

# THE BIG BEND OPEN ROAD RACE....

## A Pontiac Runaway!

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*Follow-up to the June 2005 SMOKE SIGNALS Magazine article "Going Racing with a GTO".*

Imagine driving flat out down a public highway– with spectators and the local cops waving you on. Not just a dream of street racers everywhere, this really happens in the Big Bend Open Road Race.

The season's open road racing series begins in Fort Stockton, Texas, a town usually best known as the only civilization on Interstate 10 between El Paso and San Antonio. With the support of the community and the Texas Department of Highways, the locally run event group is able to shut down 60 miles of Highway 285, running south out of Fort Stockton.

The highway becomes pretty challenging at over 100 mph, with ten mile

straight-aways punctuated by sweeping corners and steep grades, lined with big

Texas-style ranches and suitable for the over 200 mph speeds expected by the top unlimited cars, yet with over 50 corners, exciting even for the slower classes. The event runs, one car at a time, down the highway to Sanderson, Texas, where they regroup, have lunch, service the vehicles and turn around and do it again heading north. And to keep the state happy, the term race is downplayed; the goal being to average as close as possible to the speed class you select. At 150 mph, it's exciting whether you can average 149.999 or not.

With 130 entrants, the only four Pontiacs entered livened up the action. Star of the show was the Dave Wolin prepared and driven GTO, a 350 hp Cor-

vette powered muscle car that really handles. Basically a rebadged Aussie Holden Monaro, the GTO offers Corvette level performance at an affordable price and an amazing top speed of 170+ with a simple computer tweak (removing the speed limiter). The GTO is no slouch here as they're known for 13-second quarter mile times and wound out through the gears down the first 10 mile straightaway. 6000 RPM in sixth gear and 165 mph until a stab of the brake, sets it up for a series of uphill, then downhill blind corners, then another 10 mile straight, more 90 mph corners and so on until the finish line 60 miles away. Repeating the same on the return, the GTO ran flawlessly, averaging 120 mph for the event.

Another Pontiac star were veteran racers John and Susan Grimes of Spring Valley, NV with their 1998 WS6 6-speed Trans Am. Purchased new and used only as a race car, Grimes has trophied in 20 events, seen

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*Dave Wolin's Pontiac GTO at speed. He averaged 120 mph for the event.*

*A wide variety of cars waits on the starting line, all with one thing in mind– going FAST!*





top speeds as high as 170+ mph and is considered one of the best around in open road racing. When not racing, John sells real estate in northeast Nevada; Susan is a finance manager for an auto dealership. The whole family loves racing, and when not racing, enjoys the great outdoors.

Then there was rookie Chuck Buehler of Grand Prairie, TX; rookie only in the sense of not having done any open road racing. Chuck has run as fast as 160 mph in the Texas Mile, a one mile standing start drag race, with his much modified '01 Trans Am. Much modified might be too mild a term as the Kim Barr Racing engines powerplant puts out 408 hp on the dyno. Feeling his way down the Big Bend course produced a 123 mph average and we know he'll be faster next time.



*The Ft. Stockton high school provided car washes!*



*Dave's '04 GTO at the starting line ready to run.*

Last but not least of the Pontiac contingents was Chris Bischof of Southlake, TX with his '86 Grand Prix 2+2. One of only 1225 built in '86, it has been an open road racing and standing mile contender for a number of years, having run 157 mph in the standing mile and consistently wins the 130 mph class, with atop speed in excess of 160 mph.

This event has been so successful over the last five years that the organizers have added a second one, here in Fort Stockton in October. With three more races scheduled in Nevada and another in Nebraska in August, open road racing provides a great opportunity to see how fast your car can go, drive some challenging roads and compete in a different type of event.

For more information, look at these websites: Big Bend Open Road Race at [www.bbrr.com](http://www.bbrr.com); Nevada Open Road Races at [www.openroadracing.com](http://www.openroadracing.com); and the Nebraska Sandhills Race at [www.sorcrace.com](http://www.sorcrace.com).