

Buying at Auctions

For this edition of Garry's Garage, I wanted to take a slight detour given it is auction month here in Valley of the Sun. I'm sure many of you have attended at least one car auction, be it Barrett-Jackson, Mecum, RM, and/or others. What you see when you walk through the aisles are neatly parked cars that are soon to go through the auction or perhaps have already passed through the auction and have sold signs on them.

For the past couple of days I have volunteered to work at the Russo & Steele auction, helping to check in cars and get them parked in their specific spot. What might seem like a simple task is instead a fairly well orchestrated series of activities. It is a car show on steroids, not only because of the sheer number of cars (close to a 1000), but also because of the level of information that must be validated as these vehicle are very likely to change ownership hands.

When a car comes in you have to verify the VIN, make sure all the keys are there and they work, and walk the car (usually twice) to identify and note any dings, dents, cracks, chips, scratches that are visible and present as the car was first driven into the auction tent. All of the various stickers and vehicle papers are placed on the windshield and side windows (they have to be straight, visible, and also allow the driver to see where they are going). Once all this is all done, the car is finally ready to be parked in its spot. However, this is nothing like parking it at a car show or your local grocery parking lot. Each car is meticulously placed, being centered in its row and then aligning its bumper with the bumper of the cars in all the other rows (imagine a 2x50 matrix). Close is not good enough. The challenge is getting both the driver, and thus the car, to respond to your precise directions. Not every driver has command of their car, and not every car is easy to turn or will even stay running. Put all this together, and yeah – it can be quite challenging to do what seems like a simple task.

As I work through the registration side of the auction, I hear more and more about what happens during the auction, from getting cars to the staging area (in sequence) to getting them through the auction stage and then back to their final parking spot. All kinds of stories about cars stalling at the last minute, batteries suddenly failing, transmissions that have a mind of their own, and other such electrical/mechanical issues. Of course – it doesn't matter if the car is worth \$10,000 or \$1,000,000+ dollars.

So after spending just two of my five days as part of the check-in crew, I now have a greater appreciation for the amount of work that goes into these auctions before we finally get through the gate.

Enjoy the Auctions!

Cheers!

Garry