

The Mo-Hud

Knockoff



Newsletter of the Mohawk-Hudson Region, Sports Car Club of America

January 2019

The REport

Happy New Year!

Sounds like the annual meeting/awards banquet was enjoyed by all. Sorry I missed it. Congratulations to all of the Solo, road racing and worker/volunteer award winners. Thank you once again to Eric Smith, Paul Malecki, and Chip VanSlyke (who am I missing?) for all their work in organizing our annual meeting and awards banquet.

One piece of business that was conducted at the annual meeting was the election of officers for 2019.

2019 club officers:

Regional Executive – Jim Bucci
Asst Regional Executive – Eric Smith
Treasurer – Paul Malecki
Secretary – Ron Bass
Director – Bruce Kosakoski
Director – Chip Van Slyke

Also, many thanks to out-going director Dick Stewart for his many years of service.

*For the good of the sport,
Jim Bucci
Regional Executive*

PS: This month's Journal contains Jim Garry's report on his quest for a podium at SCCA Solo Nationals.

Coming Events: January and...

- **January 2:** Wednesday, 7:30pm. MoHud Membership Meeting. Maggies Cafe and Sports Bar, Western Avenue, Albany, across from SUNY Albany main entrance. Receive your 2018 award if you missed the Annual Meeting. Start the new year right.
- **January 6:** Sunday. Ice racing season scheduled to start. Go to Adirondack Motor Enthusiast Club's website <icerace.com> to see if and where there might be proper ice.
- **February 6:** Wednesday, 7:30pm. MoHud Membership Meeting. Maggies Cafe and Sports Bar, Western Avenue, Albany.
- **February 15-16:** Friday-Saturday. Northeast Division Mini Convention at the Radisson Harrisburg (PA) Hotel.
< <http://www.scca-susq.com/2018-nediv-minicon/> >
- **April 26-28:** Friday-Sunday. East Coast Timing Association Arkansas 1-Mile Challenge. Bytheville Airport, Bytheville, AR. Tired of dealing with apexes? Try land speed racing at an old SAC base; only half the distance to the Bonneville Salt Flats.
- **The Year Ahead:** Comprehensive schedule of Road Racing and Time Trials in the northeast at NEDiv's website:
< <http://www.nediv.com/nediv-info/2019-nediv-schedule> >

MoHud Spec Racer Runoffs

The First Annual MoHud Spec Racer Runoffs attracted 30 entrants at the Annual Meeting on December 1st.

Winner in the over-18 category was *Nick Austin*, while *Isaiah Kalbfliesh* led the under-18 competitors.

There were two result clusters. Cars that came out of the start line chute in a straight path ran from 6 to 8 feet. Cars that came out of the chute and turned right or did "doughnuts" tended to run in the 4 to 5-foot range.

Competitors who had earlier visited the bar seemed to enjoy the event most. And despite the camaraderie being tested by an entrant who tried to sneak in a non-spec car, no serious affronts to the sporting rules were observed.

Stewards of the event were pleased with the new, sophisticated, laser-directed scoring system and the general organization of the competition. However, they are looking at tweaks to the starting procedure, and will be investigating a different, straighter-running, spec car for 2019.



*MoHud Spec Racer
Leaving the Chute*

Road Racing- 2018 Awards

MoHud Road Racing Championship

In 2nd place, piloting the AM&O Racing Support Services Crossle 62F Formula F, *Chip VanSlyke*.

1st place- Even though he had a shortened season due to the arrival of his newest pit crew member, he still managed to set a new track record at New Hampshire Motor Speedway on his way to the MoHud championship. 1st in the MoHud road racing championship goes to *Bill Dergosits*.

New York State Road Racing Championship (NYSRRC)

This year our region had 1 driver earn a class championship in the NYSRRC series. Congratulations to Formula F class champion *Chip VanSlyke*.

The Mohawk-Hudson region Driver of the Year.

Racing in the highly competitive Spec Racer Ford class, this year's MoHud Driver of the Year has earned invitations to the national championship Runoff as far back as 2005. He finished in the top 20 in the 2018 Hoosier Racing Tire SCCA Super Tour Point Standings. In addition, this year In Spec Racer Ford Gen3, he bested nearly 100 entrants to win the U.S. Majors Tour Northeast Conference Point Championship. The 2018 Mohawk-Hudson region road racing driver of the year is *Jeff Lehner*.

Worker Appreciation Awards-

There are plenty of members who regularly give of their time, talent and energy to help ensure that SCCA events are staffed and safely conducted. In an effort to recognize some of our region's regular workers, the selection committee decided to award the following members for 2018:

Peter Kroth Rich Alexander Eric Smith Dan Gorse Rich Welty

Lewis McClumpha Trophy

The Lewis McClumpha award is the Mohawk-Hudson region's highest honor. It is awarded to the member who has contributed greatly in time and effort to the sport and to the region. This year's recipient regularly volunteers to work at races, Tire Rack Street Survival events and in the Road Rally program. This member is someone who always says "yes" when asked to help out and does so while "flying under the radar", rarely bringing up the number of events worked or the hours given to our club. He doesn't look for recognition, doesn't submit points for the worker appreciation awards and often goes under-appreciated, all while continuously promoting our sport and our region. It is past time that we recognize and appreciate this member. The 2018 recipient of the Lewis-McClumpha award is *Peter Kroth*.

David Riggi Mechanic of the Year Award

Multiple nominations by Diane and Paul Malecki. "These MoHud members have spontaneously offered their hands and expertise in race car prep and race-day management as Diane has taken on the challenge of obtaining an SCCA competition license with #44 SM2."

Bob Karl EJ Smith Phil Shoemaker Jared Lendrum Bill Dergosits Ron Bass Dave Cowie

All have shown, as many MoHud members consistently show, the values of SCCA: "Excellence: The Spirit of a Competitor; Service: The Heart of a Volunteer; Passion: The Attitude of an Enthusiast; Team: The Art of Working Together; Experience: The Act of Wowing our Community; and Stewardship: The Mindset of an Owner."

Road Racing Awards at the Annual Meeting



top, left: Chip VanSlyke wins the car-themed-tie competition, as well as his Formula Ford awards.

top, right: Richard Welty receives a well-deserved worker award, and is acclaimed for his “probably drove up in a 1929 Speed Six Bentley LeMans Replica” ensemble. Sharp!

bottom, left: Marisol VanSlyke accepts the Lewis McClumpha award on behalf of Peter Kroth.

bottom, right: Individual pins going to the David Riggi race car mechanic awardees.

Time Trials Become a Hot Topic

Aashish Vemulapalli's article on the first SCCA Time Trials Nationals in the November KO created a lot of buzz among MoHud members, as overheard at the November and December meetings. That buzz has been mirrored on the national scene, as SCCA, GRIDLIFE and the Global Time Attack have announced formation of the North American Time Attack Council (NATA) to coordinate a single license program and cooperate in event scheduling to avoid regional date conflicts.

SCCA's Time Trials are seen as an entry-level and transition program, giving members a path from Track Night in America events to Club Racing Events (CRE) and full road racing. Mostly *prepared road cars*.

GRIDLIFE advertises itself as a "grass roots" organization that has been conducting drifting, track days, and time trials at five race courses in the midwest and south. Think *tuner cars*.

Global Time Attack is the wildest of the bunch. Its rules specify that "vehicles must be mass production road going vehicles, constructed by a recognized manufacturer, and currently/previously available as a factory OEM road going passenger vehicle with a government mandated VIN# or equivalent... [and] must have a silhouette that is largely faithful to the original with the general body shape and outline remaining largely true to the original stock body."

That word "largely" got your attention, didn't it?



As of this writing, we are aware of several MoHuders who are planning to participate in time trials events during 2019. One member has a spiffy new racer that will impress all when publicly unveiled.

Of course, the KO will keep you posted on this hot topic as the year moves along

2018 Solo Recap and Trophy Presentations *- Russ Burckhard*

This year we had 2 Test and Tunes, 6 points events, and helped with what was supposed to be 2 Street Survival events at SPAC. Unfortunately our first TRSS was cancelled due to an icy lot.

Our attendance increased this year to an average of 75 participants at each event. We had a total of about 164 different people all together. This year we increased from 13 to 22 competitors that made all of the events. We had another 17 that only missed one event. At the other end 77 only made it to one event. This is 24 more than last year.

So what do these numbers tell us? This year we had 1 less event than last year but we had 36 more competitors. Our average per event went up about 16 entrants. We had over 100 entrants at our first event. Our second best attended event had 89. Both of these events were more than our unusually high last event (81) at the McCarty Ave lot in 2017. I guess that this means that everyone likes our new site.

This year the Novice class continued to be popular with just 53 entrants. This is just a few more than what we had last year. The Street (formerly Stock) class grew again to 49 different competitors this year. The Street Touring class only grew by 1 competitor this year. Street Prepared lost a couple again for the second year in a row, Prepared/Modified gave back what it gained last year, and Pro class added 3. CAM, Classic American Muscle, only added 1. Most of the classes were consistent in size with the exception of Street which was our biggest gainer with 11 more than last year.

I would like to thank our 2018 site owner. As we were planning this year's schedule, I was notified that we would not be able to use the McCarty Ave OGS lot anymore. This left us without a season until *Miguel Teixeira* worked with the Empire State Aerosciences museum (<https://www.esam.org/>) and the airport to make this season happen. We had all 6 of our point's events there plus both of our test and tunes. We appreciate that they allowed us the use of their site and would encourage everyone to visit the museum at some point.

There are a lot of people I need to thank. All of our Safety Stewards that kept all of us safe this year and thanks to *Bruce Kosakoski* for holding a Steward training class. We have a new group of Safety Stewards that we added this year. *Miguel Teixeira* took care of registration. Course design was great again this year. *Jon Kirschman* had a clean slate with the new site and improved the courses at each event. *Eric Smith* continues to work his magic as the Timing and Scoring Chief both at the events and posting the results. *Carmine Russo* did a great job again as Chief of Tech. *Lyndon Peck* kept the events staffed as the Worker Chief. *Joe Cassidy* took over as Waiver Chief and made sure that everyone that came in through the gate had signed the waiver. And thanks to everyone else that has helped out with the events.

I would also like to thank my fellow Solo Advisory Committee members; *Andy Furlong*, *Aashish Vemulapalli*, *Adam Wright*, *Bruce Kosakoski*, *Tom Moeller*, *Eric Smith*, *Lyndon Peck*, *Miguel Teixeira*, and *Russ Gorman* for planning the season, updating the rules, and picking the trophy winners. A special thanks to all of the competitor/workers at every event. We couldn't do it without you. We also need to thank the Board of Directors and all of the Mohud members. We couldn't do it without your support.

Before we get to the trophies, I must thank my car owner: *my wife Tracey*. It is always a pleasure to co-drive with her. This year she finally beat me at a Poughkeepsie event. It was the last run of the last event of the season. Do you think I heard the last of that yet? ...It is going to be a long winter. Congratulations to her on this accomplishment. >>>

2018 Solo- Trophies

Class Winners

Street

7 th place from HS	Philip DeJan
6 th Place from HS	Jason Jendzeizyk
5 th Place from FS	Ken Relation
4 th Place from ES	Andrew Nicolella
3 rd Place from AS	Denver Tucker
2 nd Place from HS	Scott Monti
1 st Place from FS	Christopher Keenan

Street Prepared

3 rd place from DSP	Diane Malecki
1 st Place from CSP	David Cowie
1 st Place from ASP	Joe Cassidy
Prepared/Modified	
1 st Place from BM	David Burnham

Street Touring/Modified

4 th Place from STH	Russell Gorman
3 rd Place from STH	Tracey Burckhard
2 nd Place from STX	Adam Wright
1 st Place from STR	Nick Austin

Kart

3 rd Place from NJB	Angelina MacLeod
2 nd Place from JB	Isaiah Kalbfliesh
3 rd Place from KM	Salvatore Baisley
2 nd Place overall 1 st from JA	Aaron Wright
1 st Place from KM	Miguel Teixeira

Classic American Muscle

1 st Place from CAMT	Bill Hudson
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Novice

7 th Place from NHS	Curtis Klope
6 th Place from NSTS	Jonathon Scavone
5 th Place from NDSP	Matt Huchro
4 th Place from NCSP	Sam Abusen
2 nd Place from NHS	Sheri DeJan
2 nd Place from NHS	Brian Borie
1 st Place from NHS	Katherine Hogan

Pro

4 th Place from XBS	Phillip Redington
3 rd Place from XSTH	Russell Burckhard
2 nd Place from XEP/GS	Andrew Furlong
1 st Place from XSTS	Jon Staude



2018 Solo- Special Awards

Novice of the Year

This year's Novice classes had 4 drivers that were only separated by 9 points. One of these drivers went 4 for 4 in wins, but unfortunately couldn't attend the other 2 events and we would have liked to see what he would have done. Another driver had 2 second place finishes. Another driver had a win and a second. Another driver had 4 3rd place finishes. This year's winner had a win and accumulated the most points, the 2018 Novice Driver of the Year is *Steven Palleschi*.

Most Improved Driver

The winner for this year's Most Improved Driver had a good year last year. With a win, a second place, and two third places last year, he finished second in class last year. This year he started with a 15th place. Followed by a 7th, a 5th, a 10th, an 8th, and an 11th place finishes. So how is that an improvement? The Pax list answers that question. Last year he had an average Pax of 34th. This year he did much better. His Pax average was 15th. The difference in his finishes from last year were because he was a novice and moved up to a much harder class and a different car; this year he closed out the championship by finishing fifth in the Street class. The 2018 Most Improved Driver is *Ken Relation*.

Female Driver of the Year

This year we had a total of 5 women that qualified for yearend trophies. Tracey Burckhard, Diane Malecki, Katherine Hogan, Sheri DeJan, and Beverly Relyea. Tracey, Katherine, and Sheri were the top runners. All three accumulated a good amount of points. Only 3 points separated the three. This year we took into account the experience level of each driver, Class finishes, and the Pax finishes. The 2018 Female driver of the year is *Katherine Hogan*.

Driver of the Year

This year's Driver of the Year came down to 3 drivers. Perennial Champ Jon Staude, Nick Austin, and Scott Monti. The worst driver of the three averaged 4.4 on the Pax. All three were in different classes and combined for 12 out of 16 possible wins, 3 second places and a worst finish was 1 third place. The winner had 6 of those wins in his class. He had 4 first place, a second, and a third place overall Pax finishes for an impressive average of 1.5, The 2018 Driver of the Year is *Nick Austin*.

Cone Hunter

Last year we had a "My Course is Better" award which showcased the driver that had the most did not finishes and the most cones. Diane Malecki won. This year the DNF's were not as many. Probably due to the new site and easier to follow courses made by Jon Kirschman, who was at the low end of the list with 1 DNF and only 5 cones. Miguel had the most DNF's with 6, he also hit 7 cones. The DNF's were mostly due to mechanical issues, but the course is so big when you are in a kart and you *should* be able to see the cones better. Further up the list Russ Gorman was the first to double digits. The father/son team of Johnathon and myself were the first to hit the teens. Old age wins out because I had 2 DNF's to Johnathon's 1. I want to give credit to the top 10 on the list. The 10th person on the list was the Driver of the Year Nick Austin with 14 cones. 9th was Tracey with 15 cones and 3 dnf's. From 5th-8th had Saul Morse, Bruce Kosakoski, Ed Molocznik, and Scott Monti all killing the cones, but not hitting 20 yet. The top four is where we break into the 20 cones hit. Adam Wright had 21 and Denver Tucker had 25 cones. This leaves the final 2. Diane Malecki and Chris Keenan. The runner up had 27 cones while the winner had 31 cones. The interesting part of all of this is that the top 7 didn't have any DNF's. Diane Malecki is this year's Runner Up. The 2018 Cone-hunter is *Chris Keenan*.

2018 Solo- Additional Special Awards

Worker of the Year

As always I wish we could give out many of these awards and not to just one person. Many people help out throughout the year and I would like to take a moment to thank everyone that has helped with the Solo program this year. We had trouble coming up with a winner this year so we decided to not award a Worker of the Year award. It wasn't because we couldn't find one. It was because we couldn't narrow it down. So we came up with a new multiple award. It is the...

Spirit of Solo Award

We had a lot of people that contributed to the program this year and their efforts did not go unnoticed. If it were not for the efforts of this guy, we would not have had a season. He did all of the legwork in getting the site for us. But he didn't stop there. He contacted the Airport and made arrangements to use part of the active taxiway and remained on call the entire event in case of airplane traffic. He was one of the first to come and the last to leave, insuring that all FAA rules were followed. He also put together the "sweeping party," to help Mohud retain the site. And, he took care of Registration every event. Our first Spirit of Solo Award winner is *Miguel Teixeira*.

One of the stipulations of using the site is to have everyone that is on site sign the waiver. This guy stepped up and took over the Waiver Chief position. With that he stood guard over the gate and made sure that everyone that entered signed the waiver. He was so focused on manning the gate at the first event, that he didn't make any runs. The next Spirit of Solo Award winner is *Joe Cassidy*.

The next winner I met at one of our first times being at Guptil's. He was given a free entry and came to an event. He had a good time and has been coming back ever since. When he comes back, he doesn't come alone; he brings a parade of entrants. And it doesn't stop there. He takes care all of his recruits. He makes sure that they all get the help that they need when driving, and that they know what to do before and during the event. He also stays after and helps clean up. He has recruited more people than all of my efforts at Guptil's. The next Spirit of Solo Award winner is *Rey Waxali*.

The final winner stepped up our program to go with the changes to the Junior Kart rules. They made sure that all of the rules were adhered to and that all of the karters were compliant and safe. They also held the role of Solo Safety Steward when not competing or working with the karts. This person also helped out with instructing novices and helped with timing when the need arose. The next Spirit of Solo Award winner is *Tracey Burckhard*.

Congratulations to all of the Solo winners. We appreciate everyone's support of the Solo program and look forward to seeing you all next season. Thank you. - *Russ*



Trophy-level cone hunting requires a course free of distracting stones and aircraft parts.

Here, Chris Keenan benefits from the handiwork of the sweeping party's work.

2018 Solo- Seen at the Awards Ceremony -Russ & Jon Burckhard, MCs



Top, left: Nick Austin, Driver of the Year

Top, right: Isaiah Kalbfliesh, Jr B Karts

Mid, left: Multiple award winner Chris Keenan

Mid, right: Katherine Hogan, female driver of the Year

Bottom: The Spirit of Solo, Miguel Teixeira

Throughout: Russ' car-themed-tie entry

Membership Report- December 2018

-Jim Garry Mohud Membership Chairman

New Members as of December 15th

Amy Conroy, Albany
Jeremy Baye, Troy

Significant Anniversaries

December: Twenty Years- David Burnham
January: Ten Years- Hilton Tallman
Twenty Five Years- Lynn Zarzycki
Thirty Five Years- Richard Welty



Perspective

Mohud membership stands at 394 as of December 15th, 2018.

Throughout the past two years our membership numbers fluctuated a great deal, going from an all time high of 580 in the spring of 2017, down to 447 by the banquet that year. The cause of that drop remains unknown. Just more people than usual dropping off our roles.

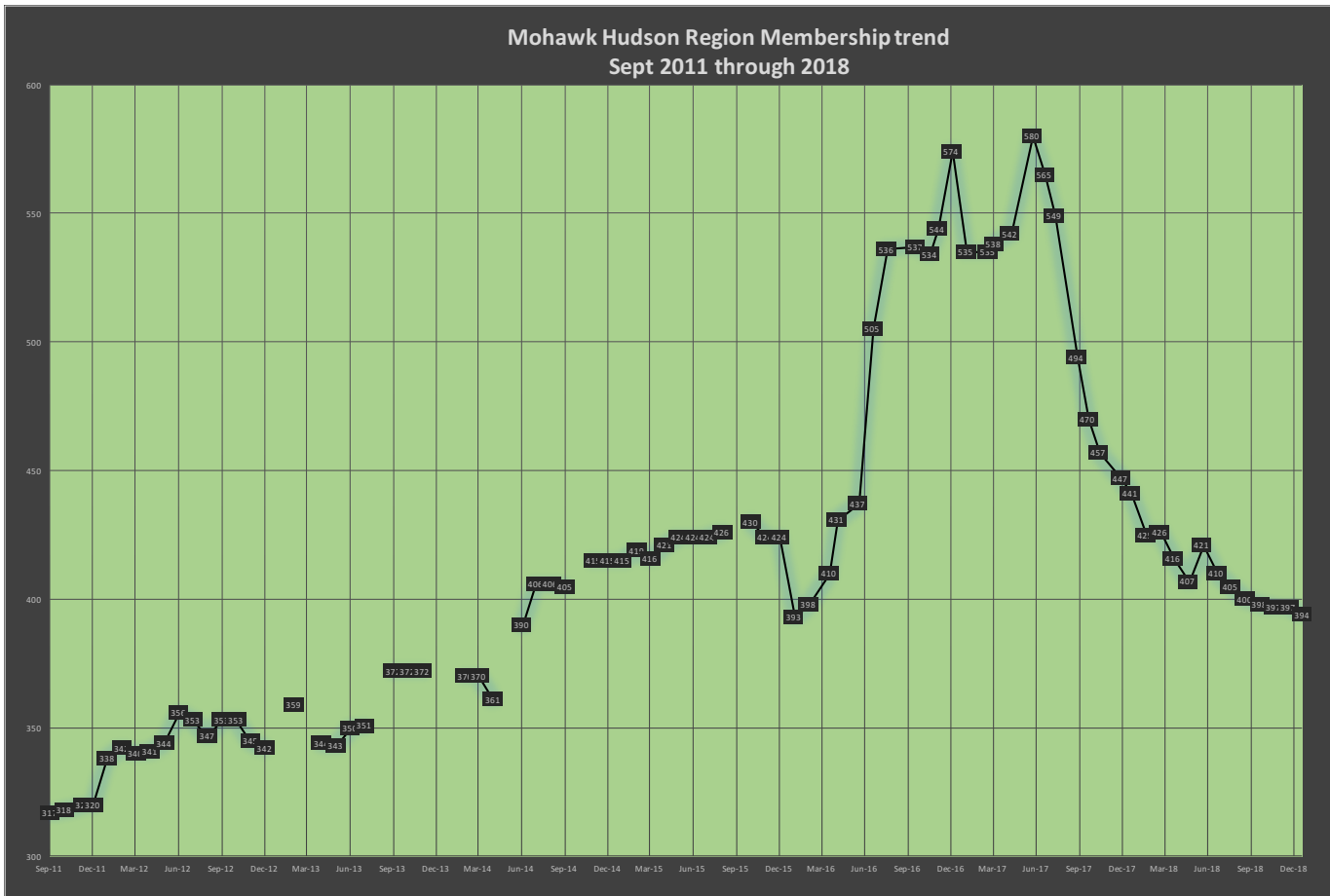
The decline continued through the first half of 2018 and has since leveled off. We now stand at 394 as of December 15th. (See graph on the next page)

Perhaps we have bottomed out.

Keep in mind that our numbers depend on acquiring new members and retention of our current members. The Good news in 2018 is that we gained 107 brand new members. The Bad news is we lost 257 old members, most but not all of them ranging in the 1 to 5 year category of seniority. Indeed, about 70 of those 257 were Teen Street Survival students.

There are two obvious goals for our Region beyond having fun. Those are attempting to bring new members into the fold and retaining the members we have. During the winter we will be discussing these issues at our membership meetings and I'll report our ideas here in the KO.

MoHud Membership Trend: 2011 - 2018



-Jim

The December 1st Annual Meeting date was also the 89th anniversary of the establishment of Scuderia Ferrari. (1929)

Pictured on these last two pages is one of the Scuderia's 1934 P3 Alfas. They are joined by a recent tribute cycle car. John Corey has in mind to build a similar car as an addition to his stable.



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Rally Chair

Trish Bucci trimar71@gmail.com

SOLO Chair

Russ Burckhard russtduck@gmail.com

Membership Chair

Jim Garry mhr.membership@gmail.com

Chief of Pits

Clark Nicholls cwnicholls@aol.com

Scrutineering (Tech)

Richard Welty: See his Facebook page

Chief, Flagging & Comm.

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Open. Contact Jim Bucci if interested ...

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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 Maggies, Western Avenue (Rt. 20), Albany, across from the SUNY-Albany main entrance.



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The KnockOff Journal

This Month...

- Jim Garry Goes to the Solo National Championships



2018 SCCA Solo Nationals in Lincoln, Nebraska

- Jim Garry

...I'm at the starting line, waiting for the starter's signal for my first run of the 2018 Solo National Championships. Despite it being only the first run, the pressure is on because the sun is going down fast and I might not get another run in conditions as good as this. The starter gives me the green. I flip down my visor and ... I see nothing. Nothing.

OK, let's back up four months before continuing that real-life scene.



Winter and Spring and a Litany of Problems

Winter work on the Cheetah hadn't gone well because my chronic Lyme bothers me much more in the winter months and so really slowed me down. Mike McMullen and I weren't ready to run the car until the last weekend in May, quite a late start. Over the years I've noticed that to be completely up to speed in the car takes about a dozen events. Starting late means that won't happen.

However, the car handled beautifully in early June at Seneca Army Depot for the Finger Lakes Tour. SCCA had lost this site but just reacquired it over the winter and I was glad to be back. It's a solid, large autocross site and offers beautiful views of the valley. Sampson State Park on Seneca Lake is literally 3 minutes away for those wishing to camp. Perhaps we could have a MoHud camp site next year. At any rate, BMod had a nice class of 8 drivers and with the Cheetah handling like a dream it resulted in a convincing win.

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Solo, cont'd, II...

... Yet the Cheetah over-heated several times that weekend, continuing a trend from the previous year that we had hoped had been cured. This was to afflict us nearly all season. While the front wing is critical to the car's good handling, it also completely blocks air from entering the radiator intake unless the fan is operating. We were already on the limit of controlling cooling with the old engine. The newer engine makes more horsepower than the old one. That means it also makes more heat.

Even with the fan, and the new radiator ductwork and shroud added over the winter, we lost a lot of water at the Tour. Half the time the bodywork was off to refill the radiator. On one run, my co-driver for that event, Russ Gorman, took a helmet face shield of water when the extreme pressure blew off a coolant hose on the front of the car. Thinking fast, he shut the engine down quickly. And happily for the rest of the attendees, the Cheetah doesn't run antifreeze. That saved a lot of heart burn for all.

Summer: continuing problems but great handling

Attempts to improve the cooling system would continue into July and then August. And just as frustrating was the intermittent electrical problem of the past few years. Despite the presence of the alternator, the battery often drains during the course of an event. Making matters worse, the paddle shifter uses a big blast of amps with every shift. If there is low voltage, the driver can experience a non-shift.



The Tower at Devins

After several over-heating incidents, the water pump finally melted at a July event when an air pocket developed and the pump burned out. Since it is external to the engine it's easy to replace. This was a small but excellent quality pump. I replaced it in kind and continued work to upgrade the rest of the cooling system.

As for the battery problem, I was going to try one with a larger capacity but the battery sits in a well in the monocoque and enlarging it required more work than I had time. Then at some point the rectifier burned out and the battery wasn't charging at all. So, I bought two rectifier replacements, one for now, another for the inevitable later.

Through all of this bother, the car was handling wonderfully and we were having lots of fun driving it. Needless to say, however, the reliability issues were distracting to the drivers and also caused us to lose more than our share of runs. It's ironic that when the car was slower, it was very reliable. Now it's fast and I've got all these issues to deal with. Perhaps not a coincidence.

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Solo, cont'd, III...



Nebraska

Finally in August, the cooling problem came to a head. On a hot Saturday at Devens we lost coolant again and with it the new water pump. I had a small spare of another brand but we couldn't make it fit the system. So, in effect, I really didn't have a spare. Happily for the moment, we were offered loaned cars to drive. Autocrossers are very giving people, rushing in to help their fellow racers and we appreciated being able to have some fun instead of making the 3-hour drive home empty handed.

In the late afternoon we drove west on the Mass Pike to see Bill at Small Fortune Racing. Bob Barone, a friendly A Mod driver, had a spare water pump. With quite a bit of adapting to carry out, Bill installed it. This water pump was a monster. Literally twice as large as mine and it had it's own cooling fan. It had one more thing. Its inlet and outlet were the same diameter as the rest of the Cheetah's cooling system lines. Those small quality pumps I had been using were based on the original setup in the car and used smaller inlet and outlets which in turn meant adapter hoses going from 1" to 3/4" into the pump and then back again on exiting the pump. This was a big restriction.



Ready to Leave

Solo, cont'd, IV...

The next day back at Devens the new water pump revealed to us that one of the biggest problems of the cooling system was the restriction. It was a bigger issue than I had expected. Sure, if we were driving down the road at 120 mph without a front wing we'd get all the cooling we needed. But that's not the reality of autocrossing the Cheetah.

Without the restriction the car ran all day long at a very reasonable temperature. With engine temperature never getting seriously high, I consciously felt a higher level of focus while driving. Just in time for Nationals.

In the week before leaving for Lincoln, NE and the National Championships I installed a small second battery in parallel with the main battery to add amperage to the system. It had to go in the footbox and required some dicey fabrication but it would turn out to do the job.

Nationals



Ken and Jim Arrive in Lincoln

It's been discussed in all of my previous Nationals articles but it's worth saying again. The trip to Nebraska (and Kansas before that) is a very relaxing, cathartic journey. You know that no matter how long you drive on the first day, you're not going to get there that day. So you just chill out, watch the changing scenery go by and enjoy the company of your co-driver, which for this year's Nationals was Ken Hurd, my old co-driver from C Mod days. Ken also co-drove the Cheetah at the 2016 Nationals when we experienced the transmission break in the Warm Up event. The subsequent engine pull, transmission repair, engine installation, and non-function of the unit is a story told in the January 2017 (<http://www.mohud-scca.org/ko/2017JanKO.pdf>) issue of the KO. I hoped that this year, Ken would get some runs. Like, all six. And me too.

The journey was uneventful and we arrived in Lincoln on Saturday afternoon. Plenty of time to set up our paddock spot, get registered and teched, and wander around to see people.

Course Walking



Solo, cont'd, V...

Sunday was our day for some test and tune runs along with breaking in the new tires. All went well except ... getting into the car to drive back to our paddock spot Ken experienced an electrical blackout. But he got it back simply by turning the master switch off and on again. We spent much of the afternoon pulling the switch, cleaning it, and re-installing it along with an emergency by-pass in case needed. It turned out it gave us no more problems but having the by-pass gave us some peace of mind.

As usual, Monday was the day to walk the courses. Some people don't like to walk the course they will be driving on the second day. But I like to get two walks in on that second course just to satisfy my curiosity and also so that when I walk it later it won't be brand new to me. This would turn out to be a life saver for us.

Later that day was the Solo Town Meeting followed by the traditional on-site taco dinner for all. At the Town Meeting a member spoke up and complained about the record number of competitors 1,375 strong. He insinuated that this was done merely for income and it would sacrifice the quality of the event. In response, Mike Cobb SCCA President and CEO stated that SCCA would never sacrifice a competitor's quality of experience for income.



At this point I almost spoke up but held my tongue. I wanted to remind him that the huge turnout had necessitated an extra competition heat, now at six, for the first time in Solo Nationals history. And the mere existence of such a heat meant that those drivers and workers would be subject to long days, finishing very late and be forced into an extremely late dinner. Competitors would have a couple hours less time to course walk in the evening. I regret not saying this. And little did I know how prescient it would have been.

Tuesday

Tuesday dawned full of rain. Ken and I made our way to the site early because my worker assignment was as a writer for SportsCar magazine during 2nd and 4th heats. It was pouring. Cats, dogs, and fish.

Watching cars navigate their way around the courses was awe inspiring and comical as there seemed to be at least several inches of water on the courses at all times. The severity of the splash and the bow wakes were something I don't think I've seen before at an autocross.



Solo, cont'd, VI...

As the day progressed, it became apparent to Ken and I that there was no way our sixth heat would be finished before sunset that day. I talked to a few officials about it but they all seemed focused solely on finishing all runs that day to keep the event moving. My entreaties were of no use. The event was now like the Titanic, heading inexorably toward that iceberg.

Mid-day walk-throughs were cancelled to try to make up time. Late in the day some pavement on the East Course (my class' course that day) broke up and some gates had to be moved. This delayed the event further. But at least the rain had finally stopped.

Sunset.

Finally the sixth heat came around, roughly 10 hours after the start of the first heat. It was so late in the day that a weak, low sun peaked out from under the heavy clouds. We mounted up our rain tires because the course was still puddled in places. Only one car was on slicks, it was Bill. Then one by one, all the other cars switched over. The Cheetah was one of the last cars to switch.



Co-driver Ken was first and had an ugly run which would turn out to be his best. Now it was my turn. I knew that the sun would be setting in 20 minutes and that this first run would offer the best conditions of the heat. I felt ready to attack the course.

The night before, I left my helmet in the trailer. I had never done that before but the van was so full of crap that I thought it safer. Now, as I waited on the start line I had little idea of the self-inflicted wound I had incurred. The starter waved his flag, I flipped down my visor, and saw only countless drops of heavy condensate across the entire face shield.

To make matters worse, I had decided to wear sunglasses because every time the car was going to be headed west, the sun would be right at the horizon, blinding me. But in the other 3 directions, sunglasses only further diminished the light entering my eyes. I should have gone with clear lenses.

With the green flag waving, wiping the visor was futile. It only moved the water around. I left the visor 1/2 open and hoped for the best... >>>

Solo, cont'd, VII...

Start Line Blindness

...and hoped for the best.

But the best was pretty sad. My run was tentative, hunting for cones, staring into the distance trying to spot the next gate. Reaching the slalom I got a cone or two. I can honestly say I never saw them until I was on them.



Oh well, maybe the light would hold out. What time is it? 7:30. Sun sets at what, 7:50. We waited. My co-driver went out and was off course. He didn't know where. It was my turn. It was about 8:10 pm. But the visor was clean and I was wearing my clear glasses. Here goes!

It was pretty dark, the heavy clouds in the west blocking much of the twilight. Not so dark for a nice walk with your wife but for a B Mod car, with no headlights, and capable of pretty quick speeds, it was dark. Again I felt like I was hunting, and my throttle foot was sadly uncommitted. Surprisingly my time left me in fourth place, just a few hundredths out of 3rd but well back from the first two cars whose drivers were also the youngest on the grid, both in their twenties. A coincidence? I don't think so. Good eyes and fearlessness.

Ken questioned his off course to the officials and he was offered a provisional run. He was the last car of the evening and it was really dark now. It was an epic run. He seemed so fast in the gloom. But his time was a few seconds off. Just too dark. And oh my, he was off course again.



A drivers meeting was held.

It was explained to us that we were to get our 3rd runs in the morning. Some folks complained loudly but what were you going to do at this point? I wrote a letter when I got home.

The problem was that anyone who took their 3rd run the next morning would not have time to walk the West Course, which was too dark to walk now and would only be open for walking the next morning with no mid-day walk-through.

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Solo, cont'd, VIII...

Driving the Cheetah back to paddock was a real trip. It was fully dark now. Ken drove behind me in the van but I still felt very insecure. I had a very conscious understanding of the risk I was taking getting back to the trailer. But helping things out was the fact that $\frac{3}{4}$ of the entrants had left the site already.

We found a nearby diner to grab some food. People from the sixth heat began filling the place starting at 8:45 to 9 pm. The waitress was surprised, as was the cook. But we ate and straggled back to the hotel for an early wake up. The forecast called for early morning rain, which would make the courses slower. We'd opt for walking the West Course instead.

And good thing we did because no one who took their 3rd runs was able to go faster unless they had lots of cones or off courses the previous evening. But we only had time for two walk-throughs. It would have to be enough.

Wednesday

Friend Jason volunteered to help me on the grid.

Wednesday was a significantly nicer day as we waited, worked, and prepared for our assault on the West Course. Before that though, I had some fun watching the classes I was assigned to report on in heats 2 and 4 and interviewing drivers. They all had something interesting to say. Then with food in hand I scampered back to the Cheetah's paddock spot. Rousing Ken we got the car out of the trailer and readied it. One thing had broken, a small home-made bracket holding the body to the splitter.



That was easy! I had spare material which we cut, drilled, and attached. Done. Charged the battery for the helluvit. I checked my helmet visor.

I know some people prefer to limit their course walks but these long, dynamic affairs have always beckoned me to walk them 8 or 9 times. Indeed, I usually walk them at least until I stop learning something. Today I'd be driving a course I had walked two times 48 hours ago and then again in the morning. And it was now about 9 hours after that morning's walks. Not optimal, but I was able to visualize the course. And there was no precipitation and the sun was reasonably high in the sky ... well, higher than yesterday. My helmet visor was clean. What more could I ask for.

Yet on my first run I simply zoned out. The 90° right turn after the start and first burst was similar to the start on the East Course. Except much, much shorter. I just wasn't looking ahead and I got to what should have been the braking zone a lot sooner than I'd anticipated. That's when I ran out of room and talent. Suddenly fully aware of my predicament, I broke hard and smashed through the wall of cones on the outside of the corner. Then a short trip through the grass, chasing a corner worker along the way.

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Solo, cont'd, IX...



I gathered the car and my wits, gingerly got back onto the course and proceeded, stifling embarrassment in order to better concentrate on the rest of the course. As with the day before, my first run was blown. This was not the right approach to your three runs on a Nationals course. And there was minor damage; the right side aero footplate had taken a hit and was bent upwards. I pulled it off. And grass was lodged in various slits and small openings on the underside of the car. You can see the damaged footplate in the photo above.

My second run was reasonably executed, but not inspired. However, it took me from way down the order back into a solid fourth place. First and second were pretty far away but I had one more shot at third.

Shift Dammit!

Last run. I was going to attack. Drive hard. It started out OK, I shifted to 3rd where I had only been in second gear before. Of course, upshifting means downshifting at some point. I got to the end of the first fast section and downshifted. But the car stayed in 3rd. I kept driving then went for 2nd at the next corner but the opportunity to downshift came and went with the car still in 3rd gear. "Damn this paddle shifter!"

Finally, I reached the last corner before the fast slalom to the finish. This time the shifter worked. But it was too little too late. As I coasted through the slow down lane I looked for my time with simple minded optimism and was not rewarded by what I saw. My second run would have to stand. But I had finished in fourth place. A solid trophy position, I was pleased but too far off the pace to be excited.

But this was much, much better than the previous two Nationals; 2016 when the transmission output shaft had snapped like a twig, and 2017 when the secondary throttle sensor had gone haywire and kept opening and closing the butterflies at random, ruining the event. Fourth is a good finish at a National Championship and I'm eying improvement for next year's National Championship event even if it's only a closing of the time gap and not position.

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Solo, cont'd, X...

Now we had to get to the banquet, which had already begun during sixth heat. We put the car away and decided to leave the trailer on site. We'd have to come back in the morning to hitch it up. With no time to take showers or tidy up we raced to the banquet facility on the other side of the city and were among the last to arrive, along with other sixth heat competitors. When Mike Cobb promised not to compromise the quality of the event back on Monday, I wondered if he had this in mind.

Home Again



Iowa

During the drive home I exchanged emails with the distributor of the paddle shifter. He reminded me that the system needs full vacuum to accomplish a downshift. If your foot is on the throttle, even a little, the thing won't work. After some self-analysis of my driving style, I realized that in some corners my feet are all over the place with the left foot on the brake and right foot tickling the throttle. THAT'S why I missed those downshifts. The fix? A second throttle spring to make throttle return more positive which will help in my effort to keep my foot out of the throttle long enough to accomplish a downshift.

Back home a few weeks later I travelled solo to Devens. Tamra Hunt was going to co-drive my car. For those who don't know Tamra, she's the real deal. The last two years she's run DSP at Nationals in the open class and finished 2nd each time, just a tenth out of first. I was looking forward to getting her and fiancé Andrew's input. By the end of the day I had a tiny lead over her but she had coned her last and fastest run. If clean, it would have put her in front of me by 0.3. Like I said, she's quick.

Her feedback on the car confirmed my understanding of it. She was impressed.



Solo, cont'd, XI...

Problems, Fixes, Unifying Theory

A mechanical issue from 2017 raised its ugly head at that event. The new secondary throttle sensor went berserk, just like the first one a year earlier. Serendipitously, this occurred at a regional event just AFTER the Nationals! If this had happened to us at this year's Nationals it would have been aggravating to say the least. We each lost a run because initially I misinterpreted Tamra's explanation as a fuel issue and merely added some gas. It wasn't until I took my run that I instantly recalled the car feeling like this last year. The fix this time was relatively rapid. Disconnect the sensor and then safety wire the secondary throttles open. If only I had known that a year ago.

After another solo drive at MoHud's new site, Mike and I attended a Devens double header a couple of weeks later consisting of a Renegade Miata Club event on Saturday followed by a New England Region event on Sunday. Miata Club splits co-drivers into separate heats and Mike ran first. The car was running a bit rough and during Mike's second run it got so rough he got out of the throttle and limped the car back to grid. Now what?!?

After trying several obvious possible fixes, we abandoned the idea of driving it again that weekend. The good people at these events again supplied us with co-drives in their cars and at least we were able to have a good time.

But What of the Cheetah?

After worrying that the issue was a serious mechanical problem in the engine, we learned that the car had bogged down when some electrical gremlin caused the fuel injection to behave funky, leaving liquid fuel in the cylinders. Talk about running rich! At the time of this writing we're still searching for the wiring problem.

This would explain most of the issues I experienced this year, neatly tying up all our mechanical problems: the burned-out rectifier, the battery not charging well (even with a new rectifier), the secondary throttle sensor getting silly, and something not discussed earlier: the master switch not shutting off the car. Wiring can be difficult to chase down but at least I know that eventually, all these issues will be resolved.

As for my driving, I did a lot of thinking this year. The car has so much cornering capability that it's easy to under-drive. At the same time, it's easy to drive stupidly and go too fast, missing the needed lines through elements. I'm pretty sure I didn't drive faster this year but I have a good idea of how to go about it now. One thing that seems necessary is you have to scare yourself, just a little. Otherwise you'll never come to terms with the car.

Finally, in 2018 it seemed I was always botching my last run for a less than desired finish. Always lost that half second I knew was there. Rarely putting it all together. Even when driving other people's cars, I'd figure out the car by the last run but wouldn't execute properly. This will be something I'll aim to change next year.

I can't wait to drive this car again.

>>>



- Jim