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LONE STAR DRAFT

Guest Column

So, You Want to be a Corner Worker/Flagger!!

Notice, this is NOT a question. From my experience, this is a definite statement. For racing action, corner working on a road race course is the second best place on the track, second only to actually being in the driver's seat. To give an overview, the normal SCCA road race course is 1 ½ to 3 miles long consisting of 10-15 corners, 3/4 of which are staffed by a team of 2 to 4 corner workers/flaggers at each station. Each manned corner station is typically placed on the inside radius of the corner about 50 feet away from the racing surface. The station is surrounded with concrete barricades like those seen lining the median of an interstate, giving rock solid protection to the workers for the rare race car excursion to the inside of the apex. Naturally, the race cars tend to slide to the outside of curve when they lose control, and believe me, they often lose control. There are several primary purposes of the corner workers:

- To relay information to Race Control of track activity via radio.
- To protect and inform racers

and responding corner workers via flags.

- To be first responders for trackside emergencies.

The corner worker **team** ideally consists of a Captain, Communicator, Yellow Flagger, and Blue Flagger. Usually, however, the team is only 2 or 3 workers combining these duties. The Captain will usually be the most experienced and will fulfill this duty the entire day. The other duties will rotate throughout the day depending on the workers experience and ability. The Communicator obviously handles the radio communications by wearing the headset and talking with Race Control. The Yellow Flagger watches race activity for incidents from his corner to the next downstream corner and will immediately present a standing or waving yellow flag to oncoming racers, depending on the nature of the incident. The Blue Flagger watches upstream and will present a blue flag to an oncoming race car to notify them to watch their mirrors and give way to a lapping competitor. Watching the mirrors is not as easy while racing as one would imagine, I am told. Concentrating on the racing line, shifting gears, and braking, as well as watching other cars alongside and ahead seems to occupy their thoughts fully.

Guest Column (continued)

Working a corner is good mental exercise; eventually you will be able to keep track of each car as it flies by your station with mental notes of “car two three blue”, “car eight six yellow”, and so on. This is the lingo used to communicate observations to your fellow workers and Race Control. Common communications are “*car six nine white spun center track and continued*” or “*car one four blue spun off drivers left and stopped, will advise*”. An unexpected aspect of SCCA racing is that they race rain or shine, so you don’t need to worry about the event getting rained out. This, in fact, adds another degree of excitement to the racing. Imagine seeing a group of open wheel formula cars going down the track with the uncontained tire spray flinging high into the air; it is quite a spectacle.

SCCA has over 30 different race classifications that typically run, and many of these are combined into different race groups, usually 7 different groups each day. Each race group will run once in the morning and once again in the afternoon, with each session normally lasting 20 minutes. You will witness Corvettes, Camaros, and Mustangs, open wheel Formula cars, Miatas, RX7s, Porsches, BMWs, Panoz, Spec Racer Fords, and everything in between. Speeds can reach above 150 mph on the long straight, with typical average speeds above 70 mph. With this kind of speed and momentum, things get very exciting and I can promise your adrenalin will be flowing! To give an idea of some race group sizes, imagine 48 Spec Miatas coming toward your worker station in one giant herd (I worked Turn 3 at Texas World Speedway last spring at the Lone Star Region race and the Miatas sounded like a mad hornets nest)! With some of the other race groups, it is common to have 20 or more cars on course at a time.

SCCA encourages new workers to participate and is a friendly bunch of characters. New workers will get paired up with an experienced worker, so don’t be apprehensive if you think you’ll be overwhelmed. All experienced workers started out the same as you and they enjoy sharing their skills and experience with newbies. Moderately experienced SCCA corner workers qualify to work the annual Houston Grand Prix, a professional spectator race series at Reliant Park Houston consisting of Champ Car, Formula Atlantic, Star Formula Mazda, and American Le Mans Series, just to name of few.

The Lone Star Region home track, Texas World Speedway, is located outside of College Station, only 2 hours from Austin. Other Texas region tracks are Texas Motor Speedway near Arlington (Texas Region) and Motor Sports Ranch Houston (Houston Region). Having talked with many race car drivers, Texas World Speedway is considered to be the pinnacle race track of Texas SCCA due to track layout and elevation changes. Another benefit of being a corner worker: you get to drive your personal automobile on the race track out to your assigned corner station (of course, we expect you drive so as to not become an ‘incident’).

At the end of each racing day or during the 1 hour lunch break (lunches provided for workers), take a walk around the paddock and look at the cars up close and talk to the drivers and crew. You’ll be very welcomed and typically thanked for coming out to work the event as they know they would not be able to race without folks like us manning the corners. On Saturday after the racing finishes up, there is always a party in the paddock for all. This is a good chance to meet everyone and share your experiences from the race sessions. A good worker guide to get prepped for your first race can be found at: <http://www.texasscca.org/novice.pdf>. If you are interested in getting out and working track side, email me at bmcnaul@aol.com. I’ll be glad to answer any questions and get you hooked up at our next Club Race (road race). There are other race specialties available if one is not inclined to work up close to the actual racing. Things like timing and scoring, grid, tech inspection, sound control monitoring, and others. I look forward to meeting you at the next race.

Brent MCNaul

2007 RunOffs Report

The 2008 SCCA RunOffs proved to be another hotly contested event with the highs and lows that accompany these types of gatherings. On one hand there were torrential rain events that delayed the start of the day on Saturday, and on the other hand, there was the joy and celebration of crowning a new champion.

The changes made to the track proved to be a good move on Heartland Park's part. Both additions straightened out corners and infused more excitement for the competitors, separating the good drivers from the really good hot shoes. These areas were both well attended by spectators who gathered to witness all realms of driving ability during several weather conditions. There were other good viewing locations as well including the grandstands at the beginning of the drag strip and the huge earthen berm across from the paddock area. What's missing is the elevation changes that we road racers have come to know and love...but hey, it's Kansas we're talking about, so we learn to work with the surroundings.

By my count, the Southwest Division (SOWDIV) had 53 entrants into this year's event, 7 coming from Lone Star Region (LSR). LSR notables were Bill Johnson finishing 12th in the hotly contested Formula Fords, Karl Zimmerman (8th), Aaron McSpadden (13th) and Andrew Rushing (DNF) in the competitive Spec Miata field, and topping the local list were Joseph McClughan stepping onto the podium (3rd), Richard Clark (11th) and James Place (13th) in the Show-room Stock SS3 class.

For us SOWDIV backers, the low point might have come when SOWDIV Panoz drivers Tony Rivera and Mark Plummer accidentally collected Tom Patton in his Sunbeam Tiger at the first turn of the GT2 race. Tony definitely had his highs and lows this weekend. The highpoint, hands down, was watching Tom Thrash back up his 3rd place finish in GT3 with a National Championship in E Production and having fellow SOWDIV driver Tony Rivera beside him on the podium claiming the 2nd place position.

We've all seen Tom with his make-shift engine hoist off the back of his truck during events. Well folks, he got this one right! He made a pass for the lead going into turn one at the start and was only challenged once for the lead. For those who don't know, Tom started off in the SRX7 class and dabbled a bit in SRF. His initial claim to fame was due to his success of winning the SRX7 title in the Southwest Division. He later parlayed this success into a small parts and race car rental sideline business. His next step was moving up to the EP ranks. Tom tasted success and disappointment in the early going of this class...often winning...often detonating engines. He fabricated a boom crane that fit on the back of his truck to assist him with the many engine swaps he performed at the track. Gradually, his reliability increased as well as his presence in the upper echelon at the SCCA RunOffs. My hat's off to Tom...he's proved he's no fluke.

Congratulations to Tom and all of the competitors on their personal successes. The SCCA RunOffs offer some of the best competition around for both drivers and spectators. I went to the Formula One event this year at Indy with some buddies of mine. It was a tremendous display of racing technology. I told these friends that F1 was impressive but that the best wheel to wheel racing events were at the RunOffs. Throughout the entire field are America's best road racing amateurs, showing displays of skill, bravery and, yes, sometimes the "red mist" that takes over when someone is laying it all on the line. If you've never been to the RunOffs, make it a point to go. You'll be glad you did.

Gregg Matocha

The Draft...

Welcome to the electronic version of the Lone Star Region *Draft*. We hope you find this an easy way to keep up-to-date on activities and enjoy our newsletter in color! Future issues of *The Draft* will include more pictures along with information on what is happening in the region.

Submission deadline for articles and photos is the day of the board meeting. Comments? Questions? Contact Eric Jones (editor@lonestarscca.org or 512-249-6432) or Danny Benzer (re@lonestarscca.org)

Thank you for your support.

2007 Solo Nationals and Pro Solo Finale

Twenty Seven LSR members headed up to Topeka, KS to participate in the SCCA Solo Nationals and Pro Solo Finale events held at Heartland Park the week of September 21-28, 2007. As the results show it was a successful trip as several drivers came back with hardware to put on the mantel. Some even won trophies! A good time was had by all and we are looking forward to going back next year.

National Championships trophy winners:

SM2 - Erik Strelnieks - National Champion!

SM2L - Beth McClure-Strelnieks - National Champion!

GSL - Brianne Corn - 2nd

SSL - Iven Dudley - 2nd

FP - Tom Holt - 4th

BSP - Michael Wootton - 5th

FP - Rick Martinez - 5th

FP - Zack Barnes - 6th

BS - Eric Jones - 6th

GS - Dan Pedroza - 7th

STS - Andy Hollis - 6th

SS - Lance Adams - 10th

Pro Solo Finale:

SM2 - Erik Strelnieks - 1st

STS - Andy Hollis - 2nd

L2 - — Beth McClure-Strelnieks - 2nd



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Upholding our well deserved reputation for having fun on the road...Movie Night at the LSR Paddock Central, Solo Nationals.
Photo by Chris Williams

From the Driver's Perspective...

Sometimes, it's all about the position you put yourself in.

For example, while attending a recent board meeting of the Lone Star Region, I was sitting right between Paula Taylor and Eric Jones.... Paula being the Secretary for the Region and Eric being the editor of the Draft and the discussion turns to the The Lone Star Draft. Paula, on one side of me, is quizzing Eric about when the next issue will release. It's a friendly conversation. Eric, on the other side of me, replies that he is eager to publish, but it would be so much easier if there were more to publish... The conversation goes on. I'm watching this like I'm at a tennis match. How about including an article about the Southwest Division Meeting ...Yea ...Great... Who's gonna write it?.... Danny Benzer... Yea ...Great.... How about an article about the Last Chance Enduro and Double Regional... Yea ...Great..... Who's gonna write it? !

A hush falls over the board room... I'm looking at Paula, then at Eric....over to Danny, back to Paula, to Eric....the verbal volley has ceased. Nothing; just silence ... Oh Oh !... I can feel it! Here it comes! I knew this was gonna happen! Danny starts to speak ... " Hey, R-o-g-e-rrr ! ! "

Sometime, it's all about the position you put yourself in.

Date Line May 26th : Last Chance Enduro and Double Regional.

It was a dreary day, cloudy, on and off lite rain. Damp and muggy. Spec Racers are Group 2. Practice is no big deal, dry, but I was crabby; Hell, even my car was crabby and tougher to handle than a hyper- active 5 year old with ADD. After practice it starts to rain. My paddock spot isn't the best; near the drain that is partially clogged. My car is under my canopy but its sitting in about 3 inches of water. Did I mention I was crabby? Grid sheet comes out. I'm 7th of 13 Spec Racers... For a mid pack driver at least I'm consistent. I decide that the weather isn't going to favor me and I roll the car out from under the canopy into the lite rain and start to change to my rain tires. I'm not struggling to find the irony of having a canopy protecting a giant puddle form additional precipitation while I'm changing to wet tires in the rain, I begin to wonder ...

WHAT THE HELL AM I DOING ?

Tires changed. Time for lunch.

Time for pre- race grid. I'm fed and a little less crabby. Still raining, water on the track but I'm thinking ahead and not behind. Rain-X ..check, wet tires ..check,, disconnect sway bar..check. Time to make the donuts!

As soon as we exit grid the rain picks up. By turn one of the warm-up lap I'm soaked to the skin. Green flag.. I can't see a thing. Nothing but a grey cloud and the drone of 13 angry bees flatulating. .. Ah! I love the sound of a spec racer. ...I steer to the right, nothing but mist; not even a rain light. I follow the mist. I steer to the Left ... Hey, a little light over here. I am surrounded by cars. Five thousand RPM, I shift to fourth gear. Four thousand RPM in fourth gear and its time to think about turn one. I can't see it, but I think I turn.... Here.! We dive into turn 1, 1a and 2. Follow the mist. Oh! this is going to getting real interesting.... even scary. 13 Spec Racers drivers, all with delusions of grandeur, hydroplaning in a variety of directions at 80 plus miles per our, in a giant collective rooster tail, in a pouring rain and all I can think is. Now ! Now! finally, this is fun! This is why I came here. I'm not crabby now.

The race goes on. The rain tires stick pretty good. I finish 6th. 15 thousands out of 5th, 3 tenths out of 4th and I set fastest lap. My reputation as a midpack driver is intact.

See ya next race.

Roger Krebs



One more Solo award to mention that was given this year to one of our local drivers.

Each year the SCCA SEB chooses a Solo Driver of Eminence for the driver who has consistently demonstrated excellence behind the wheel and an exemplary degree of sportsmanship, dedication and unselfishness. Previous winners include big names such as Mark Daddio, Bob and Patty Tunnell, Tom Bootz, Bill Goodale and John Ames.

This year it was given to Erik Strelnieks who picked up two Championships in SM2 at the Pro Finale and Solo Championships.

Congrats to Erik!

Story by Dan Pedroza

Photo by Chris Williams

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We're on the web—
www.lonestarscca.org—
check out the latest on activities!!

LSR monthly Board of Directors meetings are normally held the first Wednesday of the month. The usual location is Athena Manufacturing, 9011 Tuscany Way, Austin, TX 78754. A big thanks to Bill Johnson for allowing us to use his conference room. All LSR members and guests are welcome to attend these meetings. We suggest you verify with a BoD member that the date or location of the meeting has not changed before you come by.

Coming Up:

- Jan 2 — LSR Monthly BOD meeting
- Jan 12 — SOWDIV Corporation Meeting, Rosanky Car Museum
- Jan 26 — LSR Annual awards banquet
- Feb 6 — LSR Monthly BOD meeting
- Feb 7-9 — SCCA National Convention, San Antonio
- Mar 6 — LSR Monthly BOD Meeting
- Mar 8-10 — LSR Double National, TWS