

CORVETTES AT MIS - WHAT AN EXPERIENCE!



by Scott Bauries

Sunday, August 21, 8:30 a.m., VFW Hall, Onsted, Michigan — 50 Corvettes are sitting in the rain awaiting the signal to line up behind a Michigan State Trooper to be escorted to Michigan International Speedway. Everyone milling about waiting for the rain to stop to dry off our cars. Although most cars are from the Jackson Corvette Club, three are member cars from the Capital City Corvette Club. Bill Bratschi, son of Rich & Colleen, in a 1999 white convertible, Terry and Chris Burke in their 2000 red convertible and Scott and his father Fred in Scott's 1998 white convertible. At one time or another all three of us had a chance to chat among ourselves and also with our fellow Corvetters from Jackson as we eagerly awaited our next move. Around 9:00 the sun finally makes an appearance and we all scramble to dry and tidy up our cars!

Around 10:00 we line up and follow the state trooper up to the track where we are first staged behind the entertainment building outside of turn 2. We have a second opportunity to chat, touch up the cars and meet with track officials and receive our first set of instructions for the day. At the appointed time we are led from the staging area to

the "skid pad" on the inside of the back stretch of the track where we are staged once again for our final instructions. What a site to behold! Although I've been attending races and MIS since 1972 the magnitude of the facility really hits home when your walking around ON the track instead of watching from the stands or on TV, even onboard cameras in the race cars don't do it justice. Now for the final drivers meeting. We're told we'll roll out after the Clydesdales come by, we're given a program and a souvenir matchbox car and a bottle of water for the race driver we'll be picking up. Cool! Souvenirs and a chance to see the Clydesdales up close, this day is getting better all the time! The atmosphere is overwhelming, fans in the infield are shouting how great the cars look! Here come the horses, WOW what a site, never in my life have I seen the Budweiser cart and Clydesdales up close, what a beautiful site. Oops, forgot we roll after the horses, quickly we have to jump in the car and get rolling.

It's about noon now. We're now driving up on the high banks of the track, way up next to the wall coming from turn 1 driving toward turn 4 and the start-finish line where we stop and wait for driver

introductions to begin. Driving up on the banks and sitting on the front stretch is another eye opening experience. The sensation is indescribable as you feel like the car should slide down, or worse, roll over down the banking, but of course we don't. Again we get to listen as the fans ooh and aah about the cars on the track, gotta love our 'vettes.



The time has come, driver introductions have started and we're slowly moving closer to the start finish line to pick up our driver. One more turn, oh my god that's a BIG DOWNHILL- I sure hope the brakes hold, and I see **Juan Pablo Montoya** approaching our car. In

his career Montoya has won the 1999 CART Indy-Car Series Championship, the 2000 Indianapolis 500 and the 2003 Monaco Formula 1 Grand Prix, to list a few. This is SO COOL! Being an IndyCar and Formula 1 fan for many years I had watched Montoya come up through both series before he switched to NASCAR, I couldn't have been more thrilled. And then the experience got BETTER. As he climbs up on the car between us I hear "How are you guys doing today?" How COOL, turns out he's a talker, very friendly and funny. He asked lots of questions, "how did we get to drive in the parade?" "was the car new?" "did I get a good deal?" "what did I pay for the car?" "WOW that WAS a good deal!", all this before even getting to turn one. He was also more than happy to autograph my owners manual. As we continued along the low side of the track it was fun to not only listen to Juan's questions and conversation, but also to hear the fan reaction as we drove by. As we went down the back stretch we heard one lady shout out how much she loved him. He just chuckled and hoped that she hadn't "been up all night drinking and shouting

like that." That comment had all three of us laughing. As we entered turn 4 the parade once again climbed the banks up close to the wall and as we approached the start finish line again we made that BIG downhill turn, this time to the left, and headed back to the pit entrance and our point of exit for Juan. As he hopped out he thanked us for the ride and wished us a good day. And off we went to the garage area. As quickly as it started the thrill was over, but the memory will be with me and my dad forever. Especially with the video my dad shot as we were driving around the track.

As for the rest of the Capital City group, sadly Terry & Chris ended up as an alternate car so they didn't have a driver ride with them but they were part of the parade around the track and in talking with Terry on Monday he said "it was a very good day all around!" Bill Bratschi and his guest were the luckiest of the bunch of us. They ended up with the days eventual race winner, Kyle Busch! According to Bill they had quite the good time as well. When they arrived at the drop off point Kyle asked them to keep going. He had them drive him most of the way back to his transporter. Cool, a little extra time with the driver. All in all I'd say everyone had a great day!

That was our day at MIS! Started out wet, dried off in time for the event, and was sadly over way too soon! What a great way to be able to represent the Capital City Corvette Club.

