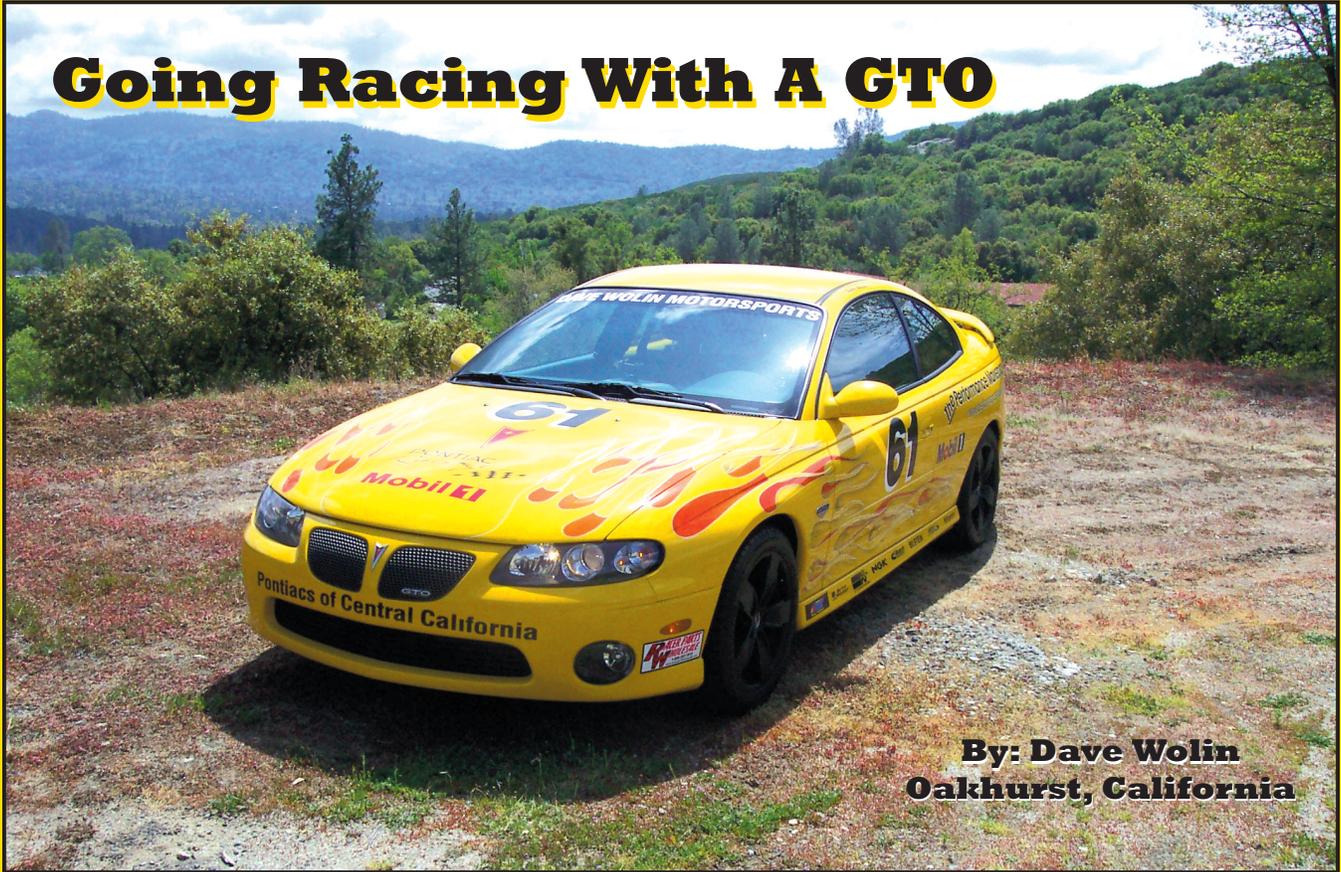


Going Racing With A GTO



**By: Dave Wolin
Oakhurst, California**

Here I was, innocently minding my own business, walking up and down the aisles at the SEMA Show in Las Vegas. For those of you unfamiliar with the SEMA Show, it's the largest speed equipment, performance, and accessory show in the world (and the largest convention in Las Vegas) with over 130,000 attendees.

An old acquaintance of mine stopped me in an aisle and we discussed all that happened since we last saw each other; who died, who got divorced, who's racing what, and so on. It turned out that he's now a marketing guy at Pontiac, looking for ways to sell the new GTO. And here I was, looking for something to race.

To make a long story short, we decided to take a '04 GTO (it's more aerodynamic than the '05 and has a 5.7 liter motor, needed to meet some class rules) and go where we could generate the most exposure for the buck, open road racing. A well kept secret in the racing world, open road racing let's you drive flat out down a public highway (closed at the time) for distances ranging from 50 to 150 miles. To keep state governments and insurance companies happy, there are classes in increments from 50 to 170 mph, plus an unlimited category,

and the goal is to average as close as possible to the class speed you pick. You get to bring a navigator; all important since these roads are not necessarily straight. Most feature 10 mile long straights punctuated by 100 mph maximum corners. The navigator, in this case my wife, is glad to participate. After years of sweltering in the pits while I had fun on the race track, she now is in charge, telling me to go faster, brake later, or otherwise improve my driving skills.

Events range from the Big Bend Open Road Race in Fort Stockton, TX (www.bbrr.com) to events in Nevada put on by a Las Vegas race organizer (www.openroadracing.com) to Western Nebraska's Sandhills Open Road Race (www.sorcrace.com), put on by the local community. There's also the Bonneville Salt Flats, only a three mile attempt to reach top speed, and some California Dry Lake events, really a mile and a half drag race.

Our GTO, really a Australian built Holden Monaro in disguise, is well suited to this task with a 350 horse power aluminum Corvette LS-1 under the hood, independent rear suspension, and a top speed of 170+ in Australian trim (U.S. computers limit top speed to

about 155 mph, an easy tweak to modify).

First and most important, was the addition of necessary safety equipment. We had Autopower of San Diego, CA build us a roll bar, replacing the back seat, added racing seat belts and harnesses and put in a Garmin GPS, needed to make sure we were near our selected average speed. An extensive nut and bolt check (don't trust anyone to put your car together for over 100 mph driving, unless they're on a NASCAR team), fluid changes, and a front and rear alignment completed the initial race preparation. Then Finishline in Fresno, CA put on the all important flame paint job, adding at least 10 mph to the top speed.

Next stop was a race track; just for some high speed testing. We had managed to put around 1000 miles on the car, just breaking it in, then changed all the fluids over to Mobil Synthetic Oils and changed the brake fluid to racing quality Lockheed AP600. New sponsors Mobil 1 and Racer Parts Wholesale (www.racerpartswholesale.com) have been a great help.

Buttonwillow Raceway, in central California, had a open day available, so
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we headed on down there to see how fast this car really was. And what a surprise. We managed to knock off consistent 13.3s and 105 mph in the quarter, not bad for a factory stock stick shift 3700 lb. car. On the road course we quickly burned the tires down to nothing but were able to see 131 mph at the end of the

long straight. Since the car felt good at 130+, we're ready for the first event, the above mentioned Fort Stockton, TX Big Bend Open Road Race. More later.

For additional information about this project, feel free to contact Dave Wolin at ceo@davewolin.com or call: (559) 658-2281.

For a new assortment of photos, take a look at <http://www.davewolin.com/pontiac.htm>



A note about the author— Dave Wolin has a background of over 35 years in professional racing, operating factory racing programs for manufacturers such as Ford, Mazda, Mitsubishi, and Kia. His cars have won numerous professional racing championships as well as winning the Baja 1000 Off Road Race and Pikes Peak Hillclimb. He has been awarded SCCA's "Jim Cook Trophy" for professionalism in racing and the Motorsports Press Association "Professional of the Year" award. In addition to currently operating this program for Pontiac, Dave has a '30 Ford C-Gasser, a Bricklin, a Cord, and manufactures a Lotus 7 type kit car. He resides in Oakhurst, California, near Yosemite National Park.