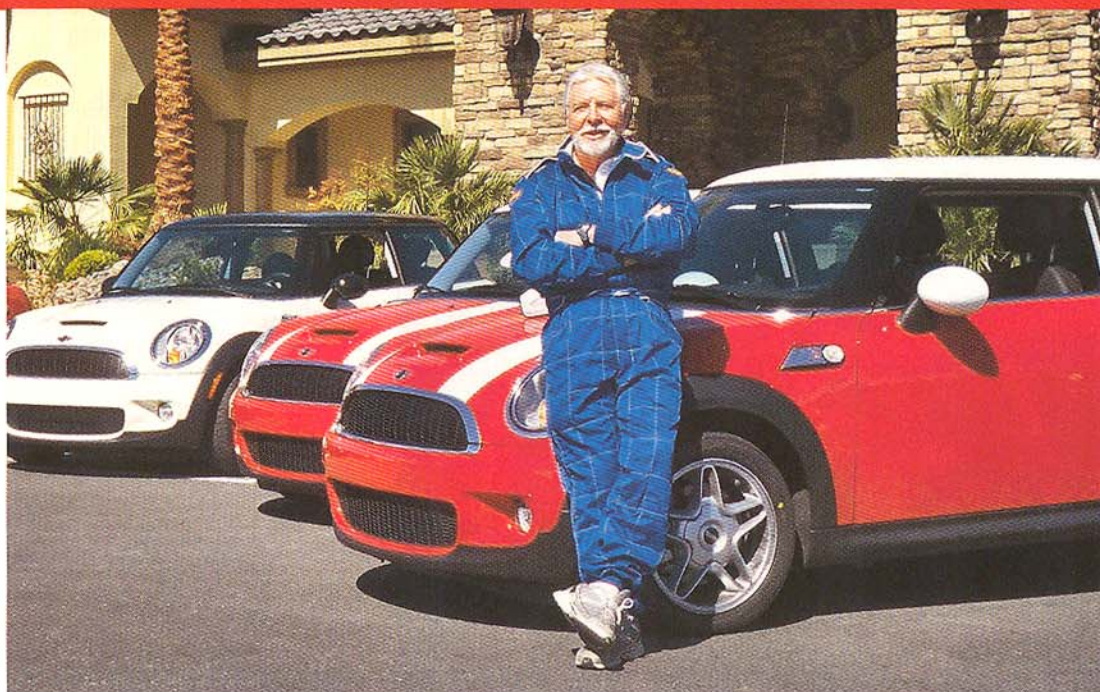




Wicks Returns To His Roots

Is there a Mini owner anywhere who hasn't heard of Phil Wicks? The well-known driver and instructor was there from the beginning - at the birth of the original Mini in 1959 - prepping and racing cars. He also drove stunt cars in the original "Italian Job" movie, "Grand Prix" and others.

Even if you haven't heard of Phil's racing prowess or seen his stunting in the "Italian Job" (unlikely), you may have heard of his performance driving schools (www.minidiving.com), where Mini/MINI owners can learn to get the most out of their cars. Perhaps you've even driven in one of Phil's track events, such as the 6th Annual Phil Wicks Driving Academy Minnie Pearl Cancer Foundation fund-raising event that took place this past September at the Nashville Superspeedway in Lebanon, Tennessee.

Of the many regular participants for the main event, Zapata Racing - headed by Carl "Chief" George - entered a variety of vintage cars, including several classic Mini Coopers. George approached Wicks and asked him to drive one of the more seriously race-prepared Mini Coopers - a 1967 car with a full race history in the United States. Phil enthusiastically agreed and quipped, "I am very excited to be reacquainted with the beginnings of my Mini racing career."

"As I had not practiced in the car, I elected to start near the back of the rolling start grid," said Phil.

Once the green flag fell, a great battle ensued between David Conrad in an MGA, David Bearden in a 1966 race-prepared Mini and Wicks in the "Snoopy Dog" 1967 Mini Austin Cooper S. On the final lap, Wicks passed Conrad to take the win and was once again a fully-committed classic Mini racer.

Several weeks later, George again asked him to rejoin the Zapata team and drive the "Snoopy Dog" Mini for the rest of the 2010 vintage-racing season and in select races during 2011. In addition to driving duties, Phil was to take

charge of preparing, maintaining and upgrading the car.

Research has established that the short block crank, rods, and pistons are of Mini Mania origin. The cylinder head is a Longman race head. Straight cut gearbox, limited slip racing diff, and Weber 45DCOE carburetion complete the racing setup.

For the season finale SVRA event at Road Atlanta, the "Snoopy Dog" Mini arrived unaltered from the previous event. However, with beautiful, sunny and dry Georgia weather, he was able to immediately establish a fast pace, qualifying first in his class.

On Sunday (race day #2) the same cars lined up for the start of the final race of the weekend. Having learned his lesson from the day before, Wicks was ready for the rolling start and passed several cars into Turn 1 and up the hill into the esses. Unfortunately, a car blew its engine on Lap 6 and navigated two complete laps dumping oil on the track before exiting the race. Yet Phil Wicks managed to take the early checkered flag first-in-class and 19th overall.

"Not bad for an old guy," exclaimed Phil, who has been competing in events now for fifty plus years.

"As well as driving a classic Mini in competition, I am enjoying being part of a race team again," said Phil. **MC**



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Phil Wicks

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