



## PHOENIX INTERNATIONAL RACEWAY DOUBLE NATIONAL JANUARY 13-14, 2006

### Thursday, January 12th

It's the first race of the season for me and the Evil #65. We start off the year with two races back to back at Phoenix International Raceway. Every time we return to the track, something has been changed from the previous year. This year is no exception as the track has added lighting for night NASCAR races and is currently installing an additional 14,000 seats with skyboxes. The Arizona Chapter of the SCCA has rearranged the schedule this weekend by providing 4 days of racing. Our class will be competing the first two days on Friday and Saturday. This is a good schedule for us as rain may be coming on Sunday morning.

We arrived at the track late on Thursday afternoon just in time to catch Phoenix traffic backed up on Hwy 10. We're greeted at registration by Lois Petersen's smile. This was the smoothest registration I've seen.

Today was also a test day and two of my competitors, Bill Hagerty in his Mini Cooper and Wiley Timbrook in his Mazda 3 played around today. Unfortunately, Wiley broke his transmission. As we entered the paddock, we noticed that his car was still up on jacks.

There is plenty of paddock space available and we find a spot near Laura Olson's SSB Miata. We unpacked the car and brought the Honda to the tech area to receive its annual inspection. Luckily, we had updated the seat harness and charged the fire extinguisher. No issues and the car is good for racing in 2006. Buckeye, about 25 miles from the track. This location allows us to miss the Phoenix traffic.



*Jim's Mini and me on the front straight.*

### Friday, January 13th

#### Practice No. 1

It's Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> and bad luck can strike at any time.

We're the first official session of the weekend and we start practice at 8:00am. The sun is barely over the hills and it's cold, about 35 degrees. The track won't have much rubber build-up and the cold temperatures will require some additional time to heat up the tires. The goal this morning is to get familiar with the course again and work on getting up to speed.

The practice session goes well and I'm quicker than last year's first session. A few of the cars spin because of cold tires. The few concrete patches on the track are slick and don't offer much traction. The sun is directly in the eyes in a few places and it's difficult to read the gauges on the dashboard.



*The Honda in post race impound.*

## Qualifying No. 1

This double national attracts racers from far away as this is one of the first events in the country. Competitors include Bill Hagerty in his Mini-Cooper S, Joe McClughan in his Mazda 3 from Texas, Wiley Timbrook in his Mazda 3 from Colorado, Jeff Gerkin and Jim Place in their Mini-Coopers.

In an effort to try and slow down the Mini-Coopers, the SCCA has changed the rules for this car. They have reduced the weight of the car and have mandated a restrictor plate to be placed in the throttle. This restrictor plate allows 25% less air into the engine and theoretically should slow down the cars. The Mini used to tear up front tires, so the reduction in weight should make the cars safer towards the end of the races, especially here at PIR. Last year, as you may recall, I had my two front tires delaminate. The outer surface of the rubber came off the carcass of the tire. Tire management is crucial here.

My qualifying session goes well as I turn in my quickest time on lap 5 with a 1min. 16.9seconds. This puts me in fourth position in our SSC class ahead of Jim Places Mini. Bill is fastest with a time of 1min. 14.2seconds. This is faster than the track record So much for slowing down the Minis! With the weight reduction and restrictor plate, they are faster than before. Thank you very much, SCCA!

During impound following qualifying, I'm asked to have the car weighed and give a fuel sample for testing. The car weighs in at 5 pounds over weight. This is too close for comfort. I resolve to eat more of Lynne's experimental recipe for peanut butter/chocolate chip cookies. My fuel passes the test.



*Front tires that have started to delaminate.*



*Cars in Pregrid for Race No. 2.*

## Race No. 1

This day is going fast. Practice at 8:00am, Qualifying at 10:30 and Race at 1:00pm.

Prior to our race, we grid up on the front straight and head out for two pace laps. The track temperature feels like it's in the 70s and it's a perfect day – so far. Lynn is on the radio and calls the green flag perfect. I'm able to make a jump on the cars around me as we head into Turns 1, 2 & 3. I'm trying to go three cars wide into Turn 2 along side Laura's Miata. She's running a little wide. With me on the outside, I'm moved off into the dirt/ grass causing me to slow. Jim sticks his Mini inside and gets by.

The pack is still tight and starts to enter the right hand Turn 7. It's Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>. Someone has hit someone; all I can see is Jeff's Mini and Laura' Miata sliding and spinning. A few other cars are taking evasive action. This doesn't look good, but I'm able to move around the parked cars on the inside. It's time to chase down Jim's yellow Mini.

## Race No. 1 (Continued)

After several laps, I'm able to get on his bumper and pull up alongside at the back hairpin. Jim has more top speed and is able to create a gap at the end of the front straight. I use the infield turns to catch back up. This goes on and on for quite a few laps. Ed Chang's SSB Acura has caught up to me and has passed me on the straight. Going into Turn 3, I can see the back of Ed's car start to wiggle right in front of me. I take evasive action and intentionally go off track to avoid him. I've fallen behind the Mini, which now has a nice gap on me.

I concentrate on cranking off consistent fast laps. Slowly, I start to close the distance to the Mini. A few more laps and I'll be on his tail. With about 5 laps to go, both Jim and I are about to be lapped by one of the Camaros. The Camaro passes me between Turns 7 & 8 and is about to pass the Mini at the hairpin, Turn 9. This is a great opportunity for me. I brake hard into the hairpin and tuck in behind the Camaro. As he makes an inside pass on the Mini, so do I. Lynn radios in and tells me that was the pass for third place. I just have to keep Jim's Mini behind me for the rest of the race. Jim seems to have slowed up a bit, which helps me create a gap. I'm able to finish the race and pick up third place. Later, Jim mentioned that he thought he was having tire problems and that 4<sup>th</sup> place would be better than a DNF (Did Not Finish).

It's still Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>. After parking the car in impound, I can see that Joe's Mazda 3 took a substantial hit to the rear passenger door. Hagerty's Mini has blue paint from the track's concrete walls. From what I gather, one of the SSB BMW Z4's lost it in front of the battle between Joe and Bill. Joe got the worst of it and Bill may have tagged the wall in avoidance. Other problems with this same car, allowed Joe to pass Bill for the SSC class win. Jeff's Mini has a broken front tie rod and body damage to the passenger door and the right rear fender. Wiley was not able to complete today, because his transmission parts have not arrived. Laura's Miata has right front damage to the fender and suspension.

After seeing the hit on Joe's Mazda 3, it's incredible that he was able to continue much less take the win.

It's Friday night in Buckeye. We find a great little Mexican restaurant in the old part of town. Unfortunately, I left my clear glasses in the Honda at the track. I'm walking around with prescription shades on at 8:30 at night with enchilada breath.



*Right front damage on Jeff's Mini Cooper.*

## Saturday, January 14th

### Practice No. 2

It's o'dark thirty now, but not as cold as yesterday morning. The rain is coming tomorrow and the sky is overcast. The tires experienced some blisters yesterday. I'll lower the tire pressures slightly to see if that helps. I go out and run about 10 laps to get comfortable in the car. This track is slightly better than yesterday now that some rubber has been laid down from Friday's racing.

### Qualifying No. 2

Qualifying goes a bit better for me today as I'm able to go almost a half second faster than Friday's best qualifying time. During qualifying, Lynn radios me that the white Z4 is closing on me and to be careful. He passes me at the end of the front straight. Going into Turn 2, he over slows the car and I struggle to avoid running into his bumper. I had been warned.

Today's time is 1min. 16.5 seconds. Jeff's has his Mini back together and beats Bill's record breaking time from Friday by 0.1 seconds. He is over 1.6 seconds faster than his Friday time. Wiley is back on board and qualifies second. Even though I bested yesterday's time, I'm at the back of the pack.

## Race No. 2

The entire SSB and SSC classes are pregridded on the front straight in two columns. In the right hand column are all the SSC cars back to back. This just looks funny. With two pace laps behind us, the green flag drops. Jim's Mini, who was alongside me, leaps forward and passes. Everyone is a bit more cautious today and there aren't any incidents. The problematic Z4 is nearby and safely is able to make some passes and move forward away from us.

Jim's Mini is in front of me again. He's keeping a good pace and not making any mistakes. Slightly ahead of him is Wiley's Mazda. I try to keep up the pace, but Jim is driving great and not giving up anything. I'm not able to close the gap. My race lap times are slightly slower than yesterday. This may be due to the lower tire pressures that I'm using today.

This race is fortunately uneventful. I finish behind Jim's Mini in 6<sup>th</sup> place. Jeff's Mini is able to take the class win with Joe's Mazda in second. Six Showroom Stock C cars entered. Two return home without damage. Fortunately, one of them is me.

The after race impound is going slowing. Tech officials are checking the car's computers and the Mini Cooper are requested to be prepared to show their restrictor plates. We quickly load up the car on the trailer for the 6-1/2 hour drive back home.



*Bill's Mini with his new 'PIR Stripe'.*



*The sheet metal gods are angry!  
Joe's Mazda 3 and its new aerodynamic shape.*

## Sunday, January 15th

With some extra time on our hands, Lynn and I head off for the dealerships to drive some potential SSC cars. We were able to test drive a BMW Mini-Cooper S. Fun car, stiff with good throttle response.

We then head to the Chevy dealer to try the Chevy Cobalt SS. This was an awful experience. The car was not responsive and the seats were very stiff. There was quite a bit of body roll in the corners. It's a typical American car!

We capped it off with a trip to the Mazda dealer for a ride in a Mazda 3. This car was very impressive for the money. Not quite as stiff as the Mini, but very responsive steering, handling and throttle. It's difficult to tell at street speeds if the Mini is faster than the Mazda.



*Phoenix International Raceway from space!*



*Third Place in Race No. 1.*

## SPECIAL THANKS

Thanks to:

- My wife, Lynn, great job on the radio calling out traffic.
- Dan for his help all weekend and for fixing the broken wheel stud.
- Lynne for creating the ultimate cookie: peanut butter and chocolate chip.
- The Arizona Region for a great schedule.
- Jacquelyn and George Bird for making the trip from Tucson to spend the day at the track.

**NEXT RACE  
CALIFORNIA SPEEDWAY  
JANUARY 27-29**



*Our paddock space. With nice weather, we didn't bother putting up the canopy.*