

VIR Race Report, October 5th 2003

By Bruce Griggs



GR40 drivers swept the top three spots in AI in both races. From left to right, on podium, Keith Videtto, Guy Cunningham, James Hoover

Unfortunately, again, I am very late finishing this race report with so much to do. I will work hard to have a journalist on staff next year.

VIR is a beautiful park, and a first class facility

AI/X was invited to Virginia International Raceway (VIR) at the last minute to run with the GrandAm and Rolex series. It was most difficult adding a second unplanned 6000-mile trip between races onto our west coast schedule, but the team really pulled together to make it happen. The crew here at home in Sonoma California really busted their butts to get it together so we could go. We had to go with a skeletal crew of myself, our truck driver and indispensable crewman, Tim Vines, and two brothers, Brad and Barry Pelletier



that volunteered for punishment by coming down from New Hampshire. Brad is well known for his speed in the New England open track circles driving his bright Green 99 GR40 Cobra. Barry is a Journeyman BMW factory tech. We couldn't have performed as well as we did had they not been there. Both of our drivers had to work hard on the cars too.

Most reading this probably already know about the results of our trip to VIR, but suffice it to say, I believe VIR to be the greatest road racing facility in the country from a participant standpoint. It is a beautiful park, and gorgeous in its layout. The surrounding populace is very friendly, and racing in Virginia is politically correct, unlike California.

Though not a championship points race for us, the event was a special one, and we were planning on taking three cars there. But two days before leaving, the venerable old 306 in the #40 AIX team car that I drive broke a rod bolt while on the dyno, and there was no time to replace or repair the motor, so I had to sit it out. The Griggs Racing team supported the event with two AI cars entered, #31 Keith Videtto, and #42 Guy Cunningham.

34 cars were entered, the best from all over the US. Keith and Guy got up to speed quickly, turning the fastest AI laps of the field Friday, qualifying first and third, and finished first and second in both races which were held back to back on Sunday. The track was very fast, and both cars were hitting the rev limiters in top gear at the end of both long straights.

Guy won both races, and they worked well and put on quite a show. Even at 9.5 lbs gross weight per rear wheel horsepower, their lap times were considerably faster than the majority of AIX cars with their unlimited power. (And much bigger tires).

At each event this year Keith seems to take a giant step forward in his driving ability and his comprehension of what it takes to be a winner. VIR was no different, and he amazed me how fast he got up to speed, and was soon lapping within a few tenths of Guy's best times.



AI West GR40 driver Keith Videtto leads a group of AIX cars at VIR

Our mission was not only to race, but also to support the GR40 racers in the east, and we did so by advising with setup and help where we could. On track help was delivered by our team by playing for track position to assure James Hoover the AI East championship, helping him garner first place points for the division, as he finished third in both races.

I can't say enough about James Hoover and his family's devotion to James' effort. Their championship is well deserved, and it is teams like Hoover Racing that set the example to follow. Always there for his fellow competitors, always there for his sponsors. Always fast and clean.



During the evolution of the AIX class, much larger tires and wheels are allowed than the front running GR40 AIX cars can fit under the stock Fox body fenders. Unfortunately the East coast front-runners had not yet spent the money on wheels, rubber, and bodywork to take advantage of these rules, like some of the visiting Midwest cars had. (We haven't added big rubber to our AIX cars yet either. Rest assured we will if we are to come back next year).

Though fast, our East coast GR40 AIX racers got beat by a couple of lesser cars with 20% more rubber, still they held their heads high, and performed well. Lester Lesneski in his Vortech supercharged GR40 AIX car was the fastest on Friday but broke something



in the electrics in qualifying, limiting his speed. During the first race his car was clearly the fastest, until his shifter broke. He pitted and still managed to catch up to 11th place locked in one gear during the last half of the first race. (It should be noted that Lester was not using the kind of shifter we recommend).

The repairs took longer than the 15-minute intermission between races resulting in Lester missing the pregrid for the second race, which forced a start from the rear of the field. Lester and his amply powered mount were up to the task, and drove through the field to finish second overall behind a well driven home built with 335-18s all around as compared to the 275s Lesdter and the rest of us GR40 cars had. That is nearly 25% more rubber or tractive force available. Hard to beat, but he almost did.

Of note should be Barry Kline who came from Minnesota to run his GR40 AIX car really hard. A tremendous competitor, Barry had a few problems as well, but let everyone know he was there, rising to 3rd overall before the shifter broke. We taught him some things about set up on his car and look for him to be faster yet next year.



Dan 'Slick' Schlickenmeyer was running his always fast 408 cid powered GR40 AIX car and developed a handling problem due to a bent rear shock. We fixed him up with a new set of KONI's and then his car ran well. Although he suffered an off track excursion that cost him some positions, his points for the weekend netted him the AIX East championship, and our congratulations and appreciation go to him. Slick was the principal organizer behind this event, and it wouldn't have happened without him. He is at the very least, the finest of gentlemen, and really looks out for his fellow AI East competitors. His devotion to the series is a lot of what makes AI/X racing what it is, and his second AIX East championship is well deserved. Thank you Dan!



Slick doing what he does best

There were close races throughout the field in both races. In fact the AI/X show at VIR was so successful that the track management has invited us back as the headliner at their largest spectator event, the Vintage Festival, on Labor Day weekend, 2004. If you can attend, do! It will be an experience you won't forget.

Our sincere thanks go to Brian Barnes of Paradise Financial for allowing us the use of his transporter, and all the vendors products that allow us to build GR40 cars to perform as they do, including, **Koni, Hoosier, Hawk Brake, Sierra Brake, Wilwood, Baer Brakes, Dan Press Enterprises, Motive Gear, Trick Flow Specialties, Kooks Headers, BBK, Tube Service, Alhambra Water, Scat, Aeromotive, Fuel Safe, ARE, Aviaid, and Vortech Engineering.**

And most important the crew at Griggs Racing is what really makes it all happen: **Cosmo, Dan, Dodge, Ryan, Kevin, Patrick, Steve, Tim, and Woody.**



A full field of AI/X cars on the parade lap at VIR

Lester and Slick go at it at VIR



VIR has so much class the pregrid is shaded.