

## WILLOW SPRINGS RACEWAY FEBRUARY 27, 2006

Saturday, January 26th

### Practice, 10:35 AM

With the mid morning Practice session, we decided to tow the car to the track on Saturday instead of the night before. Laura Olson was kind enough to leave paddock space for us near her trailer.

Laura would not be driving this weekend as she was teaching at the driving school on the small track called The Streets of Willow. Sean Ewing would be driving her #22 SSB Mazda Miata for the weekend.

For our Showroom Stock 'C' class, there are 5 entries. The Mini Coopers of Jeff Gerken and Bill Hagerty were here as well as the Mazda 3 of Ali Naimi, the Nissan of Dono Soeharto and myself. Wiley Timbrook brought his Mazda 3 here but he was having tire delivery issues and chose not to run this weekend.

The schedule this weekend has us running with the Touring 1, 2 & 3 cars. These include the Viper, Corvette, Subarus and the Mazda RX-8s. We'll be watching our mirrors as this is another horsepower track.

Willow Springs is the second fastest track we race on with California Speedway being the fastest. This track is notorious for the dreaded Turn 9 that leads onto the front straight. This is a large decreasing radius right-hand turn that I enter at about 118 mph and connects the back straight with the front straight. If you mess up here, you end up in the dirt big time and not much fun. There are no markers for braking and turning. It's difficult to find the 'line' and even harder when you're behind someone.

During our Practice Session, I am able to beat last year's practice times. My air pressures from last year were quite high. This year I'm running my pressures closer to 40 psi in the front tires. With the temperature about 55 degrees, I'm able to get quickly up to speed.



*This place is going to the dogs. This is Laura's Kiara.*

Good news and bad news: Since the last race, the SCCA has decided to add a hundred pounds of ballast to the Mini Coopers. That's the good news. The bad news is that it doesn't apply this weekend. We're expecting the Minis to walk away with the event again. The hundred pounds should appear for the Firebird National in a couple of weeks from now.

Our other paddock neighbor this weekend is Rob Walker. He has brought out his incredibly beautiful Datsun/ Nissan racer that has been immaculately prepared. Phil Binks pointed out that all the rivets were polished before they were installed in all the locations. His car features a special intrusion panel made up of honeycombed aluminum, carbon fiber and metal that is located on the driver's side door for protection in side impacts. Rob practice session didn't go as planned. He came back to the paddock space and his crew began removing the rear differential. When they drained the diff, the smell of burnt gear oil filled the air and lingered for a while.



*Rob Walker's beautiful Datsun/ Nissan. Unfortunately, this was the same view for most of Saturday and Sunday morning.*

### **Qualifying Session, 2:30 PM**

It's warmed up to 70 degrees for our afternoon session. Dan and I adjusted the tire pressures to allow for the added temperature. Qualifying goes well and I'm able to match my best times from last year. The Minis are turning laps of 1min 40 seconds and my lap times are about 1min 44 seconds.

## **Sunday, January 27th**

### **Qualifying Session, 9:15 AM**

It's cool and cloudy. This is when the car makes the most power. With all the various types of cars, it's important to get some clean laps early in the session before the car heats up. Sure enough my second timed lap is my fastest with a time of 1min. 43.233 seconds. The fastest of the day is Bill Hagerty's Mini with a time of 1min. 38.98 seconds. Everyone has gone quicker today. I'll be starting in 5<sup>th</sup> position today right behind Dono's Nissan.

### **Race, 3:15 PM**

It's going to be a good race day with cloudy conditions and cool temperatures. Rain is expected for the evening and we can see rain clouds in the distance. Without a pace car, the faster Touring cars, who are setting the pace, are going a little too quick to gather up the whole field. It isn't until we are in Turn 9 that everyone is in order. As we enter the front straight the green flag is very late. It becomes a drag race to Turn #1. I am able to pass one of the SSB Miatas in the first turn and I manage to stay on Dono's tail going up the hill.

Hagerty manages to pass Gerken's Mini for the class lead on lap two with Ali's Mazda 3 hanging on to third place. I'm continuing to chase Dono's fourth place Nissan.



My Honda is slightly faster than Dono's Nissan going uphill and at Turn 3; I try an outside pass. I'm able to hold onto to it but he's directly on my tail. Going into Turn 9, Dono is able to dive deeper and retakes the position. On lap four, I'm able to make another pass and hold it until lap 8 when Dono repasses me again.

At lap 7, a yellow flag has been displayed at Turn 1 for Dave Schotz's T2 car that this parked off track near Turn 2.

Towards the end of the race, I'm able to pull alongside the Nissan going flat out into Turn #8. In my mirrors, I see one of the Subarus trying to pass both of us, but I wasn't about to slow down. Dono takes the following Turn 9 and I'm able to tuck up behind. This goes on and on.



*Sometimes I feel that I'm driving this!  
(This is what happens when you don't make Turn 9).*

With one lap remaining, Lynn gets on the radio and encourages me to go for it. I'm on his tail going into Turn #2. Going into Turn #3 I'm able to try the outside pass again and pull it off. I just have to keep him behind me for the rest of the lap. Dono is on my tail. Going into the last Turn 9, I forget to downshift. I come out of the corner in the wrong gear and the engine has fallen out of the VTEC. The engine must be at 5500 rpm or above for the VTEC feature to make more power. It's now a drag race to the checker flag. I drop down a gear to get some acceleration and I see Dono almost alongside. I try and take the shortest line to the check flag as possible. At the line, I'm ahead of Dono's Nissan by half a car's length!

## Race (Continued)

It was an exciting race dueling for position with Dono. We've raced together many times before and have confidence in each other's ability and clean racing.

At lap 14, Ali was able to pass Bill for second position. Gerken takes the class win.

At the end of the race, everyone has taken their car to impound. There's quite a discussion regarding racers that passed under the yellow flag that was displayed at Turn 1.

During the awards ceremony for our class, the third place went to Bill, second to Ali and first place to Jeff. However, when Jeff took the podium he announced that he was going to reshuffle the results. In a very gentlemanly manner, Jeff mentioned that he illegally passed under the yellow caution flag and was penalized two positions.

The official results list Ali's Mazda in first with Bill's Mini in second. Jeff's Mini is in third and I take fourth with Dono behind me.

## Personal Comments

I'm looking forward to the race at Firebird to see if the hundred pound ballast for the Mini Coopers will make much of a difference.



*Willow Springs International Raceway. Turn 9 is in the lower right hand corner. We drive the course clockwise. Turn 2 is in the lower left hand corner.*



*Lynne Wiegandt with Kiara, another satisfied cookie customer.*

## SPECIAL THANKS

Thanks to:

- My wife, Lynn, great job on the radio calling out traffic.
- Dan for his help all weekend. Rob Walker's crew should thank him as well for his recommendation on removing the rear axles.
- Lynne for bringing the cookies that were still very appetizing over the burnt gear oil smell.

Everyone wishes Jack Craig well wishes and a speedy recovery.

**NEXT RACE  
FIREBIRD RACEWAY  
DOUBLE NATIONAL  
MARCH 11 & 12**