



equipment; not worn more than 25 percent from new condition and not shaved"? RUF will deliver a Porsche with slicks, Foubare said. He didn't have TARIs, and Mosler had offered to let the Porsche run on slicks that morning. Consulier wasn't buying.

"At that point I said, 'What the heck, I'll just do this for Porsche,' and I ran all out on the slicks," Foubare said.

And he went faster than the Consulier. The Consulier people were quick to point out that Foubare was not in the contest.

Meanwhile, Peter Farrell was having doubts of his own. Just what was all that stuff in the cockpit of the Consulier anyway? Adjustable shocks? Electronic boost control? And where'd they get those tires?

"The issue of tires needs to be clarified," Farrell told Mosler Saturday afternoon. "As does the issue of catalytic converters."

Farrell meant the inspection of catalytic converter cores to verify there was one in each car. While Consulier reserved the right to inspect any Challenge car, the Challengers did not share a reciprocal right.

Nonetheless, the mood was jovial. "Maybe if Mazda has a \$100,000 Challenge we'll invite you," Farrell joked. Conviviality aside, the technical issues were never clearly dealt with.

Even so, Farrell admitted his RX-7 was not as quick as the Consulier on the Sebring circuit. While the RX-7 had 255 hp, it weighed 2862 pounds. Tires might have helped, but not enough to win the Challenge.

"You guys can do 1:21s and I can do 1:23s," Farrell said Saturday afternoon. It was as simple as that.

As the Saturday sessions wound to a close, even the amateurs who were out for a fun weekend questioned what was going on.

"I haven't seen any times, any rules or anything," Velardo said as his Diablo was being loaded back on the trailer Saturday night. "I mean, we're talking \$100,000 here; you'd think they'd at least tell you what was going on."

The only time Velardo officially got for the day was a 1:39, though he says he was hand timed by a crew member at 1:29.

"I know what we'll do," Velardo joked, "We'll take 'em to New York and have 'The Diablo Challenge,' and I'll make the rules."

On Sunday morning, Consulier announced more changes. While times from Saturday would be counted, the one-hour timed lapping period scheduled for the Challenge would be split into two half-hour segments. The first segment was reserved for cars going for the \$100,000. The second half-hour session would be for those cars plus several "field" cars Consulier had invited. That second half hour would be mighty crowded.

The first 15 minutes or so of the half-hour Challenge run was used for an official photo of the cars on the track, followed by a parade lap. In addition to the five cars technically going for the prize, Consulier had inexplicably allowed Foubare's RUF and a heretofore unknown Corvette Challenge car on the track at the same time. On Sebring's two-mile course, traffic makes slower lap times. When the parade came around for the official start, Phillip ducked into the pits, letting the field fly past in a knot.

In the timing and scoring trailer next to the hairpin, the SCCA timers hired for the event went to work using a standard TAG-Heuer continuous-time system.

On the course, traffic was becoming a problem. After Phillip disappeared, the order was RUF, RX-7, Corvette, Porsche, Porsche, NSX and Diablo.

While the RUF pulled easily from the pack, the Corvette had enough horsepower to pass the Mazda at the end of the long straight. But the Vette overshot the hairpin, slid three wheels into the dirt and powered back onto the track—right in front of the RX-7. Farrell had to slow to avoid hitting it. Since the timing lights are just after the hairpin, two of Farrell's laps were ruined in the process. Thereafter, Farrell found himself stuck behind the Corvette, which was faster on the straights but couldn't handle the turns as well as the RX-7.

The NSX and one of the Porsche Turbos had similar problems; Foubare was passing everything he got near; and Phillip was bidding his time in the pits.



Peter Farrell (top right) brought a new RX-7 (above) courtesy of Mazda. Hospitality (top left) flowed



Rudy Hernandez, a Miami psychiatrist, rolled out one of the two Porsche Turbos at the Challenge

"I just waited two or three laps until I saw the track was clear and then I went out," Phillip said.

Good strategy. He turned his 1:20.089 shortly thereafter. Foubare did a 1:19.648 in the same session, but remember, it didn't count.

After the photos and parade lap, the official Challenge run had lasted only 12 minutes. The second half hour was too crowded to accomplish any competitive times. For all intents and purposes, the event was over.

For the most part, the "Challengers" seemed unruffled as they loaded their cars onto trailers or fired them up for the drive home. They'd gotten exactly what they came for: an enjoyable weekend at a very nice track with an amicable host.

But nothing had actually been proven. What was needed was drivers of the same ability, riding on a mutually agreed set of tires, around tracks of suitable variety, to gun it out under non-partisan supervision.

Maybe something like the Supercar Series without the weight penalty. ■