



2004 Cannonball One Lap of America

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2004 Cannonball One Lap of America:

Adam and "The Bachelor" Andrew Firestone among four Bridgestone Tire entries

By Vince Bodiford

Automotive Editor

Overall Champion, 1994 One Lap of America

PIKES PEAK INTERNATIONAL RACEWAY, Fountain, Colo. - Brock Yates' original Cannonball Run movies were packed with non-stop craziness, fast cars and stars. Make no mistake - the real deal that evolved from those blockbuster films - The Tire Rack Cannonball One Lap of America presented by Car and Driver - is not far from those movies and your wildest imagination.



The event has seen superstar drivers like Price Cobb, Hurley Haywood, David Murray and others in the field, along with top auto writers such as Automobile magazine editor Jean Jennings, Car and Driver editor Tony Swan, and others, myself included. The big names make for great entertainment, but this event is really about the Average Joe - the passionate motorsports fan who happens to have a very fast car in the garage and the few thousand bucks it takes to participate in this event. It's been rightly described as an entire racing season crammed into one week.

The Cannonball One Lap of America is no walk in the park. Car manufacturers have been profoundly embarrassed by their factory entries being beaten badly by low budget privateers. It's a recipe for drama and intrigue - mixing the field with varying classes of cars and driving talent and budgets. The most successful factory entries have been those of Porsche, Corvette and Dodge's Viper. Without a doubt - it's a grueling test of strategy, endurance of both man and machine, and talent. The margin for error is zip. This event is about the whole package - car, driver, talent, power, tires, and set-up. This is an all-out, no-holes barred shoot out - don't bring a knife to this gunfight.



Overall Championship in 1994 for the factory entry of Porsche and Bridgestone Tire, co-driving with World Champion driver Price Cobb. Returning in 2000, I drove the factory Saab 9-3 Viggen with co-driver Dave Young to a respectable Top Ten class finish - after blowing the engine up at Road Atlanta - a

trick that would have had any other competitor heading home, much less coughing up a Top Ten finish for the factory. (<http://www.theweekenddrive.com/reviews/onelap/onelap.html>)

Both trials were daunting and some of the hardest driving I have ever done - but I will likely repeat an appearance, as soon as next year.

Having carried the banner of victory for Bridgestone, I have a special interest in the four Bridgestone-supported entries in the 2004 event.

The Bridgestone Presents The Champ Car World Series Powered by Ford entry is a 2003 Ford Focus SVT and outfitted with ultra-high performance Bridgestone Potenza S-03 Pole Position tires. The car is driven by Champ Car Pace Car Team veteran Kelly Williams of Toronto, Ontario Canada and Bridgestone Field Support Manager Mike Swope.

Andrew and Adam Firestone, great-grandsons of Harvey S. Firestone, who founded the Firestone Tire & Rubber Company in Akron, Ohio, in 1900, are competing in a 2004 Subaru WRX STi. The car is outfitted with Bridgestone/Firestone Vehicle System's PraxisTM system, an aftermarket suspension system that allows the driver to control performance. Also participating in the 2004 One Lap competition using the Praxis system are Blake Fuller of Braille Auto Development and Mike Potter of Team Racing for the Children.



A really hot system is the Praxis system, the first and only aftermarket suspension system that allows the driver to control performance - on the road or at the track - without the need for tools or time in the shop. Multi-Rate Air-Spring technology, coupled with the IntellirideTM control-system and externally-adjustable monotube dampers supplied by H&R Springs allow the driver to rapidly select the ride-height, spring-rate and damping. Once installed, a simple touch of a cockpit mounted control button and damper adjustment at each corner places the vehicle into one of three fully-tuned operating modes: touring, sport or track. It's just the kind of set-up that is perfect for this type of driving.



and Andrew Firestone at Pike Peak raceway for the time trials there, and few teams can compare to this pair of brothers and their passion for the event, their car and systems, and tires. Outfitted with an array of gadgets, and a painted-to-match Let's Go Aero trailer, the Firestone brothers quickly dissolve any notion that their entry is all Hollywood. Their level of commitment and hard work is purely professional, with a refreshing zest for the event and its nostalgia.

"This is America, this event. It's Route 66, it's that long summer vacation road trip you took when you were a kid, it's our love affair with the automobile and the open road, our love of racing, it's Freedom, all wrapped up into one," Andrew Firestone told us. Andrew became widely known for an appearance on the reality television show The Bachelor. But if you didn't know that about him, you'd still come away with the same opinion about him and his brother Adam as I did - that these guys are pure Firestone, and they are genuine in their passion for the same tires that bear their own name, in raised white letters.

The Firestone brothers now make wine in the hills of California near Santa Barbara. Just like all the other competitors, they make their living somewhere else, doing something other than racing. But it's the event, and the call of the open road, that draw fans and competitors to the Cannonball.

The 21st running of the Cannonball One Lap of America runs April 30 through May 8. Fans can follow the progress of Adam and Andrew Firestone at www.firestoneonelap.com, and comprehensive event information can be found at www.onelapofamerica.com.

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