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THUNDER ON THE COAST

Factory L88 Corvettes take pride of place at the 2026 Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance

| BY **GARY WITZENBURG** | PHOTOS BY **NATHAN DEREMER** |

A Corvette lover since helping to prepare a 1978 Pace Car for delivery while working in a Chevy dealership at age 21, Kevin Mackay bought his first Vette—a 1964 convertible—just two years later. He then restored his second one, a 1965 coupe, to a state of excellence sufficient to win its class at Bloomington Gold. That led him to open his own shop, Corvette Repair, Inc. in 1985 in one bay of an auto shop in Valley Stream, New York. Four decades later, his current, custom-built facility accommodates an ever-growing clientele of Corvette collectors.

Mackay specializes in finding, repairing, and restoring C1, C2, and C3 Corvettes, ranging from base cars to the most rare and valuable. He and his team have won thousands of awards and have been featured in hundreds of magazine articles and books, while his own book, *The Corvette Hunter*, chronicles stories of some of the rarest Corvettes they have restored. His knowledge of Corvettes has earned him NCRS Master Judge and Bloomington Gold Benchmark Judge statuses, and in 2012, he was inducted into the Bloomington Great Hall as one of the most significant people to have influenced Corvette history. In 2018 Mackay was selected as one of the top 20 restorers in America, and the only restorer of Corvettes.

So, who better to organize a group of special Corvettes for a display at the prestigious Amelia Concours d'Elegance? Mackay did that last year, with a group of 10 cars that competed in the Sebring 12-hour through the years ("Fast Company," Sept. 2025). For 2026, he returned with an even more impressive group of factory L88 racers.



1965 "See-Through" Corvette
Owner: Matt Foss

When Corvette Chief Engineer Duntov called Delmo Johnson, owner of Johnson Chevrolet in Dallas, to offer him a special 427 for the 1965 Sebring 12-hour, the Texan jumped at the opportunity to run it in his Corvette Grand Sport. Duntov smuggled the still-experimental engine—actually a 396 enlarged to 427, with a large four-barrel carb and prototype side-mounted open headers—out of Chevrolet Engineering and sent it to the St. Louis Corvette plant, where it was installed in a '65 convertible and shipped to Johnson Chevrolet in March 1965. It was then removed from the convertible and mated to a prototype Muncie M22 transmission in Johnson's Grand Sport coupe. A week later, that pioneer car was clocked at more than 180 mph down Sebring's back straight, but it dropped out after just 137 laps. It is now a remarkable "See-Through" display C2 built by Corvette Repair.

1966 Corvette Development No. 14
Owner: Scott E. Freese

This 1966 coupe was one of four cars, known as "The Four Kings," used by Chevrolet to develop the L88. Built for Pedro Rodriguez for the 1966 12 Hours of Sebring, and powered by a 427/425 engine, the car was loaded with factory equipment intended to make it suitable for racing: "lateral restraint devices" (later known as RPO A85 shoulder belts), C48 heater and defroster deletions; radio deletion; F41 heavy-duty front and rear suspension; a G81 3:70:1 Positraction limited-slip rear axle; J50 power brakes; J56 special heavy-duty brakes; a K66 transistor ignition system mounted in the passenger compartment; an M22 heavy-duty four-speed transmission; an N03 36-gallon fuel tank; and an N36 telescopic steering column.

As it turned out, Rodriquez ended up co-driving a Ferrari with Mario Andretti that crashed at Sebring instead, and this car sat out that race. Following Sebring, Rodriguez asked Don Yenko to sell it for him, and Harold Whims, a longtime racer and friend of Yenko's, became the second owner. It has been a racecar through its entire existence, holding the Chimney Rock Hill Climb record for five years, piloted by Sam Henderson, and scoring many wins at such tracks as Daytona, VIR, Road Atlanta, Rockingham, Roebling Road, Summit Point, and Pocono. It has been invited to multiple shows across the country, and in 2020 was awarded the Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance Grand Sport Trophy by GM President Mark Reuss.





1967 Dana/Harry Mann No. 92

Owner: Kevin Mackay

Just 20 L88s were built in 1967, and of the 16 accounted for today, this one was factory ordered by Dana Chevrolet of South Gate, California, which hired drivers Dick Guldstrand and Dale Armstrong to launch the dealership's performance division. It was fitted with an L88 engine, an M22 "Rock Crusher" transmission, a 3:55:1 Positraction limited-slip rear axle, RPO J56 heavy-duty brakes, F41 suspension, a transistor ignition, radio delete, a heater, and a removable hard top. It even arrived factory fitted with racing headers and American Racing Torq Thrust wheels. The only known Marina Blue L88 convertible, the car was raced as No. 92 at Las Vegas, Santa Barbara, and Riverside, California, where it scored multiple wins. Corvette Repair was instrumental in updating it to 1968 Harry Mann livery, and it has since won the coveted National Corvette Restorers Society (NCRS) American Heritage award.

1967 No. 9

Owners: Dana and Patti Mecum

Peyton Cramer and Paul Dombrowski, co-owners of Dana Chevrolet, decided to send a privateer racing team to the 24 Hours of Le Mans event in 1967. While Cramer's previous Le Mans experience included winning the GT Class with Shelby American in 1964, and an overall victory in 1966, he wanted to return for '67 with his own L88 Corvette. The car qualified at a record 171.5 mph—making it 10 seconds per lap faster than the previous GT record—and Bob Bondurant pulled away to a substantial GT-class lead two hours into race. Dick Guldstrand maintained that lead into the night, but the engine threw a rod just shy of the 12-hour mark. Though it failed to finish, this car remains etched in history as the only Midyear Corvette to compete in a 24 Hours of Le Mans.





1967 No. 89

Owners: Dana and Patti Mecum

The only '67 Corvette L88 to retain its complete, original engine, this car was the most successful L88 Corvette racecar of all time during its eight-year career. It scored more than 150 outright wins—including a record-setting 52 consecutive victories, and nearly 300 podium finishes—with original owner Cliff Gottlob. Its historically correct restoration by David Burroughs celebrates its 1970 Daytona 24-hour run, where Gottlob's privateer team finished a stunning Second in the GT class and 11th overall. Boasting impressive documentation and an unquestionable pedigree, this L88 won Best in Class at the 2026 Amelia show.

1968 "Band-Aid Racer" No. 12

Owner: Kevin Mackay

Of the two factory L88 Corvettes that racer Doug Bergen owned, this was his first. After learning of the L88 from Corvette engineer Gib Hufstader, he ordered the car through Williamson Chevrolet in Marietta, Ohio. In the July 14, 1968, International Championship of Makes at Watkins Glen, it was co-driven by Robert "Columbus Bob" Johnson and Robert "Marietta Bob" Johnson, earning it the nickname "Band-Aid Racer," after the Johnson & Johnson corporation that manufactured the well-known first-aid product. There, the car broke the lap record en route to a First Place finish in its class and 11th overall. It later scored a First overall at Mid-Ohio.

Following a body-off restoration by Corvette Repair to its winning Watkins Glen livery, Bergen and Marietta Bob Johnson were reunited with the Band-Aid Racer 40 years later at the Corvettes at Carlisle Racers Reunion, where it earned the NCRS American Heritage award.





1969 "See-Through" Corvette

Owner: Kevin Mackay

This '69 "See-Through" coupe serves as something akin to a rolling business card for Corvette Repair. It was originally purchased in Tuxedo Black through Bay Chevrolet in Douglaston, New York (where Mackay had worked as a mechanic before founding his shop), by a man who simply wanted to own the "baddest" car available. He also ordered RPO N14 factory side pipes, likely making it the only black-on-black L88 so equipped from the factory.

The original owner sold the car in 1972, and it passed through three more owners before ending up in a machine shop in Piscataway, New Jersey, where it languished until a former Corvette Repair employee informed Mackay of its existence. The car had all of its original body panels, window glass, and interior, and the intact original build sheet on top of its fuel tank verified that it was indeed a rare L88 Corvette. Mackay went to see it and decided immediately that he had to have it.

While Mackay has owned more than a few famous L88s, he and his crew wanted to do something special with this one. They came up with a unique idea: Create a completely functional, street-legal L88 without a body, to show the heart and soul—and their attention to detail—under the skin of one of Chevrolet's most famous cars. They later created the previously detailed See-Through C2 from the '65 L88 of Ed Foss, father of current owner Matt Foss.

1969 Convertible

Owner: Steve Leitstein

Ordered new by champion racer Tony DeLorenzo as his personal daily driver, this special-order convertible is just one of two like it known to exist. Befitting a street car, it was heavily optioned with power brakes, a tilt/telescopic steering wheel, a transistorized ignition, an M22 transmission, a 3:08:1 Positraction rear axle, J56 special brakes, F41 suspension, tinted glass, and a black soft top. DeLorenzo took delivery in early 1969 and drove the car daily until his German friend and fellow racer, Curt Wetzel, convinced him to race prep the Corvette and sell it to him. DeLorenzo agreed, and in December 1969 they drove it to the Detroit Airport and loaded it onto a Pam Am cargo jet bound for Frankfurt.

Wetzel raced the car in Germany and across Europe, badly beating the Porsches and BMWs of the day. It then went to a sharp-eyed buyer in Switzerland, who kept it for the next 12 years.

Tuxedo Black is the rarest and most sought-after color for '69 L88s, a fact that has no doubt helped this car earn multiple awards from Bloomington Gold, the NCRS, and others. DeLorenzo was reunited with it after 36 years, at the 2005 Bloomington Special Collection ceremony.





1969 "Stars and Stripes" No. 49

Owner: Irwin Kroiz

One of three L88 Corvette racers sponsored by BFGoodrich from 1971 to 1973, this one competed in the trifecta of sports car endurance racing: the 12 Hours of Sebring, the 24 Hours of Daytona, and the 24 Hours of Le Mans. All three team cars—No. 48, No. 49, and No. 50—were owned and campaigned by John Greenwood, and this No. 49 was driven by Greenwood and by other top racers such as John Greendyke, Bob Johnson, Dick Smothers, and Don Yenko.

Interestingly, it was initially used as Greenwood's PR vehicle, but when No. 50 was damaged in a crash in 1972, he converted it to a racer since he was required by contract to field two cars. It got a full set of Greenwood racing modifications including a 750-hp, all-aluminum ZL1 427, notched rear trailing arms (to allow for wider tires), a quick-replacement radiator, and quick-camber adjustments for the front and rear wheels. Its first major win was a GT-class victory at the 1972 Watkins Glen six-hour, driven by Greenwood and Smothers. The following year, co-driven by Greendyke and Bob "Marietta" Johnson, it finished Eighth in its GTO class and 19th overall at Sebring. Next, wearing No. 68, it set a new GT-class record at 215 mph on the Mulsanne straight during qualifying for Le Mans. But the car failed to start the race when it was damaged the night before while being driven in town by Yenko.

Restored to concours condition by Corvette Repair, the car made its debut in 2008 at the Bloomington Gold Special Collection, and in 2009 it won the NCRS Heritage Award. It is the most original of the three '69 BFG/Greenwood racecars, retaining its factory-issue rear clip, gauges, mirrors, dash, and T-top panels, along with the removable radiator brackets and Minilite wheels installed by Greenwood.

1969 Coupe

Owner: Frank Stech

This car is one of just five Tuxedo Black-on-black '69 L88 coupes known to exist. The original owner and his wife drove the it off the lot at Mark Chevrolet in Wayne, Michigan, and subsequently put 20,833 miles on the odometer over the next 43 years. It was purchased by a second owner in 2013, and Frank Stech became its third owner in June 2022. Restored by Mackay and his team at Corvette Repair, it still boasts its original engine, transmission, and rear axle, as well as its factory interior and exhaust system. It earned NCRS Top Flight Awards in 2016 and 2023, and received Bloomington Gold certification in 2018. ❍

