

2008 Pikes Peak International Hill Climb

Rally Advertising LLC Press Release

In a treacherous day on the mountain that saw almost one quarter of the field fail to finish, the team of David & Allison Kern managed to blaze their way to the top in 11:48.434 seconds, fast enough to win the AWD Time Attack class by nearly 40 seconds and beat the existing class record by more than a minute. The Kern's also grabbed a 5th place finish out of the 65 cars that entered. Their Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution IX was the fastest 'full frame' car to make it to the top, with the only four cars to beat it being specially built tube-frame cars, piloted by PPIHC veterans Nobuhiro Tajima, Paul Dallenbach, and Clint & Leonard Vahsholtz.



Photo by Mitch McKee



Perseverance pays off – while the build up of the Kern's Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution IX took place over the last nine months, the car first made it into 'Pikes Peak trim' just days before the 86th running of the Pikes Peak International Hillclimb. The #9 Evolution had several shakedown races this spring and the car performed flawlessly at each and every one, though all were on dirt surfaces. The fresh tarmac at the PPIHC proved to be a bit tougher on the drivetrain, but the team assisted by Salta Motorsports & Ace Transmission bounced back quickly and managed to take fast time in each practice section.

July 16th Day 1 practice had the Time Attack class running the stretch from Glen Cove to Devils Playground. The demands of the PPIHC reared its ugly head on this 2 mile section that is literally nothing but hairpins, and tight ones at that. Lots of elevation gain, and lots of stress on the drivetrain.

The noises from the transmission started on the first hairpin of the first run, but we decided to push on realizing that we only had a few shots to master this stretch of road. On the first hairpin right of our 3rd run, something let go, and the car could no longer move under its own power. We ended up the day with a best of 2:26, which was good enough for top spot in Time Attack AWD.

After we got off the hill, I headed over to Ace Transmissions with our service crew from Salta Motorsports. The guys immediately dove into the project and within minutes we had identified a problem in the transfer carrier. Within an hour parts were spread across the ground and we had the transfer case out, revealing the broken front differential. Many phone calls later to shops across the country and we tracked down a used transfer case on the other side of Colorado Springs that had a bad ring & pinion. We managed to piece together a used but functional unit and had the car running up and down the road by 8pm.



July 17th Day 2 saw the team practicing on the section from Devil's Playground to the summit, and this part of the road is all dirt. This section has some very high speed sections with tons of exposure. If you go off here, its not good - think sharp rocks opening up a car like a can-opener. We started out with a cautious first run and ramped up the speed as the day went on, now confident

that the transmission repairs were successful. Our aerodynamic package from DHP Composites proved to be effective, allowing us to push the car harder in the high speed sweeping corners. Our AMS rally brake setup was flawless, providing us all the stopping power we needed, and the Ohlins suspension also performed great, soaking up the rough road encountered from Boulder Park to the summit. We ended up leading the class by ~6 seconds over rally veteran Peter Workum in a STi with a time of 3:25.

July 18th Day 3 of practice had us running the lower portion of the mountain, from the start line to Glen Cove. We only got 3 qualifying runs due to a few mechanical DNFs, and a few self imposed DNFs (crashes). On the first run I pushed pretty hard just to see where we'd end up. After getting down to the bottom, only one other driver bested our time. I was a bit surprised and determined to turn up the wick on run #2. Then, about 1/2 hour later at the top of run 2, I heard that Rhys Millen was driving the car on that run so the time wouldn't be official. Runs 2 & 3 saw us dropping more time by pushing deeper into the corners, and I still think I've left some time out on the course. We ended up the top qualifier with a 5:16, ~6.5 seconds up on Kevin Jones in the Crawford prepped Subaru Impreza WRX STi.



be every bit as crowded this year. Thanks to the Wright Group, we were able to have access to a huge party bus with a big-screen tv mounted to the outside. We had in-car footage from the three days running most of the night, and had plenty of fans pause to watch a run.



Photo by Bryan Hoit



Our finishing position earned the team an invite to Fan Fest as Time Attack AWD fast qualifier, where we were able to display the Evo with the other top qualifiers. Fan Fest is a huge block party in Colorado Spring's bar district that saw about 40,000 attendees last year, and looked to

July 20th Race Day – Hot and dry best describe the conditions on race day which caused markedly different road conditions from the three days of practice. This caught out many teams, including our own, as we mis-calculated the amount the tire pressures would change. By the Picnic Grounds it was apparent that we had left too much air in the tires, and grip on the pavement was decreasing. At the first split we were down by a couple tenths of a second to Kevin Jones, but by the second split at Glen Cove we had built up a 9 second lead, and managed to shave another 2 seconds off our qualifying time, despite the road conditions being worse. By the time we hit the pavement above Glen Cove, it was apparent that the rear tires were quite overinflated, as power-on at each corner exit was



due to some new drainage ditches, so we had to be very careful not to get too close to the edges. A quick snap of the steering wheel and a heavy dose of the throttle after heading through Olympic corner, and we passed the checkered flag sideways. A few minutes later we got word of our time, 11:48.434 seconds, which was good enough for 1st in class and a new Time Attack AWD record!

We were thrilled with the 1st place result, but had expected a better time based on our qualifying runs. After talking with the few drivers that beat us, we found that they too were 20-30 seconds off their pace from 2007. So, we are already gearing up for a return to the 2009 PPIHC with a faster version of our Evo, with hopes of battling it out for another class win and lowering the record.

rewarded with a fair bit of “tail-out” driving. By the time we reached the dirt at Devils Playground, the water temps had started to climb. We backed off a bit, short shifting the car until we hit Bottomless Pit, by which time the temps were back to normal. From there to the summit, we pushed as hard as the road would allow, but it was dry-slicked, and there really wasn't much grip available. The section from Cog Cut to the summit is much narrower than in years past



Photo by Michael Latulip

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Photo sequence
by Bob Campbell



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