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NATIONAL AUTO SPORT ASSOCIATION

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Chicago, July 27, 2010, NASA Midwest, Inc.

Everybody's Gone *Racing!*

The July event at Autobahn saw 944 Spec racers really step up their game. Nine 944 Spec cars attended, with 8 racing, and Mark McCullough's stunning, newly "wrapped", Bennington Motorsports built car participating in HPDE. Racing is the right adjective for the rest of the cars! The newer guys went faster, while Anhil Blazquez had the adjustment bolts on his front anti-sway bar come loose slowing him down enough to be in the thick of the 5-car race for 3rd, and making for entertaining amounts dirt-tracking. Up front, Eric Kuhns & Neal Agran continued their fight like two brothers brawling – no holds barred on the track, but good friends afterward. This weekend resulted in more last-lap passes for the win, with the two splitting victories through the weekend. The mob behind them kept them in sight, with less than 4 seconds per lap between the slowest and fastest cars this weekend.

Four 944 Spec cars started the weekend running in the enduro, with all of them running the 3 hours in stifling heat. The majority of the cars finished in the top half of the field, led by the Kuhns & Agran entry, who finished one lap off the E3 pace after having spent 15 minutes in the pits early on, dealing with an overheating issue caused by a loose connector to the cooling fans. Even the brand new Privateer racing entry of father/son duo Jon & Ben Wilson ran well through the three hours – quite a feat for it's first time on track since being built by Benninton Motorsports. In fact, it was the first time that car moved under it's own power in about 7 years according to the Jon Wilson.

Because so much of the weekend's sprint racing action was mid-pack, this month's race report will focus on the action there, as told by Joel Karns, who came all the way from Kansas City, MO. Karns said that this was some of the best racing he's been part of.



Race 1 - Saturday

I qualified 5th. At the start of the race, I was managing traffic with all the Thunder Roadsters, Legends cars, and the Stang GT who were gridded behind us all coming up through the field. I got slowed up by a Spec Miata and Michael Palmer was able to pass me. Palmer then was able to catch Blazquez who was fighting a loose front sway bar, resulting in some impressive oversteer. They fought for several laps until Palmer was able to dive under Blazquez in turn 6. Palmer then pulled away from Blazquez as I caught Blazquez and we fought for several laps. I kept on Blazquez's bumper but had some cooling issues and had to run most of the straights outside of the draft to keep better airflow to the engine.

Finally, Blazquez caught a Spec Miata that slowed up in turn 2 and dropped 2 wheels off that initiated a tank slapper into turn 3. I got a run and passed him on the inside of turn 4. I then slowly reeled in Palmer, and executed a pass in the final laps on the inside of turn 4 using the good run I got out of Turn 3. I was able to hold him off for the remainder of the race to take my first Podium in 944-Spec (3rd).

Race 2 - Sunday

I qualified 6th (did not get a good qualifying lap with all the traffic). Before the start of the race I was given advice to be more aggressive in passing slower cars (especially cars not in our class) as I was not being obvious that I wanted to pass. Some video review showed my lines to be good, I just had to get comfortable with the full performance potential of my 944, and push a little harder. I started the race following Blazquez, Palmer and Sudhir Chikkara. On the first lap Palmer grazed the right rear of Chikkara at corner 9. This slowed Chikkara and the group and Palmer, Blazquez and I were able to pass Chikkara in the next few turns. On the next lap in Turn 1 Blazquez got under Palmer in the braking zone to pass Palmer for 3rd. On the following lap Blazquez ran wide in Turn 6 and went 4 wheels off and Palmer and I were able to pass him. Chikkara caught up to Blazquez and they scrapped for several laps. Palmer and I were running nose to tail for several laps - even managing to keep the leaders who were fighting tooth and nail in sight. Unfortunately on lap 5 or 6 my oil light went



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off as my oil pressure dropped to dangerously low levels and I slowed dramatically on the approach to Turn 8 and pulled into the pits.

944 Spec prides itself on driver development, and the Autobahn event really started to show that progress. In particular, Chikkara has found more speed through identifying issues by comparing Trackmate data with Kuhns. Interestingly, it was not in the areas that he would have thought. Newcomer Ben Wilson, debuting his new Bennington Motorsports prepared car, cut over 6 seconds off of his lap times over the weekend. Several other drivers really stepped up their game in the close competition throughout the field. All of the current 944 Spec drivers freely share tips and data to help enhance the competition out on the track, and this is proving to make for some great, tight racing in the series. Everyone is getting faster, and racing more closely, making for some of the most exciting amateur racing out there!

Michael Dalton receives the A Part Above "hard luck" award of \$75 towards replacement parts after a mechanical issue sidelined him early this race weekend.

For complete results and a list of lap records, please see www.nasamidwest.com

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