

# GT-1



The GT-1 pack enters the Keyhole at Mid-Ohio. © Dayle Frame 2001.

spend an enormous amount of time being worked on, with seemingly endless changes to suspension, brake bias and alignment set up for every track and weather conditions.

We're talking a lot of car here – in power, weight, skill needed, maintenance, and, in the case of cars running in the top tier of National competition, money. GT1 is the heavy weight class, the Thunder Class, and remains a class that almost no-one can resist going out to watch.

## Weighty Power

**“The one thing that people really like to go out and see is the Thunder Cars... even all the crews go out to watch because it's just great fun.”**

Ralph Maltby, Ohio Valley Region, GT1 (Panoz GTS).

Because most of these beasts are front engined, powerful, and weigh a tad bit more than the combined weights of my biological family (and it should be noted rather sadly here that my family is not blessed with the “skinny”

## Example Valvoline Run Off Times at Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course

Class	Make & Model	Mid-Ohio, Lexington
GT-1	Ford Mustang	1:28.8
GT-1	Chev Camaro	1:29.0
GT-1	Olds Cutlass	1:29.5
GT-1	Chev Monte Carlo	1:30.7
GT-1	Chev Corvette	1:30.7
GT-1	Porsche RSR	1:41.8

**GT-1**  
 Weight .....2,500 - 3,500 lbs.  
 HP.....625+ hp  
 Handling.....👋👋👋👋  
 Brakes.....👉👉👉👉  
 Cost to Buy Used .....\$\$\$\$\$\$ (\$25-\$190k)  
 On-going Cost.....🔧🔧🔧🔧🔧🔧  
 Typically runs with .....GT-2 and American Sedan

As noted in the introduction to GT, GT1 cars are typically (but not always – the occasional Porsche 911 is the exception) front engined cars. They pack significant horsepower and torque and will eat most other cars in other classes as a light snack, a plump sweet raspberry for example, *before* breakfast. However, for all their power, they lack the downforce trickery of formula type cars and weigh considerably more than they would like to. (Don't we all?)

Many of the cars run highly tweaked engines (310's, usually) that suck down a gallon of race fuel every 3-4 miles. These are twitchy engines at the very limit of their performance envelope and the rate of attrition in races and qualifiers is significant. As an example, at a recent race of a field of 23 cars, 5 either never made it past qualifying or did not finish the race. Reliability and durability is an issue for Nationally competitive GT1 cars. Top cars also

gene), you have to know what you are doing driving a GT1 car. This is certainly not the class you want to enter if you have never raced before. (Most drivers come into the class with at least one year, if not many, in other classes.)

There are several general key points arising from this intoxicating mix: power down application, braking, and tires are among them.

Getting the power down in GT1 is a matter of patience and good timing. With the weight up front and so much power on tap, it would be easy for a novice to apply too much gas on corner exit and fish tail out - or worse. When watching GT1 in action watch carefully where drivers are applying throttle through corners and compare it to other classes and you will see how the smoothest drivers are judicious and avoid stomping on the gas. Of course power is what these cars are all about – that feeling of huge accelerative forces pushing you back

**“If you're mechanically inclined and money's not an object, it still takes a significant commitment to be successful at the National level in this class.”**

Ralph Maltby, Ohio Valley Region, GT1 (Panoz Esperante GTS)



David Fershtand in a stunning 69 Mustang. © Dayle Frame 2001.

into the seat and the 180mph+ speeds on the straights. Where these guys can stomp on the gas they will!



Ralph Maltby's GT-1 Panoz Esperante GTS. © Paul Stanfield 2001

## Braking & Baking

Braking is also potentially entertaining, although not always for the driver. These cars can get up to 190 mph on a good day and, with a relatively heavy weight, braking can

be a fairly brutal affair. Having the leg muscles of an Icelandic weight lifter is also useful (but not absolutely essential) to brake these cars. This is especially true for longer races where brakes are set heavier.

Not surprisingly, well sorted GT1 cars have damn good brakes. However, good brakes do not make up for poor driving. Being smooth with the brake pedal is critical to weight transfer and maintaining a stable platform through turns. Slamming on the binders, turning, and hammering the gas is not the way to handle these cars if you want to win. Not only will the car not maintain momentum as well as a

**“I would have a hard time believing anyone could be really competitive in GT1 without some very competent full time help. I don't think there's a more expensive class to run in – it's the pinnacle by far in terms of money, work and excitement.”**

Dick Greer, Corvette #82, GT-1, Central Division