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# Italian Renaissance: The Concorso comeback story

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PROFILE

## Moving from Friday to Saturday pays a serendipitous dividend

*Editor's note: Follow all of the action and updates on our special **Monterey Car Week** page.*

As I walked onto what normally serves as one of the 18 fairways of the Black Horse Golf Club that overlooks Monterey Bay, I wondered if I was in the right place. My intention was to cover the 33rd annual Concorso Italiano, a celebration of all things Italian, but especially of Italian cars. Yet the first cars I encountered were a vintage Datsun, several Porsches and Mercedes-Benzes, and a bunch of British vehicles.

"We have a global exotic section now," explained Tom McDowell, whose LinkedIn page describes him first as "Italian Car Enthusiast" and later as "President, Concorso Italiano."

Actually, those descriptions are accurate, because McDowell was an Italian car enthusiast long before he became leader of the largest car show taking place during Monterey Car Week.

"My cousin introduced my father to Alfa Romeos," McDowell said. "It went from my dad to my older brother, from my brother to me," and on down through the McDowell siblings.



Tom McDowell

**Although Tom McDowell's first car was British,** he wasn't happy with it and soon opted for an Alfa, later adding Fiats to his favorites as he worked in film and television production, in investment banking, and as a business

consultant.

He thought he had retired when he was asked to help evaluate a business that looked to be for sale. It was about this same time that his wife suggested that he was getting underfoot at home and that he might want to find some work. And he did.

McDowell didn't merely consult on that possible business transaction. He realized that what he wanted to do was to buy it himself, and thus he found himself accepting the challenge of resuscitating Concorso Italiano.

A move from a golf-course setting to a harsh airport tarmac was one of several factors that threatened the continuation of the Concorso beyond 2008.



Delightfully colorful Dinosaurs

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“It’s constant work,” he added, “and it’s fun.”

While preserving the essence of the show, McDowell said he and his team “nibble around the edges” each year as they contemplate special featured classes and which vehicle anniversaries to feature.

But perhaps the biggest change he’s made that has helped the event rebound — nearly 1,000 cars were on the fairways this year — has been to switch five years ago from Concorso’s traditional Friday date to Saturday.



Rose Wysard stands by as her husband, Herb, provides Wysard provides details before the judges arrive about their 1951 Alfa Romeo 6C 2500 Super Sport, which later won Best of Show honors at the 2018 Concorso Italiano

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The reason for the move was simply to make it possible, he said, for people from the San Francisco Bay area to avoid having to try to take the day off on Friday, perhaps facing the added challenge of trying to find and then book a hotel room in Monterey. With the switch in dates, Bay Area residents can simply get up on Saturday morning, drive down the coast for Concorso, and be back home that same evening.