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Mid Ohio Sports Car Course/July 10-12, 2009/NASA Great Lakes

Mid-Ohio GTS Drivers Clean Up!

Friday was practice during the day and the format was great. Five short sessions--20 minutes each--gave you enough time to get on the track, heat up the tires and get in several quick laps. Having lots of short practices also made it good if you had things to work on or tweaks you wanted to try. For those like yours truly who hadn't raced in two months, it was a great chance to knock the rust off while trying a few new ideas....

Friday night was the enduro and I have to admit, even though I had signed up for it I've been on the fence about doing a 90 minute race. I've had all kinds of thoughts about wear-and-tear on the car and that it would eat up tires and all that. Having now done it (even ignoring the results), I am TOTALLY in for the next one. 90 minutes of time to get into a groove and really work on subtle changes to your line. It was great. I worked out ways to brake both later and differently that I probably couldn't have done otherwise. That was money well spent.

And while, yes, TECHNICALLY it wasn't a GTS event, well...let's just say GTS did pretty well. Better than pretty well, really.

By all rights, Jamie Frauenberg should have won overall. He basically led the entire race. Ah, but there's a catch: You have to make a pit stop sometime during the race and add 5 gallons of fuel. Jamie's pit crew (GTSers who shall remain nameless for reasons which will become all-too obvious in a moment) apparently used a turkey baster to transfer the gas from can to car because he spent nearly 7 minutes sitting dead in the pits while they on-loaded 5 gallons of gas.

In any case, while Jamie luxuriated in the comfort and safety of his BMW in the pits, and thanks to the excellent pit stop afforded by his crew, Jim Child and Scott Berkowitz, Scott Good was able to not only make up the gap between himself and Frauenberg but also append what turned out to be an insurmountable lead. In the end, Good won both his class (E1) and the race overall, followed by Steve Phillips. Frauenberg was relegated to third overall, a lap down, followed by Jack Baruth and then Mike Ward, meaning GTS cars took four of the five top overall enduro positions. Not too shabby. Extra bragging points for the cars from *das Vaterland*



But, hey, this is a GTS update!

Saturday and Sunday were real, which is to say "sprint," races. Two full-to-the-gills run groups of 60 cars each meant a busy track and lots of passing. GTS ran with the Big Boys: the Super Unlimited cars, American Iron, CMC, and the like.

We learned a number of things this weekend. First, the GTS1 guys love racing with GTS cars but do NOT like being stuck on a track with lots of big V8s. Can't say I blame them as those Corvettes at the front are MASSIVELY fast and the closing rates are quite unbelievable.

Saturday we managed to get in a "dry" qualifying session about 15 minutes before the skies opened and DUMPED rain on the track for 45 minutes. Lightning, thunder and a ton of rain. Then, just about as quickly as it started, it stopped, cleared up, cooled off, and we had a wonderful dry sunny afternoon for racing.

With 60 cars on the track, there were three separate starts; GTS being the third. By the end of the first lap the GTS leaders were already running through the stragglers of the AI and CMC cars and starting into the faster ones. Not long after that, the SU cars and those monster Corvettes started coming through from the back.

GTS1

In spite of their trepidation about running with the fast cars, the GTS1 guys came off the track with big smiles after a fun and hard-fought race. You want close racing? If you ADD UP the total gap between Kevin Gibson and Jim Ginter over the course of both the Saturday AND Sunday races you will still have less than 2.4 seconds in hand. In Sunday's race the two crossed the line a scant 0.620 seconds apart. THAT is close racing. Gibson will be happy to tell you he came out on top both days with Ginter second (and Bill Edwards in third), but that really doesn't do justice to the quality of the racing. Check out the lap chart and it looks like a zig-zag stitch with the two of them swapping the lead back and forth over and over again.

As if that weren't good enough, we managed to get GTS1 moved over to Group A for Sunday, which made their happy-racing-smiles even bigger because they could pretty much repeat Saturday's performance without having to constantly watch the mirrors for Kentucky-built cruise missiles coming from behind. Gibson again won the war but the battle was back and forth between him and Ginter as they swapped and re-swapped the lead from start to finish.



GTS2

I'm not sure what exactly was in the water but GTS2 was a bit of a Deutsche Demo Derby this weekend. On Saturday at literally the third turn of the race (the right-hander at the bottom of Madness) Jim Child and Teddy Worrell--up from North Carolina to take a Southern swipe at those of us from states victorious in the War of Northern Aggression--had a dispute about exactly who owned the inside of the turn. Worrell won the immediate argument spinning Child off the track long enough to make him start over dead last in GTS (minor damage to left fender and bumper cover, not-so-minor damage to attitude) but Child eventually won (the war, at least) when Worrell was DQ'd for not having filled out a Damage Report. (Note to self: Do the paperwork)

On Sunday it was the Red-Car-Roustabout-Joust with Mike Ward (red 968) and Enzo Campagnolo (red 944 S2) fighting over who REALLY got to go first through the Keyhole. Minor dings to both cars; no clear winner in the dispute although ultimately it was Campagnolo who took the DQ.

Around all of that fussiness was some pretty good racing.

Worrell brought his winged M3 home second in both Saturday's and Sunday's races but was DQ'd Saturday due to his paperwork, or lack thereof. Child, Saturday, was ultimately able to climb back to (an adjusted) 3rd place behind Mike Ward in 2nd and Scott Good with the win (and a new GTS2 track record at 1:38.412. Previous record: Jim Child with 1:39.040). Sunday, Child again finished third, this time behind Worrell in 2nd and Good again in first (with another slightly lower track record at 1:38.301).

Sunday's qualifying conditions were amazing, especially for GTS2. Conditions were perfect with moderate temperatures, a dry, not-too-hot track and the times showed it, topped off by three cars, Enzo Campagnolo, Jim Child and Teddy Worrell all in the 1:39s, and Scott Good who somehow managed two qualifying laps in the 1:37s with a best of 1:37.581.

GTS3

Here's a surprise: Scott Berkowitz won both days. Actually, considering the luck he's had this year, that actually is a (little bit of a) surprise. Korey Deason broke his string of bad luck with a strong 2nd on Saturday only to be side-lined partly through Sunday's race after three of his left rear wheel studs sheared off during the race. On a positive note, he can probably legitimately blame his crew for that rather than, well, let's just say his crew (which is to say, father) has been able to



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do a lot of finger-pointing this year and it's time Korey got to even the score a bit.

John Haas was there in his white 993 as was JB Knopp in his white M3 and the two of them spent Sunday going at it with one another. JB, on his first outing (with us, at least) this year brought Paul Hamm's former car home 3rd Saturday and 2nd on Sunday. Haas was also out for the first time this year and brought home 4th and 3rd place finishes respectively. Breck Lewis was here for--I'm pretty sure--his first NASA weekend. Welcome!

GTS4

GTS4 was a two-car field with Jamie Frauenberg in his blue camouflage M3 and Marc Ruhling in his fire-breathing 944 Turbo. Frauenberg's car looks really good--a lot better, frankly, than I'd expected it to--but he complained that it's hard to read his sponsor stickers before saying, "I guess I should have known...it IS camouflage, after all..." Some on-dyno work had Ruhling's car, still a bit heavy for GTS4, back making the kind of power it was supposed to and his lap times showed it. Unfortunately, continuing teething problems found him ending both races prematurely, making Frauenberg's hard work and fast driving result in gimme victories. Where are the rest of you GTS4 people? Jamie needs somebody to beat...er...race with!

The weekend saw many former and current GTS drivers watching from the wings. Brad Waite, currently on Injured Reserve after a foot operation was there Saturday, as was Gregg Lewis, also on IR due to a dog-picking-up incident (really? that's the best excuse you can come up with?). Sunday saw Sean Tillinghast, who is planning to be back in August to make GTS2 a real race, Paul Hamm, longingly inspecting his former ride and dreaming of his next, and Bob Lasser, in his beautiful Carrera GTS, who was just there to hang out and cheer on the GTS cars.

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