

THE KNOCK OFF

October 2022 Issue

MOHUD ON
FACEBOOK



MOHUD ON THE WEB



THE REPORT

MoHud puts on a good autocross! On Sunday, September 18, I and 48 others had a blast on a sunny day while enjoying another great course put together by Jon Kirschman, MoHud's course designer. I got to break in my new-to-me BMW M2 Competition, the first of many motorsports outings I hope to enjoy with it. Props to co-driver Sal Baisley for helping to figure out how to disable the nannies and let the BMW hang its tail out!

As I write this, last night I attended SCCA's quarterly Zoom meeting for Medium/Large Region's Leadership. SCCA likes to bring various regions of similar membership size together to discuss what SCCA is working on, as well as discuss challenges and solutions regions are finding while carrying out their missions. Topics that piqued my interest was a report from the SCCA's EVAC (Electric Vehicle Advisory Committee), and Kristen Poole of SCCA's Graphics Department. The EVAC takeaway for me was hearing that for now SCCA is putting the responsibility for EV safety on owners, asking them to provide info on how to handle them in various emergency and non-emergency situations. This will likely change as EV participation

evolves. One region offered up they investigated EV-specific fire bottles and found the costs about \$600-\$700 per bottle, and expirations in the 6-month range. Kristen Poole has undertaken a long-awaited refresh of the SCCA logo, pointing out that the Cs of "Car Club" in the logo are different sizes, and that needs to be fixed, among other clean up issues.

On **Saturday, January 14, 2023**, MoHud will be hosting its **Annual Meeting & Awards Banquet**. Once again, we'll be at the Saratoga Auto Museum in Saratoga Springs, NY. Save the date and plan to join us. Registration details will be coming next month.

THE REPORT (CONT.)

We're back to the **Gateway Diner, Albany**, for our **monthly membership meetings**. It would be great to see you and to get your input on various topics discussed about where our region is heading and what lies ahead. Please join us!

Finally, nominations will be due soon for anyone who wishes to run for a **MoHud officer position**. Until we get the nominating committee put together, please contact me if you're interested in running for a position.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sept. 26 – Oct. 2 – [SCCA Runoffs @ ViR](#), Danville VA. [Live streaming info on SCCA.com](#).

Oct. 5 – MoHud Membership Meeting @ [Gateway Diner, Albany NY](#).

Oct. 9 – [Autocross Event #3 @ Tech City Lot](#), Kingston NY.

Oct. 14-15 – [NER Championship Weekend @ TSMP](#), Thompson CT.

Oct. 16 – [Street Survival @ SAM](#), Saratoga Springs NY.

Jan. 14 – Annual Meeting & Awards Banquet, SAM, Saratoga Springs, NY.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT – JIM GARRY, MEMBERSHIP CHAIR

As of September 21st, Mohawk Hudson Region had 318 members. After the initial and expected drop in membership during the first year of the pandemic, our numbers rose again during the Spring of 2021 and more or less held steady until very recently. We've now seen a decline of about 15 members as compared to any time earlier this year. That's a loss of between 4 and 5 percent.

New Members

We had no new members in August. New members in September:

Jeffrey Morency, Queensbury
Brendan OBrien, Latham
Mark Calkins, Stuyvesant Falls

MEMBERSHIP REPORT (CONT.) – JIM GARRY, MEMBERSHIP CHAIR

Significant Anniversaries in August and September

Five Years

Michael Park
Michael Harrington
William Better

Ten Years

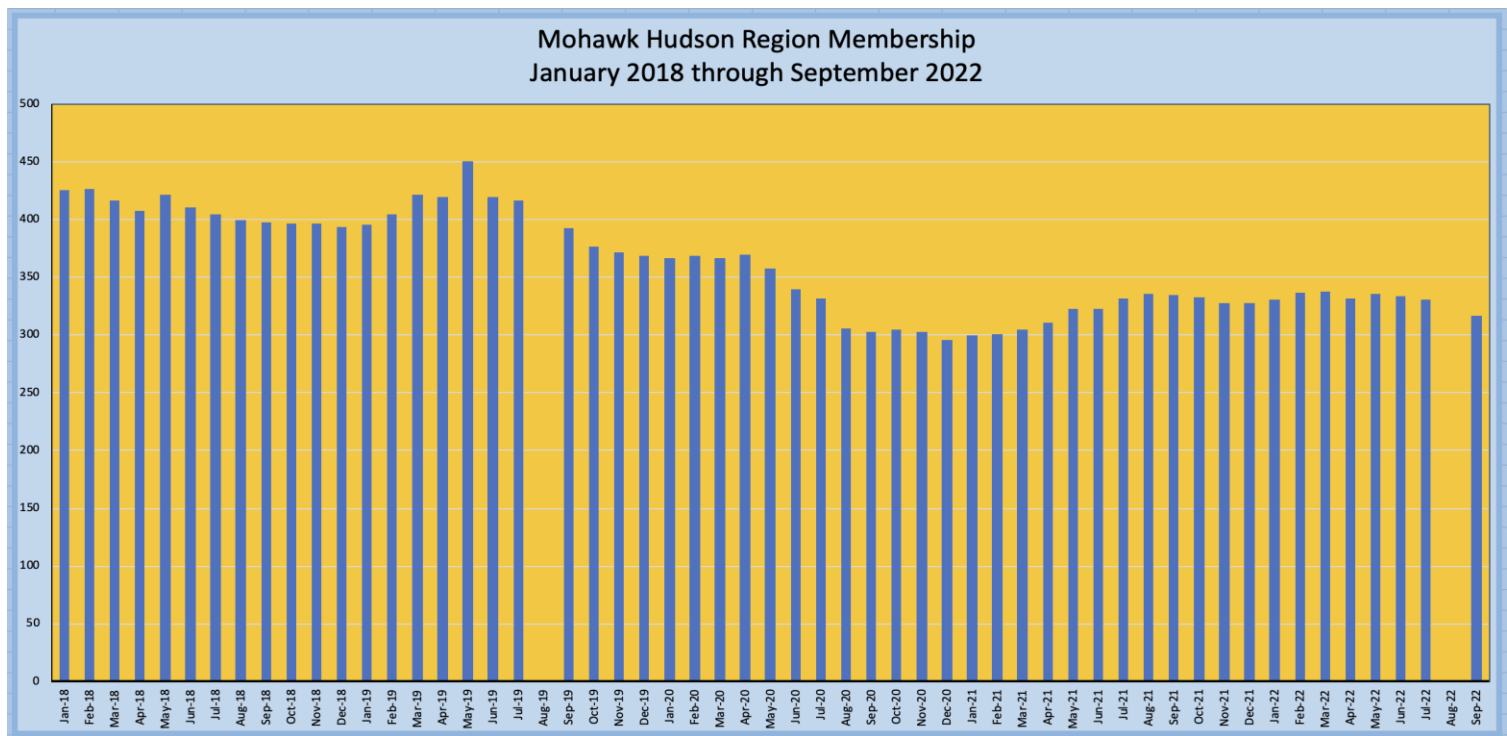
Greg Tewes

35 Years

Jim Bucci
James Quaile

55 Years

David Wachtel



ACTIVITIES REPORT – TRACEY BURCKHARD

An outing to member Dave Burnham's Citroen shop is being planned for October 23rd. Please check the website and our Facebook group for details when they are determined.

SOLO REPORT - RUSS BURCKHARD

We held event #2 at Tech City on September 18th. It was a very nice day, started sunny and got a little warm, but not bad. 49 participants worked their way around a nice course that Jon Kirschman put together. It had nice flow, but still had a good number of technical elements that kept you on your toes. Low 40 second times is where the fast cars were. Mid to upper 40's is where most of the competitors wound up. I had a mechanical failure that kept Tracey and I out of the running. A \$5. battery in the key remote died and the Rabbit would not leave the driveway. Tracey was forced to take the Civic as I had already left to get the event set up. I felt almost like I was a rookie. Taped on numbers, loaner helmet, and under inflated street tires. This was the most unprepared I have been since my rookie year. It was definitely a case of "run what you bring". The Civic is a plenty capable car based on the spanking I got at Nationals (more on that later) and the top PAX at this event was a Civic. The lack of competition tires added to the fun. We had the loudest tires at the event. I think Tracey won the battle on who could make the tires cry the most. Some quotes I heard; "she must hate those tires" and "she gets off the line better than Russ". Despite the uncompetitive tires, we had a blast. Tracey seemed to have a better overall feel of the car, but a mistake on the first hard right slowed her enough for me to be .06 ahead of her at the end of the event.

Mark Van De Carr set the fastest time of the day in his newly purchased formula car. Matt Huchro was the fastest full-bodied car. Damian Markle had an impressive first event topping the novice group. Top five of the Pax list was Nigel Boice, Matt Huchro, Scott Monti, Luke Partridge, and Max Lux-Ramos.

Nationals was a blast for Tracey and I as we made the journey for the second year in a row. We were joined out there by Matt Huchro and fellow Tech City competitors Mikey Albacete and Joe Austin. We all had our competition days on Thursday and Friday. GS and STS were at the same time but on different courses, so we were unable to cheer each other on. STS saw Joe Austin struggle. He couldn't catch a break and coned every one of his runs on day 1. Matt also had trouble with cones but was able to put a clean run in the books for his final run. It was a little slower than his best dirty run, so we know there was some more time there, but it was better than a 2 second penalty. 21st place was where he was standing going into day two. On day two Joe ran better, but the damage from day one was done, and he was unable to move up. Matt did better the second day improving throughout the day. He took about a second and a half off his first run on his final run. This allowed him to finish in the 20th position in a tough class of 37 entrants.

My first day was not up to my standards. My first run was my fastest. Unfortunately, it was dirty, and I got slower with each run. I was in 21st place after all runs were done. Not where I wanted to be. But in the grand scheme of things not bad. Day 2, I took the Kumhos off of the front and put a pair of Falkens on instead. The car felt better for me, and I was able to improve with each run on day two dropping 7 tenths from my first run. After my last run, I moved up to 19th place. I was good with a finish in the teens. That only lasted a few minutes as a two-driver car pulled ahead of me and dropped me back to 20th out of 33. There were two 2022 GTI's there. They seem to be the new car to have as one of them took the Championship and the other wound-up 7th. A 2015 2 door GTI was the

SOLO REPORT – (CONT.)

only other non- Civic ahead of me and if I was clean on day one, I would have been ahead of him and in the 16 th position. But as they say, that's racing.

Mikey was next to go. I was able to keep tabs on him as I was working grid for his heat. On his first day, he improved a couple of tenths each run. He was 25 th out of 33 at the end of the heat. Day 2 was a better for him. His third run was his best again and he moved up 3 places to 22nd. Like the rest of us, I bet he was wishing for one more run.

Tracey was in the final heat each day. Day 1 was on the smaller west course. While you would think we would do better on a smaller course, it was still big compared to what we are used to. She did like I did and ran her best run first. Luckily, she didn't cone, and her time was in striking distance of the lead. Almost a half a second out of first and 2 tenths out of second, she was one out of the trophies in third spot. The tire change suited her as well and she was a lot closer to the top. The girl that was in first coned on her first run and that put Tracey in first after the first run. The driver that was in second set her best run on her first run and didn't improve on her second run. A strong last run was taken away with a cone so that left Tracey and Jessi to battle for the top. While the second day was close (.077 difference) Tracey had to settle for second place about a half second out of the lead. I wish I went with the Falken's on the front for day one. I think it would have made up that difference. Regardless, Tracey won the second-place trophy out of a class of 6 and would have been 25th in the open class.

MoHud has 1 more event on October 9th.

ROAD RACING REPORT – PAUL MALECKI & RICHARD WELTY, CO-CHAIRS

(From EJ Smith...)

The Runoffs are now complete, and as a participant, I can tell you it was a wild time. You can follow along at the following links:

- Results - <https://www.scca.com/pages/2022-scca-runoffs-results>
- Friday races - <https://youtu.be/j48fWEGSjb4>
- Saturday races - https://youtu.be/KuVj1zwl_7l
- Sunday races - https://youtu.be/KuVj1zwl_7l

MoHud was represented by 7 members at this year's Runoffs (as best I can tell from registrations):

Workers

- Rich Alexander – F&C
- Sal Baisley – F&C
- Pete Kroth – F&C
- Eric Smith – F&C

Drivers

- Jared Lendrum - T3 (Started 13th, finished 7th, awarded the Hard Charger Award)
- Ken Lendrum - T4 (Started 17th, finished 17th)
- Charlie Campbell – FP (Started 4th, lead briefly, finished 3rd), SM (started 40th, finished 31st)

RALLY REPORT – KEN RELATION, RALLY CHAIR

We have a date set for a Fall Road Rally. The rally will be a Time-Speed-Distance (TSD) in Southern Saratoga County on Sunday, November 20th at 10:00am. We are excited to announce our first TSD and guarantee a fun time for all. Details will follow in the next couple weeks.

We hope you join us.

Thank you,

Ken & Michelle Relation

Road Rally Chairperson \ Rallymaster



THE KNOCK OFF JOURNAL

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In this issue:

- MoHud Time Trials - CART TT Event #2 Update, by Aashish Vemulapalli
- The Necessarily Brief History of the Mount Cathalia Hillclimb, by Greg Rickes
- Miata Is Always The (Time Trial) Answer, by Sal Baisley

MOHUD TIME TRIALS – CART TT EVENT #2 UPDATE – AASHISH VEMULAPALLI

By all accounts, MoHud had a very successful inaugural Time Trials season. The final event of our season concluded on Saturday, September 17th at Thompson Speedway. MoHud partnered with Connecticut Autocross and Rally Team (CART) which happens to be a sub-chapter of NER and their Time Trials driver.

A few weeks prior to the event, the TT committee reached out to CART with a structured plan on how we could also aid event flow in addition to driving at the event. As it turned out CART was also short of flaggers. Sal Baisley and Max LuxRamos signed up to flag at the event and I am very thankful for their gesture.

It helped that we presented a plan to help with event flow. The entries for the event surged to over 65 and per CART they even had to turn away a few people as they were short of transponders. Sal, Adam, Aaron, DJ and I arrived at Thompson by 7:00 AM on Saturday. Sal went to work right away and set up grid using cones from the solo program and cone toppers with numbers that DJ had procured for BMWCCA Club Racing. This was very well received by all the participants with post event comments saying how much it helped to be gridded by time.

Tech had to get through over 65 cars and Sal, DJ, Adam, and Aaron busied themselves in helping with Tech. It was impressive to watch the group working tech in action as they were able to complete tech within an hour allowing the event to start on time and run to schedule.

Elsewhere, Kathy Barnes and Dick Patullo from NER helped manage control and pit out and DJ having wrapped up his duties with Tech was stationed in pit lane to provide driver feedback and coaching. Aaron and I helped with grid and made sure cars were gridded according to times.

MOHUD TIME TRIALS – CART TT EVENT #2 UPDATE (CONT.)



Mohud member Adam Wright hoists his trophy

There were quite a few road racers from NER that found their way to this event. A chance meeting with Abhi Ghatak, the NER RE, at July's Thompson Time Trials National Tour gave me the opportunity to present the CART event as a good way for Abhi to get back on track following his recuperation from a medical issue. Abhi, in turn reached out and recruited quite a few NER racers to attend the event. Greg Amy was present driving his Porsche 914 in the Max 4 class competing with Adam and Aaron and later helping with Grid too.

Following a morning practice session for all groups, all subsequent sessions were gridded by time. Grid was set up like the Time Trials National Tour layout, and after two sessions everyone seemed to realize they needed to show up on time to grid and learned how to park in their assigned spot.

Sal was stationed at Turn 9 which is the corner leaving the oval, and I got a kick out of waving to him and seeing him enthusiastically wave back and cheer me on. I regret not meeting Max ahead of time, otherwise I would have made sure I waved to him as well while out on track.

At the end of the day, several CART members walked over to thank us for our support and help with the event flow. In my humble opinion, the credit completely goes to them. They were willing to accept our feedback that we compiled from running the first event and were willing to make us partners in helping them with the event. That worked out very well for CART as the entries surged and having a plan and assigned roles for people ensured that the event went smoothly. There were positive comments also on social media and IRL from drivers that said they loved the gridded start of events and who thought that the event was flowing really well compared to prior events. But for me personally, the icing on the cake was Ryan Nielson, CART President, saying that CART would be making up for the losses from their first event and turning a profit and thanking us for helping deliver a great event, AND, that MoHud proved that as much as we are a small contingent, that we can plan, take ownership of and run activities to facilitate a smooth event.

MOHUD TIME TRIALS – CART TT EVENT #2 UPDATE (CONT.)

I want to mention our TT rookies. James 'Iceman' Mulder, Aaron Wright, Matt Huchro, Nigel Boyce, Jeff Baertschi and Dave Cowie all took a chance with this new program and I am grateful for their support. At this event, Matt and Iceman were competing for Sport 5 honors while Aaron was out to prove he could outdrive his dad. Nigel had a close fight with me all season long and vastly improved since he first turned a wheel on track, and we had a very close battle for first place in Tuner 5. All these drivers, have improved very well over the season and it was good to see them at this event competing hard, but on friendly terms. Several of them have also won exemplary awards at Time Trials National Tours in addition to finishing on the podium.



MoHud members (L to R) Nigel Boyce, DJ McArdle, Dave Burnham, Jim Mulder, Sal Baisley

As we head into the off season, I am looking forward to updating the results of the championship once CART shares them. Following that will be meetings with the TT Committee to discuss end of season tasks as well as next season.

I will sign off with a note on what I think is the future of SCCA events. Attending the Time Trials National Tour at Pitt Race which was part of the Steel Cities End of Summer gala for the second year in a row, proved to me that the future for regions and the club lies in hosting mega events that combine all SCCA programs. With around 450 entrants participating in Time Trials, Club Racing, Drivers school, Autocross, Road Rally as well as Track Night in America and an additional Track event, the event justified the high cost of track rental. Likewise, I believe the regions here should

MOHUD TIME TRIALS – CART TT EVENT #2 UPDATE (CONT.)

explore combined events to ensure event return on investment. Typically, our members have their own chosen program flavor, but there are those that like to dabble in multiple programs. Pitt Race proved that. There were club racing aspirants that participated in the Time Trials while fulfilling the requirements needed to get a novice license and there was at least one autocrosser that went out on track during Time Attack sessions.

Some members like to draw comparisons to GridLife and how their events are so successful. GridLife draws drifters, Time Attackers, runs their own racing series and adds music or a car show into the mix. Observing the Steel Cities event, we also seem to have an answer to delivering events that will justify the cost of track rental. We must only have the desire to plan and ensure we can share that event space with multiple programs.

THE NECESSARILY BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MOUNT CATHALIA HILLCLIMB – GREG RICKES



Mohawk-Hudson Region has a tradition of supporting non-racing track events. The region and its members have a long history of competition in events such as hillclimbs and time trials, both SCCA-sanctioned and those organized by independent clubs. Going

back almost 50 years, in 1973 I participated in a time trial event at Lime Rock Park put on by the Liverpool Sports Car Club driving my Formula Vee. Many others were hillclimb regulars at venues like Keene New York, Mount Ascutney in New Hampshire, a little place called Hobo Hill (owned by a renowned circus clown of the time by the name of Emmett Kelly), and the annual SCCA event at Mount Equinox in Vermont.

2022 marks the 50th anniversary of Mohud's last attempt at what the SCCA then called "speed events". The location was Ellenville, New York, in the heart of the Catskills at a place called Mount Cathalia.

The Mount Cathalia Lodge was a ski resort attempting to revitalize itself after a period of decline. MoHud's Activity Director John Petrella had an enthusiasm for hillclimbs (he'd recently purchased a Mini-Marcos reputed to be the Scottish Hillclimb Champion in it's somewhat mysterious past). He convinced the MoHud leadership team that Mount Cathalia, which claimed to have recently repaved his access road, was a viable location. The event went on the calendar for September 9 & 10. The event was scheduled so as not to conflict with any events by the very popular Pennsylvania Hillclimb Association, with the idea that the proximity of the Catskills to the Keystone State would surely boost entries.

Though this was the first SCCA event at Mount Cathalia, sports car hillclimbs first started there in the Shawangunk Sports Car Club in the late 1950s, and later became a regular fixture for the Long Island-based South Shore Sports Car Club and Beer Drinking Society (yes, that's the full and correct name). The original course length was about a mile and half, but by the early '70s only about a mile was still useable. The short course started at the "A" frame house at the bottom of Mt. Mongola Road and finished parallel to the Mt. Cathalia swimming pool.

When the big weekend arrived there were, to say the least, some ominous signs. Most notable was the condition of the roadway, for which the claim of comprehensive repaving seemed dubious, though drive-able. The condition of the lodge was nothing to brag about either. Apparently, this was common knowledge among the PHA, as they were notable by their absence.



1. Mount Cathalia Lodge

MoHud had a full slate of activities that year, including two races (a regional at Thompson, and a National at Lime Rock), plus an active autocross series, and even a few rallies. For whatever reason the prospects of the Mount Cathalia venture didn't attract a lot of support from either competitors or the crucially important cadre of volunteer worker. Perhaps it was a blessing of sorts that the entry barely exceeded a dozen cars.

Among the drivers who did turn out were Bill Morris in his homebuilt Screaming Yellow Zonker B/Sports Racer. Bill was an enthusiastic 'climber and had competed at the iconic Mount Equinox event in both his Lotus Elan and later the Zonker, and Regional Exec Howard Geer in his street-driven Lotus Elan.



2. Bill Morris and his "Screaming Yellow Zonker"



3. Howard Greer's Lotus Elan

Autocross standout Art Frederick, who'd shown up to help with event staffing, got coerced into making the trip back to Chatham to fetch his Elan to bolster the entry on Sunday. Instigator Petrella ended up missing out after blowing the Mini-Cooper engine in the Marcos at an autocross a few weeks earlier.

Beyond that details on the actual event are slim, though Art Frederick remembers that his brief appearance was nonetheless successful with a second-place finish in the C Production class, which also somehow netted him runner-up in some sort of SCCA Northeast Division Hillclimb championship.

Like it's early venture at Whiteface Mountain, MoHud's foray at Mount Cathalia was a well-intentioned attempt to broaden the competition opportunities for the club that unfortunately would be one-and-done. If further evidence is needed that the venue was a big part of the problem, New York Region/SCCA, which at the time was a powerhouse in the northeast sports car landscape, tried a similar event a month later, with the same disappointing results. Mount Cathalia though wasn't quite done. The Adirondack Motor Enthusiast Club would host events there as late as 1974.



Sports Car hillclimbs aside, the fate of the Mount Cathalia Lodge continued to decline. The structure partially burned later in the 1970s. In the late 1980s the Lodge was again in the news, with the disappearance of a local teenager at a clandestine party on the abandoned property. He was never found.

By the early 2000s all that remained of the Lodge was the stone wall...



4 Mount Cathalia Lodge's stone wall

...but the roadway, though badly deteriorated, is still there.



Though it was but of moment in MoHud history a half century ago, memories of what might have been helped to revive the idea for a “speed event” program, which came to reality with this year’s debut of the Mohawk-Hudson Region Time Trial Championship.

Thanks to Howard and Nancy Geer and Craig Robertson for the period photos, and Mike Kamm for the sentimental journey from 2007

- Greg Rickes

MIATA IS ALWAYS THE (TIME TRIALS) ANSWER – SAL BAISLEY

This time just 2 years ago was my first time ever going to a circuit. At that time, I had done autocross for 4 years but never made it out to a track. In talking with some of the friendly people from MoHud I learned that the SCCA would be holding a TT (Time Trial) at Thompson, CT under strict COVID protocols. Despite being pushed to take my Mustang out to compete, I settled on volunteering for the event not knowing what the event consisted of or what I would be doing. My mind was blown that people I knew were coming out to compete at a national level, and quite successfully. What stood out to me even more was the level of comradery that existed among the competitors. Any issue that someone ran into, there were always people around more than willing to jump in and help. After the event my enabler, Adam (Wright), helped me replace the brake fluid in the Mustang and got me out to a September track day at Thompson and I was hooked. But 295/35R19 tires aren't cheap, so there must be a cheaper way to get on track. Miata. Is. Always. The. Answer.

I rescued my ex-drift Miata less than a month later. The car was entirely stripped, had aluminum seats, belts that expired in the 90's, primer, and a set of patch panels riveted over the original quarter panels. It could not have been an uglier car, but it was my mini race car. After driving it a bit that winter, I set the goal: go to the SCCA TT Nationals. The first time on track at Palmer was early April. There was frost on the ground heading out and I towed it on a trailer, loaned from Greg Goss, with winter tires on. First session out I had a Ferrari 488 behind me. Everywhere but the straight I was slowly squeaking away from them, then the V8 would scream to life. By the end of the day I was feeling fairly confident. Before making the trip down to the National Corvette Museum (NCM) I made it out to another track day. I figured the car was ready besides brakes. Adam again loaned me his garage. After bedding the brakes in on the backroads, I needed to cool down the brakes with a slow cool down. Of course, I end up hitting a deer in the mile loop, but we get back and just hammer the fender so it is away from the tire. This doesn't make the car look any worse than it already did.



The author at the 2021 NCM Time Trials in his (first) Miata

The trip from New York to NCM is about 1,000 miles. I figured I would start out and just sleep in the back seat of my truck when I needed to. After attempting to take a midday nap, I ended up doing 800 miles in one day. This is not something I will ever do again. The next day I made my way to the actual Corvette Museum in hopes of hiding in the AC. It wasn't much cooler, but at least I got to see some new C8s in person. The forecast for the week was brutal, 90 degrees each day only getting down to mid-70s at night. Trying to save money I decided that tent camping would be the best idea. Remember that my car is also primed black and has no heat insulation. When running it was probably about 120 degrees inside. Thankfully Mike Park, who also made the trip down, offered to let me use the shower at his hotel room and I gladly took him up on it.

The next day the event starts. I am running in class S6, the slowest group of the least modified cars. I and the 4 other Miata drivers joke about needing an S7 class for us as we compete against the 17 BRZs with us. We weren't competing against them; it was just a competition against ourselves and the clock. For those who don't know, the track at NCM is 3.15 miles long and has 23 numbered turns, but is really closer to 25 turns. Us slowpokes in S7 with about 130ish hp are lapping around 2:40 at the fastest. The big boys are about 40 seconds faster than us, but we are all still having a blast. After each session we talk among the group trying to figure out how best to help the others, creating gaps where needed and giving advice on how to get even quicker. The event goes great until the last day when I get a little too bold. The right-hand sweeper, "faux rouge", entices me to go full throttle, but I am off on my turn in point, putting me into the wall at about 45 mph. Not a great feeling but I am OK. Once I am back in paddock everyone around me helps to load it back on the trailer. I now have to look at it for the 1,000-mile ride home thinking about what the next step is.



The 2021 Palmer TT National Tour, prior to breaking the windshield...

June 2021: In just about another month the National TT is in the area at Palmer (Motorsports Park, MA), and I am already signed up. I could just take my Mustang, but the “mufflers” on the car won't satisfy the sound limits there. So, I decided to try and straighten the Miata out as much as possible to take it out again. Adam Wright again loaned me his garage. After about 20 hours of work after my full-time job in a month the car is straighter but is somehow uglier than after the crash. I got to the event the day before in the pouring rain for a test day. After doing about 60 down the river filled front straight the car didn't seem too bad, great. The next day the event starts, and it is still raining. In contrast to the event just a month earlier, this 4th of July weekend event we are all wearing coats due to the low 50's temps. Practice sessions go well; slow but well. I start heading onto the track and the moment I get to the blend line my hood flies up! I forgot my hood pins. The windshield cracks, meaning I can no longer run for the weekend. After 5 minutes of yelling in the car everyone helped me calm down. All that work and the car can't run anymore. So what do I do? I volunteer in the grid. I am already here and willing to help however I can. I have seen other people with this attitude here before and figure since I am not going anywhere, I might as well help out. I ended up having a good time despite the issues, mainly due to the approximately 20 friends from MoHud that also made the trip out. We even peer pressured Shelby (Blanchette) into her first time on track. No matter how often she said she wasn't having fun that day she was absolutely loving it. At the end of the event, I won the Spirit of Time Trials award for the event.



Sal's 2017 Ford Mustang GT takes to the track at Pittrace in 2021

The next event is at Pittrace. This is a combined TT, autox, club racing, driver school, and road rally. Outside of the SCCA there are also go karts and motorcycle safety training. A big part of the community of the TT program is the party that is held during one of the nights of the event. The Miller family smokes pulled pork for all the attendees for the events they can make it to. I got there that night with my Mustang around 8 PM as they are loading the smoker with the first of two batches of 20 pork butts. Aashish, Jeff, and I help them out for a couple hours, then get to prepping our own cars. After throwing the stickers and numbers on my car and setting up my tent, I lay down to sleep around 1AM. I realize that I have not watched (any track video) and quickly watch a single lap before going to bed. The track is amazing, us time trial participants running the South course and the club racers running the North course then alternating run groups of the full track the next day. Not once did I think I could ever say I took a turn at 120 mph, but for my own health I only managed that once. We leave after the awards, getting home around 2AM. I start my first day of my new job at 8AM that same morning.

So what of the drift Miata? Prior to the Palmer event I bought a rolling junkyard Miata chassis with aspirations of swapping over everything that isn't destroyed in the car to the new car. Both cars now live at Adam's house, occupying one of the bays of his garage. Prior to this endeavor the most complicated mechanical task I have done is probably replacing shocks and springs. I bring the junkyard car down to my dad with a box of pre bent pipes and say "this will only be about 20 hours of work". It comes back with a nice new roll cage. In the meantime, I replaced the oil pump in the motor. At full throttle the gauges only indicate that there is 25 psi of oil pressure, not good. After about 200 hours of work the car is back together. Is it put together right? Well...

No, the oil pan has a crack in the top that slowly leaks. The new clutch didn't fit so I had to put the one that was sitting on the ground for 2 months back in with hot spots. None of the factory gauges work anymore. The car is about 5 different colors and has 3 VINs on it. But it runs.

The first event I make it to I start at about 50 mph going down the straight, adding about 5 more mph each lap. There is some noise from a bad wheel bearing and the exhaust hitting, but it makes it through the day. The car can't hit 100 mph, but it is the most fun I have ever had on track. I decided at this point I can't make the trip out to NCM as this is only weeks before the event but will absolutely be there next year. Thankfully MoHud partnered with C.A.R.T. to start a regional TT championship so there are a couple of times to get out locally.

This past 4th of July weekend was the first time that I got out to a national TT with the new car. My goal was to get below 1:30 in the car at Thompson. My personal best was a 1:25 in the Mustang. The first session out I get a 1:29. Well, time to pack up and go home. I lower my goal to a sub 1:29. Next session out I get a 1:28. I figure that I can't possibly do any better than that. For day 1 I was right, the heat caused a slick track. Day 2 I go out for my first session and the car feels good. I cross the line and see 1:27.5 and celebrate like I won my first F1 race. Fist bumps, screaming, all of it. I ended up getting down to a 1:27.1, with more time it will easily be in the 1:26 range.



The latest Sal Special Miata, competing at the 2022 TT National Tour @ Thompson Speedway

“But that is about 2 seconds off what you did in the Mustang?”. I was able to take a car that I built with my own hands within 2 seconds of a factory-built car with about 4 times the power. Without the SCCA

TT program I would have never pushed myself to build a car like I did or push myself to drive like I did. Beyond personal driving I also would have never got into flagging, which has taken me to Trans AM and IMSA races. I would absolutely have never had the opportunity to coach a Track Night in America at a historic track like Lime Rock. And this has all been within the span of 2 years. The moment I got onto the track I was hooked. Who knows where this will take me next?

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