



CALIFORNIA SPEEDWAY NATIONAL JUNE 4-5, 2006

Saturday, June 4th

Practice Session, 10:10AM

This was the race I swore I wouldn't do again. Last year we ran at Fontana in July with temperatures over 100 degrees. The car was starting to overheat and I had to run the race with the heater on full blast. It was not only miserable for me but also the other racers, workers and those that came out to watch and help.

I thought that this weekend in June was going to be cooler. The early forecast showed temperatures in the 80's. So I registered for the race thinking that 80 degrees isn't too bad. As we got closer to the race weekend, the forecast were starting to show high 90's during the day. We're going to tough it out.

We've had a string of double race events all season and it feels strange to be running only one race for the weekend. And with the track within an hour's drive from the house; it should be a relatively easy weekend other than the heat.

In January, we ran well here in Fontana turning lap times close to 2m: 06 seconds. I elected not to do the test day on Friday, trying to conserve my energy for the weekend.

Since the last race, the SCCA has reduced the weight of the Honda by 50 pounds, so we took out the spare tire. I would also be able to run less fuel in the car to get closer to minimum weight. My strategy was to check the weight of the car frequently throughout the weekend to learn just how much fuel to put in the car. We also changed out a bad battery.

For this weekend's race, our Showroom Stock 'C' field included the Mini Coopers of Bill Hagerty, Jeff Gerkin and Tom Brecht – 3 Minis and my Honda.



*The #65 Evil Beast on the oval at 120mph!
Photo by Scott Webb.*

Even though Tom has his own BMW dealership in Escondido; his car is sponsored by his rival, Crevier BMW. The remainder of the cars that will be on course with us are two Touring 1 Corvettes and a Viper, several Touring 2 Nissan 350Zs, several Touring 3 Mazda RX-8s and Showroom Stock 'B' cars of BMW Z-4, Mazda Miatas, Mazda 6 and a new Honda Civic.

My practice session is average. My top speed on the oval was about 120mph. Comparatively, in January I was running 121mph. I kept trying to brake harder at the end of the straight, but locked up the front tires a couple of times and didn't make the turn. After we came in, I noticed that one of the front tires had delaminated. Ahead of me were Tom's Mini and Jeremy's Mazda 6. I seem to be able to keep up with them but not able to close the distance.

Bill H. was absent from practice and I was told that he was having clutch or transmission problems from Friday's Test day.

Someone had placed a lap timer on the front straight, instead of where all the other timers are located on the back straight. My onboard lap timer is showing split times instead of the time of a full lap. I'm not able to record my lap times and compare to January's times. After the race, I checked the website, MyLaps, and found that my best lap was a 2m: 09.7s. I had heard that Bill was turning lap times about 2m: 05seconds on Friday.



Delaminated Front Tire from heavy braking.

The temperature was about 84 degrees and getting warmer. I had the car weighed at 2,768 pounds: 38 pounds overweight. That's roughly 6 gallons of fuel too much.

After practice, Paul Bonaccorsi showed up for a visit on his new Suzuki Boulevard. It's a beautiful bike only a few days old.

Qualifying Session #1, 2:00PM

This was going to be the warmer of our two qualifying sessions with the second one scheduled for Sunday morning in the cooler temperatures. It's close to 93 degrees. It's important to get the most out of the car in the first couple of laps, otherwise, the car would heat up too much to be fast. We decided to try and go out last to get some clean space on the track and come in after one lap to check tire temperatures.

After the first lap, I pulled into the pits for Dan to get pressures. They hadn't quite come up to optimum pressure yet, so I went out to try to get a fast lap. I'm still getting split times on my lap timer, so I can't tell how fast my lap times are.

After 3 more laps, I bring it into the pits again for Dan to check pressures. He adjusts everything to 40 pounds and I head out again. With only enough time for one lap, it turns out to be my fastest lap of the session at 2m: 09.5s. Gerkin's Mini turns 2m: 06.8s and Tom's Mini turns 2m: 07.1s. Bill has commitments off the track and did not join us for this qualifying session.

We weighed the car again and it hit the scales at 2,744 pounds: 14 pounds overweight. After finishing the session, Dan was able to get tire temperatures. The outside of one of the tires was 198 degrees!

Saturday evening we joined the Bonaccorsi's at their newly remodeled home with some friends for a great barbecue and conversation.



Lynnie on Paul's new Suzuki ride.

Sunday, June 5th

Qualifying Session #2, 9:40AM

It's already 93 degrees this early in the morning similar to yesterday's afternoon qualifying. From our measurements yesterday, we were able to set the tire pressures more accurately before we head out to the track. As Dan and I go onto pre-grid, we notice that two lap timers are still in the wrong position and are going to produce split lap on the timer. Dan is kind enough to place all these timers on the ground so their beacons wouldn't produce false times.

This session will be shorter than yesterday's, so I elect to not come into the pits during the session. I'm driving more aggressively and I turn my fastest time on my third lap at 2m: 08.2s. This is 1.3seconds faster than yesterday's fast lap. The three Mini Coopers all post times about 2m: 06.1s to 2m: 06.9s. Hagerty is still having problems and only does a few laps to save his clutch for the race. Jeff Gerkin is the fastest of our group. Everyone has gone faster today.

The car weighs in at 2,732 pounds: 2 pounds over minimum weight. This is with a ¼ tankful of gas left in the car. This is cutting it too close!

Race, 2:00PM

Race temperature will be about 100 degrees. We heard that it may have been over 103 yesterday. I know I'm not going to have much today for the Mini, but my strategy is to hang in there and see what happens. At the last race, Gerkin and Hagerty traded paint and allowed me to close up on them. Anything can happen!



The team trying to beat the heat. How much blue plastic can you tie to an E-Z-Up?



The heat brings out the ugly in everyone, although Guido's good looks caught Laura Olson's eye.

California Speedway uses plastic cones and strip-berms to mark some of its turns. There are stacks of tires on the outside with heavy duty rubber sheets fastened. Halfway through the race, half the cones have been knocked over and some of the plastic berms have been move onto the track. Parts have fallen off some cars and are still on the course. With all the debris on course, I'm able to beat my best qualifying time and turn in a 2m:08.2s lap in this heat.

Towards the end of the race, Laura's new Miata is stopped on the outside of the left hand hairpin with a broken transmission. Sean's Miata and Jeremy's Mazda 6 came together in one of the last turns, lots of bent sheet metal. Jeff takes the win in our class with Tom's Mini in second and me in third.

SPECIAL THANKS

Thanks to:

- My wife, Lynn, great job on the radio calling out traffic and for her awesome turkey sandwiches.
- Dan for his help all weekend and for trusting me not to run him over in the hot pits.
- Lynne for the Ultimate Battle of the Cookies with the batch of chocolate chip versus the peanut butter/ chocolate chip cookies.
- Laura Olson for holding a paddock space.
- Sean Ewing in the Miata for working with me during qualifying. He has 5-6 weeks of recovery for his fractured hand caused during his crash in the race.
- Paul and Laura Bonaccorsi for a nice evening under the stars.
- Scott Webb for the photos.
- All the Cal Club Workers for bearing the heat.

**NEXT RACE
THE SCCA RUNOFFS
TOPEKA, KANSAS
OCTOBER**



Here's a shot of Dan thinking of ways to convince Lynne that he needs a bike