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Rose Cup Follow Up

Written by [Nick Daschel](#)font size _ _ _ [Print](#)

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Timing is everything, or at least it was Sunday for Milwaukie's Matt Crandall when he won the 50th edition of the Rose Cup Races at Portland International Raceway.

Driving a rocket ship throughout the 45-minute race, Crandall piloted his Ford Mustang to a comfortable win over Portland's Brian Richards. Getting back to the winner's circle was another matter. Crandall ran out of gas on PIR's backstretch, less than 30 seconds after taking the checkered flag.

"It was embarrassing," Crandall said, "but cool."

Crandall, 41, became serious during the past year about winning the Rose Cup, the longest-running amateur race west of the Mississippi River. A Rose Cup regular driving a lesser-powered GT2 model, Crandall bumped himself up to a Mustang GT1 this year, though initially it had little to do with improving his chances to win.

Last year's Rose Cup was a race run with Trans Ams, a model Crandall ultimately prefers. Driving a GT1 gets him closer to that goal.

"I got the bug bad," Crandall said of the Trans Am. "I had to have one of those cars." [rose2x14jpeg.JPG](#) Motoya Nakamura/The Oregonian Matt Crandall's Mustang GT1 speeds around Portland International Raceway. He led on all but two of the 33 laps.

Sunday proved to be a good launching pad. Crandall won the pole for this year's 27-car race, which included two former champions in Monte Shelton and Richards. Then he went out and led all but two of the race's 33 1.977-mile laps.

The Rose Cup became Crandall's to lose when teammate Nick Fluge, who qualified second with a Shelby GT Mustang, dropped out after nine laps with a power-steering problem.

Fluge briefly took the lead after passing Crandall on the Festival Curves. But it was a short-lived lead for



Fluge when a leak developed in the power-steering line.

Fluge, who recently began racing cars, took the bad news in stride.

"I felt it would have been tough for Matt to get by us, but you periodically have problems in racing, so that's how it goes," Fluge said.

Crandall had a comfortable lead the rest of the way, but never felt like he had first place bagged until taking the checkered flag.

"On these cars, everything falls apart. I was up all night worrying about what was going to break," Crandall said.



The one thing Crandall didn't sweat was the gas. Crandall said he was unaware that he was running on fumes during the final lap.

Richards, who won the 1993 and 1994 races, thought differently. He said cars with powerful engines like Crandall's drink gasoline. Richard thought his Chevrolet Camaro with an engine of 600 horsepower -- about 70 percent the horsepower of Crandall -- might have a chance if fuel mileage became an issue.

"Or if those first two take each other out," Richards said, laughing.

Sunday's race was a welcome back of sorts for Richards, in more ways than one. The last time he raced in the Rose Cup was 1994. Richards drove the same car he used to win the 1993 and 1994 races.

Shortly after climbing out of the Camaro in 1994, Richards figured he was all but done with racing. It was getting too expensive, plus there were family priorities. His Camaro sat in a storage facility near Portland International Airport. It had become a place for friends and family to store their junk.

"I hadn't moved it in 15 years," Richards said. "Not even an inch."

Richards began driving again in 2008, renting a much smaller Mazda Miata for races. It wasn't like piloting a Camaro, but he said it got him acclimated to racing again. Then last summer, Richards told everyone to get their stuff out of his Camaro; it was time to go racing again.

The Rose Cup was the first race back for Richards in his old Camaro. He ended up narrowly ahead of Rob Holden of Woodinville for second place.

"It's a total win for us," Richards said.

-- Nick Daschel

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