shields retained
to protect headlights

Adjustable front strut
to facilitate camber settings

Safety pins in hood and deck lid

High-capacity performance oil filter

Disc front brakes

Heavy-duty stabilizer

Heavy-duty Autolite shock absorbers

Choice of 5.5-in. to 8-in. rims
with racing tires

Rear seats and floor units removed

Roll bar at back edge of seats

Glass hold-downs on windshield
and rear window

2 differential cooling vents
at leading edge of trunk lid

Ratchet-type locking differential
with 2.75 to 4.71 ratios, depending
upon circuit; 9-in. ring gear

37-gal. fuel tank with mechanical
and electric pumps

Traction bars

2.5-in. x 10-in. rear drums
with metallic linings

Special left-door latch for maximum
security in roll-over

Dual straight pipes exhausting
forward of rear wheels

Military aircraft-type belts and
shoulder harness with inertia reel

Floor-shifted production 4-speed
Borg-Warner or FoMoCo transmission
with single-disc clutch

16:1 mechanical steering

