

The Mo-Hud

Knockoff



NEWSLETTER OF THE MOHAWK-HUDSON REGION SPORTS CAR CLUB OF AMERICA (MoHud)

August 2017

The REport

Brake fluid information; continued from the July 2017 Report...

DOT3 - BMW adopted DOT4 fluid in the early 1990s so we're not going to concern ourselves with DOT3 much. Any DOT4 is chemically compatible with a DOT3 system.

DOT4 - the most commonly found performance brake fluid. BMW was using DOT4 since the 1990s so this is what we consider the absolute minimum rating for optimum street braking performance. A DOT4 fluid is usually the minimum required for track use because they are a normal viscosity (not low) but remember to bleed and change the fluid often. Some DOT4 brands meet or surpass DOT5 boiling point specs but the manufacturer chooses to label them as DOT4 or "exceeds DOT4 specs". This is to avoid associating their product with the silicone DOT5 products or get them confused with DOT5.1 low viscosity products. Products with DOT4 rating: Ate Type 200, Ate Super Blue**, Motul RBF600, Motul RBF660,

DOT5.1 - a low viscosity glycol-based fluid. In the BMW world (and likely others), a change was made in the mid 2000s to a low-viscosity fluid (E53 chassis from 2004 and every new chassis from the E60 onwards). The low viscosity means a thinner fluid that can better travel through the tiny channels in the ABS and DSC systems. A thicker fluid will have more trouble moving through these passages and will be less effective. In most situations the viscosity goes unnoticed and you can use any glycol fluid you wish, especially on the track where higher temperatures will thin the fluid anyway. However, in cold climates the thinner low viscosity fluid will work better. If you experience a mushy or slow reacting pedal during an ABS stop on the street, you likely have the wrong fluid and changing to a low viscosity (LV) fluid will work much better. Note that LV brake fluid is generally not recommended for track use as the viscosity is too thin at higher temps. We recommend using a high performance or racing normal fluid which will thin to a lower viscosity on the track. These racing fluids typically exceed DOT5 boiling points and resist compression better than the LV fluids anyway.

Products with DOT5.1 rating: Motul DOT5.1, Pentosin Super DOT 5.1 Ate SL.6 is listed as a DOT4 even though it is low viscosity but it's because its wet boiling point does not meet DOT5 specs.

** A note about color... In the US, all brake fluid must be an amber/yellow color. This is to distinguish it from other fluids (engine oil = brown, transmission/power steering fluid = red). So all DOT-approved fluids are going to be the yellow/gold color. And that was the reason why Ate Super Blue was discontinued for good in 2013. Despite being sold as a 'racing' brake fluid and not a product for street use, Ate pulled the product from shelves because the color prevented it from being DOT compliant (there was no issue with its formula or performance). Ate Type 200 is the same spec as the Super Blue and is the correct amber/yellow/gold color.

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Brake fluid information; continued ...

SILICONE-BASED WATER REPELLING ("DOT5") (HYDROPHOBIC). Silicone fluid makes for an outstanding racing brake fluid. Why? Because it repels water. Unlike glycol fluids that absorb water, a silicone fluid (greater than 70% content) will not mix with water. Since it never gets contaminated by water it has a much higher boiling point than a hygroscopic fluid. However, since the water is no longer absorbed it tends to pool and then boil on its own (at 212° F) and turn into vapor. The vapor blocks the system and can do more harm than absorbed water. The trapped air can give a very spongy pedal since it compresses easily. And pooled water will lead to rust. So silicone fluids will need to be bled far more often than glycol fluids to vent the trapped air and purge the water. Because of a misunderstanding when silicone was first introduced, the "DOT5" label only refers to silicone-based fluids. This has resulted in even more confusion when the DOT5.1 came out (see above). A silicone fluid can be used in an existing brake system that previously had glycol fluid but the complete system must be drained and several flushes with the silicone fluid done to ensure no trace of the old fluid remains. The better approach would be to start fresh with all new components.

Products with "DOT5" rating: Castrol SRF

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For the good of the sport,
Jim Bucci
Regional Executive

Solo Bits

Timing and scoring data can be accessed live through your smartphone or tablet during MoHud Solo events.

- Put the device into *airplane mode*.
- Search for the MoHud wifi network.
- Open your internet browser and type: 192.168.1.2
- You should see an app that allows you to switch displays between the last 20 runs and best positions.

New Karts

At the June 24th and 25th event, Josh Smith turned up with a Maranello kart he had assembled over the winter.

Not to be outdone, on July 23rd Lou Pirro brought a new (to him) kart obtained through some fancy trading with a resident of New Jersey. It's running – we believe – an 80cc Honda engine and has a whole bunch of forward speeds!

If you're itching to build a kart, Lou got two spare engines and a box of spare parts as part of his deal. See him.



Coming Events: August and...

- **August 2:** Wednesday, 6:30 – 8:30. MoHud Family Go Kart Night, Funplex, East Greenbush.
No Membership Meeting

- **August 7:** Monday, 3:00 – 9:00. SCCA Track Night in America, Thompson Speedway, Thompson, CT.
The easiest way to experience time on a race track. < tracknightinamerica.com > has great introductory videos.

- **August 10:** Thursday, 2:00 – 8:00. MoHud Annual Golf Outing, Burden Lake, Averill Park.

- **August 12 - 13:** Saturday and Sunday. Mt. Equinox Hill Climb by VSCCA, Arlington/Manchester Center, Vermont.
Among the many famous competitors since 1948 was Rene Dreyfus. Keep that in mind when you read this month's Journal.

- **August 13:** Sunday, 8:00 – 5:00. MoHud Solo Points Event #5).
OGS McCarty lot, Thruway exit 23
Contact: Russ Burckhard russtduck@gmail.com

- **August 17:** Thursday, 3:00 – 9:00. SCCA Track Night in America, Palmer Motorsports Park, Palmer MA.
The easiest way to experience time on a race track. < tracknightinamerica.com > has great introductory videos.

- **August 20:** Sunday, 7:00 – 6:00. New England Region Solo, Devens Airport, Ayer MA.
Details at <www.motorsportsreg.com >

- **August 27:** Sunday, 8:00 – 5:00. MoHud Solo Points Event #6).
OGS McCarty lot, Thruway exit 23
Contact: Russ Burckhard russtduck@gmail.com

- **September 5 - 8:** Tuesday thru Friday. SCCA National Solo Championship Runoffs, Lincoln Air Park, Lincoln, Nebraska.
We can expect Jim Garry and friends to uphold MoHud honor among the 1,300+ expected entrants.

- **September 6:** Wednesday, 7:30pm. MoHud Membership Meeting. Orchard Tavern, 68 North Manning Boulevard, Albany.
While the formal meeting starts at 7:30pm, we start gathering around 6pm to share time with our fellow members.
Contact: Jim Bucci hdjimbu@gmail.com

- **September 25 - October 1:** Monday thru Sunday. SCCA National Competition Runoffs, Indianapolis Motor Speedway.
You can support our racers by going along as crew, or following them in real time through the SCCA website.

- **October 1:** Sunday, 8:00 – 5:00. MoHud Solo Points Event #7).
OGS McCarty lot, Thruway exit 23
Contact: Russ Burckhard russtduck@gmail.com

- **December 2:** Saturday, 5:00. MoHud Annual Awards Banquet. German-American Club, Albany.

Reminder: Check your latest issue of SCCA's SPORTSCAR for more listings of national series such as Track Night in America.

Road Racers Report

Charlie Campbell, Jared Lendrum and Greg Goss raced all summer long in the North East Conference Majors Championship series which consisted of 7 race weekends, 14 races total.

The season started in April at Virginia International Raceway in Alton, next door to North Carolina, and traveled north to Summit Point in West Virginia, Pittsburgh International Race Complex in Big Beaver on the West side of Pennsylvania, Pocono Raceway in Long Pond on the East side of Pennsylvania, Watkins Glen in our own backyard, Thompson Raceway, nestled in the Northeast corner of Connecticut, and finally New Jersey Motorsports Park, Millville, near the Southern edge of the state.

All three came away NE Conference Champions in their class, Jared (T4), Charlie (FP) and Greg (STU) and they are now headed to the SCCA National Runoffs at Indianapolis (The Brickyard) in September to compete against the nation's best racers.

Campbell Racing's reports have been included in each month's Journal section of the KnockOff; Tom's reports from Watkins Glen and New Jersey are included this month.

Watkins Glen July Sprints, Sunday July 9th. To show the diversity of MoHud racers, we're highlighting their results for the second day of July Sprints at the Glen. All of these races were "contingency races," meaning that sponsors paid out a few bucks if you placed well and had the appropriate decal on the car. Not as mercenary as NASCAR, but it helps with entry fees, etc.

Race 1: Ron Bass placed 6th out of 8 in Formula V ('98 Mysterian).

Race 2: Doug Garrison placed 2nd overall and 2nd in SpecRacerFord-3rdGen; George Kline was 1st in EProduction ('00 Caterham Super 7); Chis Brassard was 1st in SpecRacerFord; while Pete Smith and Jack Hanifan came in 1st and 2nd in their FProduction Miatas. Adam Figarsky ('90 Miata) was not placed in SpecMiata2 (regional class for older NA series Miatas).

Race 5: Jonathan Eriksen was 1st overall and 1st in Prototype 1 ('06 Stohr WF).

Race 6: Chad Mulhall was 2nd in SuperTouringLite ('03 Miata); while Jim Bucci was 2nd in Touring4 ('00 Honda Civic).

Race 7: W. Scott Stickle was 5th in HeritageGroup5 ('63 Jaguar Series 1 E-Type Coupe).

Pro Improved Touring Race: Fred Fox came in 2nd overall and 2nd in ImprovedTouring ('93 BMW 325iS).

The Karl family and their Miatas must have been somewhere else that weekend.

This Road Racers Report aided by Gregg Goss, Tom Campbell, and the KnockOff's digital assistant.

Road Racer Pics



Jeffrey Lehner astounded by his *Stylin' Award*
 - note matching red car/ helmet,
 set off by contrasting black suit, belts, etc



Wrong!
 The grid assistant is supposed to shield
 the *driver* (George Kline)



Clockwise:

- Campbell Racing all smiles
- Jared Lendrum and Gregg Goss all smiles
- Jack Hanifan expresses himself with a phrase he learned in Naples (not FL)

SOLO Report – July into August

We are about half way through the season and it is time for an update.

With our three events so far, the weather has been inconsistent. We started the season with a wet start that dried throughout the day. The second event started dry and got wet towards the end of the day. The third event was dry, hot, and was partially cloudy. So any advantage depended on what heat you were in and when the rain decided to fall.

There are generally three types of drivers. 1) The late bloomer. These drivers improve just about every run. While it is good to constantly improve. Are they getting everything out of their vehicles? 2) The fast starter. These drivers come out of the gate fast but never can repeat what they did on the first run. Usually due to over-driving, these drivers try to improve too much and usually wind up losing time. 3) The consistent driver. The consistent drivers have a little more of an advantage because they know how to get the most out of their vehicle earlier in the event. Their times are usually more consistent throughout the day with slight changes up and down in time. Once in a while they will find something and have a faster run. How do they do it? If you ask them, you will probably get the shoulder shrug and two hands, palms up, in the air and an "I don't know."

Want to be a consistent driver? I will give you an incomplete list that you can try:

#1, Seat time. More experience is always better.

#2, Walk the course. Possibly more important than quantity is quality of your walk. One good walk is probably as good as 5 distracted walks. Talking along the way is good if it is about the course and what line to take. Visibility comes into play while you are walking. Are you walking in a group? Can you only see one or two gates ahead of you? Stop and let "traffic" clear so you can get a better view of where you are going.

#3, Know your car. Having a good understanding of what your vehicle is capable of and what its limits are. Knowing what different conditions (weather, pavement, temperature, etc.) will do to your handling. Being able to find the limit and stay there is one of the most crucial things in autocross.

#4, you need to trust your abilities. If you don't think you can, it will be just about impossible to succeed. Second guessing yourself takes time. Put some faith that you can do it and then do it.

#5, Trust your car. If you are just over the edge and it starts to lose grip, don't panic and make abrupt changes. That may make it worse. A slight change can get the grip back without losing a lot of speed. Once you get the grip back, keep pushing so that your time loss is minimal.

July 15th: The season's points battles are far from settled. We still have 4 races left in this unofficial recap.

Street has 6 drivers that have made all 3 events so far and the spread between them is 45 points. First-place runner Ian Wallace has a decent lead due to having 2 wins. He is sitting 23 points over second. That means that the next 5 drivers are only separated by 22 points. The average spread from first to last in this class is about 25 points. These positions can change in a hurry.

Street Prepared has only had 5 participants. One has only made one event and has moved out of the area (*Best Wishes*, Skylar). That leaves 4. With our rule of dropping the 1 worst event, that changes things. Joe Cassidy is the current leader, but second place, Adam Wright, has won both events that he has entered.

Prepared/Modified has the father/son battle going. Ian is showing his dad Saul what the car is capable of. Saul has his son in his sights and has been ahead at times, just not when it counts at the end of the event. >>>

SOLO Report - cont'd

Street Touring/Modified has a lot of competition. 13 drivers have scored points. 2 have all of the events and are sitting first and second. Aaron Bailey currently sits on top of the list. Tom Taft in third has gone two for two in the win column. Tracey Burckhard has two second place finishes in her two starts. Look for these two to rise up when the worst events are dropped.

CAM needs some more competitors. Charles Dickenson has scared away all of his competition. He has run unopposed this year easily giving him the top spot, but that hasn't stopped him from trying. His worst Pax finish is still in the top 20.

Pro has had 12 participants this year. Five of those have made all three events. The early leader, Andy Furlong, has been doing well this year. He has a win, a second, and a third giving him a 14 point lead over second place runner Phil Reddington. Carmine Russo is just another 5 points behind Phil and could be a factor by season end, partly due to him running all three events, partly because he is running well. He has a first, second, and third.

Karts Kart has four drivers so far this year. Moises Samaniego currently has the top spot Johnathon Burckhard in second has a first and a second in his two attempts. Lou Pirro sits third and Josh Smith in fourth has a win in his only attempt.

And finally the future of our club: **Novice**. 26 different drivers have ran an event. 5 of those have made every event. Ed Molocznik is the current leader. His best finish is a second. Two of the wins were from 2 different drivers with only one start each. The third winner had a slow start. I am thinking that the wet pavement may have had something to do with it. Currently in second place, Ken Relation, will be a factor before the season is over.

Breaking News: I was able to squeeze the results from our July 24th event into this issue. They are totally unofficial and are not reflected in the points recap above. By now EJ should have the official results on the MoHud website.

As we approached the 4th event of the season, the weather didn't look good. Rain was in the forecast in the days leading up to the event. The morning of the event the threat went away. We wound up with a warm and sticky day that stayed dry for all but a couple-minute light sprinkle. 55 participants came out to run. Jon made a tight, but flowing course that kept everyone on their toes. Looking ahead and patience were the key words for the day. Handling was more important than horsepower. A quick left, right at the start helped to save tires and clutches. A slight left after the timing boxes turn into a slightly bent straight away that ended with a tight 180° left. A 90° right into another straight (if you did it right) went to a decreasing radius 180°+ right hander. A short straight went into a long left followed by a hard right. A 180°+ decreasing radius to the left turned into a short slalom that led to a final left and the finish boxes.

We all had 6 runs to try to get the most out of our cars. The times ranged from a 31.4 in a Modified to a high 40 second run from a first timer. Most of the faster street cars started in the mid 30 second range. The fastest raw time went to Ian Morse and the fastest Pax time went to Jon Staude. Rounding out the top 5 in Pax were Ian Morse from FM, Tim Frink BS, Andy Furlong from Pro EP, and Phil Reddington from Pro BS. Top class winners were Tim Frink from Street, Tom Taft from Touring, Adam Wright from Street Prepared, Jon Coffin from Prepared, Michael Budai from Street Mod, Ian Morse from Modified, Josh Smith from Kart, Andrew Decker from Novice, and Jon Staude from Pro.

- Russ Burckhard

August Membership Report

- Jim Garry -

jdgarry10@gmail.com

As of July 17th our membership count stood at 549, down 16 from a month ago and 31 from mid-May. I do not have a firm reason for these losses. A guess would be that while we normally gain members in spring and early summer as people find out about SCCA's activities, this year there may be a lack of confidence in the economy. Or maybe we've gained as many people as we can and it's all downhill from here naaahhh. The good news is that we are still well over 500 members and that's a solid number for us.

New Members since the last report:

Roger Collen, Albany, NY

Interest: Club & Pro Racing

Timothy Cole, Watervliet, NY

Interest: Solo & Club Racing

William Brutsch, East Chatham, NY

Interest: Club Racing

Significant Anniversaries

Thirty Years

Rick Pocock

Ten Years

Ryan Walter

Five Years

Anthony Bucci

Scot Carpenter



That's it for this month. Have as much fun as you possibly can...



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Open.

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For more information about the Mohawk-Hudson Region SCCA, and membership in the Sports Car Club of America, go to < <http://www.mohud-scca.org> >

Membership meetings of the Mohawk-Hudson Region SCCA are held on the 1st Wednesday of the month, excepting July and August, 7:30pm, at the Orchard Tavern, 68 North Manning Boulevard, Albany.



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The KnockOff Journal

This Month...

- Cycle Karts
- A Special Ashtray
- Campbell Racing Reports



You're Not Sending the Kid Out in One of Those, Are You?

MoHudder John Corey, always busy with some cool project, has built another car for competition over the last few months; this time it's a cycle kart inspired by a 1927 Salmson Grand Sport/Grand Prix racer.

Cycle karts trace their heritage back to the cycle car boom of the early 1920s in Britain and France, with four-wheeled cars based on motorcycle parts designed and sold as both sporting toys and serious transportation. The current cycle kart movement seems to have started out in California about 20 years ago as a means of having racing fun, messing about with something that was more adult than a pedal car, but not so adult as a road car. The rules, if one could call them that, settled on a one-seat car with 17" motorcycle wheels, powered by a 6.5hp 200cc engine driving a single rear wheel, brakes at the rear only, with a wheelbase of about 66 inches. Or something similar.

John and several friends recently competed in the Melrose (NY) Grand Prix. Pics from this event, and more on cycle karts, can be seen at < <https://youtu.be/8mXxUO9DntA> > < <https://youtu.be/QxsmEBiffj8> > and < cyclekart.com >



The Salmson: as Rolled Out of the CoreyWorks Shop, and in the Melrose GP Paddock

A Token of Remembrance

At age 19 I was – in my own opinion – so cool that it sent chills up and down my spine. I had an MG-TD MkII, polished leather shoes patterned after WWII “desert boots,” and a blue blazer with a large SCCA *wire wheel* logo on the front pocket. The perfect package for escorting young ladies to fancy places where you sipped sweet vermouth over ice (with a twist of lemon) at the bar, and ordered Chianti in bottles wrapped with straw to accompany pizza. (Drinking age was lower then, but the “escorting young ladies” stuff was stricter.)

Emboldened by my worldliness, I began dating a girl from Manhattan whose attorney-father had access to free tickets for every show on Broadway. What better way to impress her, and her dad, than by taking her to Le Chanteclair before a show?

Le Chanteclair, on East 49th Street, was run by Maurice and Rene Dreyfus. Rene had raced and won Grands Prix races at Monaco, Pau and other courses during the 1930s, piloting Bugattis and Delahayes for the honor of France. In 1940 he was providently excused from the French Army to race at Indy. Being Jewish, he wisely stayed over here. In 1942 he enlisted in the US Army, earned battlefield honors in Italy, and afterward returned to America to start the first of several restaurants with his brother.

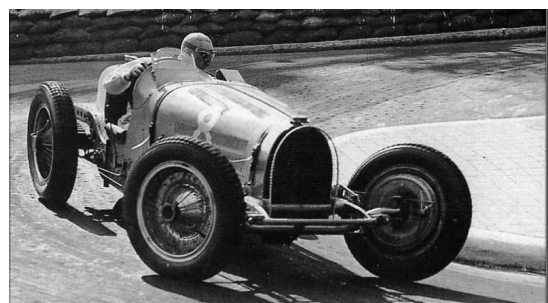
I had read in Road & Track that the bar at Le Chanteclair was a hangout for Briggs Cunningham and the original SCCA crowd; it seemed to describe the most impressive place in North America to take a date; at least in my mind. So, I made reservations for two at 6 o'clock on a weeknight.

Surprisingly, when we got there the place was empty. In the decades since then I've learned that nobody eats at 6 o'clock in a posh restaurant unless they are escorting their elderly mother – but hey, how was a kid from Buffalo to know that? Such rube behavior notwithstanding, Rene, having noted my SCCA blazer, came to the table and made some small talk with us. He asked if I owned a sports car, and when I bragged about my MG, he nodded just as appreciatively as if I had said that I had a Maserati A6GS/53 parked around the corner. And after a wonderful meal, with the entire waitstaff hovering around us, Rene came over and presented me a Le Chanteclair ashtray – clear glass with a BUGATTI -themed decal on the back. A generous move by a class gentleman.

The ashtray had a place of honor on display shelves wherever I lived in the years afterward. But for reasons I cannot remember or fathom, I gave it away when packing up our household for the move to Albany some 20 years ago.

Today I think about that ashtray from time to time. It brings to mind a superb racer, a man of honor, a fighter for freedom, an urbane gentleman, and a gracious host. France too, had a “greatest generation.”

Au Revoir, Rene...



Campbell Racing- Watkins Glen, New York, June 23 - 25

Last report I said: "One of these times I'm going to be able to say simply we went, we won, and we came home. But, again, not this time. Although in the end it was a great weekend." I'm going to start this report with the same opening. Although this was an easy weekend it ended with a very disappointing finish.

This was a "Super Tour" weekend which means that there were more entrants, about 320, and a longer event, 4 days instead of the usual 3. As is our usual practice we entered the test day on the day before the event actually started. In this case that was Thursday. It was a beautiful day and trouble free. Did all 4 sessions with the FP car; two to shakedown, do some tire testing, and get the driver some early seat time. The only surprise was picking up a long screw on one of the tires during the second session. This was a used but good set of tires that I was planning to use this set for qualifying on Friday; but you can't repair one of these nor effectively add a different tire to fill out the set. So a trip to the Hoosier truck brought back a new set. The two afternoon sessions were used to scuff in the new tires: the new set plus another new set I had brought with me and a third set of tires for Charlie's car. Putting a short heat cycle on new tires greatly enhances both their performance and longevity.

On Friday there was a practice session scheduled in the morning and the first qualifying session in the afternoon. The morning was cool, windy and threatening rain so we didn't take the FP car out (had plenty of practice on Thursday). Charlie did the practice session for his SM car and all was well. In the afternoon it started a light rain just as Charlie went to the grid for the SM qualifying. He made a quick return trip to the garage where we put on the rain tires and he made it back before the group went on track. Some of the cars went out on rain tires, some on dry ones. It turned out that some of the dry tired cars were able to put down a couple quick laps before the rain totally wet the track and the cars on the rain tires were then quicker but slower than those first couple laps. Charlie finished 10th on the grid, and was pleased with the way the car was performing. And there was another qualifying session on Saturday morning. The qualifying for the FP car was definitely on a wet track and we decided to not even bother going out. We expected a dry track for Saturday's qualifying session so it was unlikely that the times for Friday would be used so why risk the car. And there were several cars that were wrecked during the wet qualifying sessions, including one of the leading cars in the FP class. So we finished the day early, put everything away and went into town for a nice dinner.

Saturday's weather was good as expected, cloudy and warm but with threatened showers late in the day. SM qualifying in the morning went well. Everyone improved their times from Friday afternoon but Charlie ended still in 10th place. However, his times were very good and consistent. He was pleased. FP qualifying later in the morning also went well. Charlie put down a really good time early in the session and was actually fastest of all the cars, including the two really fast BMWs we usually start behind. One of them turned a lap just .004 seconds slower than Charlie later in the session but then Charlie took another 3 tenths of a second off and solidified his first overall Pole position. We have had many class poles but rarely the fastest in the multi-class group. The car was performing well and so was the driver. Charlie just loves this track!

The first SM race went well, early in the afternoon. Starting 10th Charlie stayed with the lead pack of cars and was having a good time drafting down the long Watkins Glen straights. It was the usual close, hard racing that always happens in the SM class. By the end he had worked through to an 8th place finish and was very pleased with how it ended.

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Watkins Glen, cont'd

The FP race turned out to be a bit frustrating. Although starting on the pole, the next three cars behind were E Production class BMWs which had much more power and would pull past Charlie before the first turn. By the end of the first lap Charlie was in 4th but the BMW ahead of him was holding him up. Charlie could catch him under braking and could corner faster but couldn't stay close enough on the straights to get past him. This went on for three long laps before Charlie found a way around but so did the second F Prod, also a Miata, and the Charlie, unfortunately, found himself in second place. The two were nose to tail for the rest of the race. The official press release on the race told it this way:

F Production featured a nose-to-tail battle between polesitter Charlie Campbell and Mason Workman, Workman moved his No. 52 Hoosier Tire/Planet Miata/Mazdaspeed Mazda Miata to the lead on lap four, but Campbell's Miata was never far behind. A brief late-race caution set up a two-lap run to the finish, and the duo ran side-by-side for much of it, each taking turns at the front. Campbell made an outside pass for the lead in Turn One and took the white flag up front. But Workman responded, taking the lead for good in the Boot on the final lap.

It really was a great race, even if we didn't win. But Charlie was frustrated by being held up by the BMW and felt that he might have been able to stay with the faster pair of BMWs and opened up enough of a gap during those first three laps to hold up for the rest of the race. We'll never know.

Sunday was another beautiful day although there was a short rain shower just before the FP race which had us concerned but didn't last long enough to affect us.

The SM race was similar to the Saturday race. Adding the fast laps during the Saturday race to make up the Sunday grid moved Charlie back to 11th. But, again, he was able to run with the lead packs and was turning laps just as quick as most of the front runners. In fact he turned more than one lap below his previous personal best at this track. By the last lap he was up to 8th place and chasing down the 7th place car. He caught it and tried an inside pass on the next to last turn but it ended in contact and both spun. Charlie recovered to cross the line in 10th but the other driver had to settle for 13th. Charlie felt really bad about it (although it was really just "one of those racin' deals). After the race he apologized to the other driver and asked the Stewards to put him back to the finishing position behind the other driver. All that said, he drove a really great race and the SM car is working better than it has in a long time.

Then we finish the weekend with the Production car race. The two fast BMWs turned faster laps in the Saturday race and should have started 1st and 2nd but both found problems with their cars and chose to not race on Sunday. So Charlie would, again, start on the overall pole. He got an outstanding start and was able to clear the remaining, troublesome BMW at the first turn, as did the other FP Miata which won on Saturday. As the first lap ended Charlie came out of the last turn and went down the front straight with about a 2 second lead on everyone else. The next lap the margin grew and Charlie turned not only our fastest lap of the weekend but the quickest that car has even done on this track. I had made some major suspension alignment changes after Saturday's race and the car was really hooked up. He was only 2 tenths of a second off the track record. This was a 15 lap race (50 miles) and he was checking them off consistently a second or more faster than on Saturday and opening the gap on the second place car by about a second each lap.

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Watkins Glen, cont'd

Then, with three laps to go (and a gap of over 10 seconds) he reports on the radio that the engine just stopped running and he had pulled over. Then he reported that it had restarted and he was back under way. Unfortunately he lost about 30 seconds and was now in 4th place in FP. The car was just as fast as it had been and he was catching the leaders but there just wasn't enough time remaining to get back in the lead. Two laps later he reported it shut off again at the same place on track but he immediately restarted it and carried on. On the last lap the third place car spun and Charlie was able to get past so that we ended up on the podium in third place. Very disappointing after the way the car and driver were performing right up to the last three laps. But, as the saying goes, "that's racin'".

Now I have the challenge of finding the problem. It was occurring when he was crossing the especially aggressive rumble strips on the curb at the exit of the bus stop series of turns. Apparently the violent shaking of the car was causing some sort of interruption in an electrical circuit. Hopefully my new data system will help diagnose the location of the problem. It was certainly the central theme of the thinking all the way home. And I have three weeks before the next race which is at New Jersey Motorsports Park the weekend of July 22.

And, by the way, we clinched the Northeast Conference Championship. So it was a pretty good event.

..... - Tom and Charlie

New Jersey Motorsports Park, July 22 - 23

This was the last weekend of the regular season, our sixth Majors series race. The results were mixed and, once again, quite frustrating. We did the test day on Friday. Charlie took his SM car out for the first session and all was well. Took the my FP car out for the second session and the engine shutoff issue that started at the last race at Watkins Glen was, unfortunately, still there in spite of all we did to find and fix it between races. It happened three times in a 20 minute period on track so it seemed to be getting worse. It is so hard to find electrical gremlins. We went through everything again but didn't find anything new. Then, while reviewing the data acquisition results for the run I noticed a small abnormality in the trace for the ignition timing. A bad ignition timing sensor might explain the indication and the engine cut out. We replaced the sensor and the problem didn't recur for the rest of the weekend and the data trace also cleared up. Charlie purposely drove over the biggest curbs he could find to try to cause the problem and wasn't able to so I think we really fixed it this time.

Also, this weekend I was trying a major change in the suspension on the FP car; significantly softer springs front and rear. So we used the test sessions to dial in the handling balance and by the end of the day had the car within half a second of the lap record. The weather all weekend long was exceedingly hot, in the mid 90's and very humid, so getting that kind of speed was encouraging.

On a two day event there is a qualifying session on Saturday morning and then a race in the afternoon and another second, longer race on Sunday. Both cars qualified well. The FP car was on the pole and Charlie had the SM car in 6th place, less than a second from the pole, his best starting position all year.

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New Jersey Motorsports Park, cont'd

The FP race was first and went well. We won by a good margin and the car was handling well. I'm in a bit of a quandary about the new suspension set-up. The car was as fast as it has ever been (the old lap record was ours from last year) but not noticeably faster than with the old set-up. If the weather was slowing things up a bit this could be a better set-up; but if the weather wasn't really playing a role in things then perhaps the car could have been faster on the old set-up. There is never enough clear data!

Then there was the SM race later in the afternoon. The car started to overheat on its way on to the track from the grid. Charlie did the pace lap and pulled in and back to the trailer where he discovered that the water pump belt had broken. No clue why. So didn't even get to take the green flag.

On Sunday, another day of extreme heat, the FP car took off and led the field for the first half of the race. He even got to within 3 tenths of a second of the lap record while the tires were still cool. But just after the half way mark the engine quit. It wasn't the electronic problem this time. It just "blow'd up" as the stock car guys say. By this time we were all just worn out, physically, mentally and emotionally. Charlie decided to skip the last SM race, it was quite a bit later in the day, and get on the road home before the traffic got too bad.

So, looking back on the season, we certainly had our problems but did win the Conference Championship in F Production and Charlie was 7th out of 102 drivers in the SM car. For the conference championship we get to count our best 8 races so the FP car ended the season with 6 wins and 2 second place finishes. We also set a new track record at Pocono. So it was a good year, we just had to work hard to achieve those results.

Next up is the National Championship race, the "Runoffs", which this year is at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. As you might imagine, because of the destination, this is going to be a big deal event. Registration for the Runoffs opened last Wednesday morning. As of today there are 899 entries including 42 FP cars and 92 Spec Miata cars. The event is the week of September 25 through October 1. We both have a lot of work to do to get the cars ready but several weeks to do it all. In my case, you may recall, I had already prepared the new motor I was planning to use at the Runoffs (the one we went to Kansas in March to pick up) and it is sitting in a big plastic bag under the work bench ready to be installed.

- Tom and Charlie



A Multitude of Miatas
Heading for the Runoffs