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Chicago, July 14, 2010, NASA Midwest, Inc.

GTS Drivers set Lap Records at BeaveRun

I don't know if you've heard; I don't know if word has made it to you yet, but last weekend's racing at BeaveRun was nothing if not eventful. And, that's eventful in both good and bad ways, from wrecked cars to new track records. Here's what went on....

I'm sure the weather didn't help. By 10 AM Saturday, temperatures were already above 80 degrees reaching, eventually, a nice balmy 87. No wind. Sunday, 80 degrees was history before 9AM and it kept climbing and climbing until finally reaching 93 degrees and about 75% humidity. Just the kind of weather you want for your double-race day in long underwear and full race gear. But, hey, it's summer and it's racing so sweaty long-johns are pretty much par for the course.

Bring plenty of water, boys.

GTS had cars representing GTS classes 1, 2, 3 and 4. GTS1 was the biggest field or, should I say, STARTED as the biggest GTS field. Maybe that's where I need to start.

GTS1

Here's the quick summary: GTS1 started the weekend with eight cars and finished the weekend with three.

Some were good (mechanical or schedule), some were bad (crash). Saturday, apparently, was Clutch Day at BeaveRun. Jean-Pierre Verbunt, Bill Edwards, and Mike Mallais ALL lost their clutches on Saturday. Mallais, who'd come all the way from Toronto (give or take), spent 12 hours lying on his back in a pool of sweat changing the clutch so he could make Sunday's races. A better man than me...I'd have put it on the trailer and watched the racing from the hill.

In Saturday's race, Ed Baus was The Man in GTS1. The BeaveRun track record for GTS1 coming into the weekend belonged to Christian Cook from back in June of 2006 with a 1:09.144. That was already looking dodgy by



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the finish of qualifying where Baus put down a cool 1:08.656 and Mallais, Brant Giere, John Graber and Verbunt were ALL in the 1:09s. Only Greg Panik had no qualifying time after missing that session working on car problems. Accordingly, he started at the back of GTS1 but managed to pass three other GTS1 cars on the run down to turn 1, starting what would be the first of a series of excellent races for Greg.

Mallais, after qualifying well, spent the rest of the day working on his clutch and missed the race. Panik, ignoring his lack of qualifying time, drove a great race from the back of the pack and earned himself a well-deserved third place, his first-ever podium. Congratulations Greg! At the very front of the field, though, it was Giere and Baus. Giere, who has been becoming a GTS1 driver to reckon with over the last few events, finished second with a best lap of 1:08.286, nearly a second under the record, but he was not to be done by Flying Ed Baus and the green-and-silver Polize special who not only won the race with a cool 15 second lead but also CRUSHED the lap record with a 1:07.639

The first GTS Man of the Year nominee has to be John Graber who discovered on the grid that one of the new injectors he'd just installed was leaking gas onto the motor. Not able to go out like that, he remained on the grid working in a frenzy as the race started and then eventually got it finished and took the car out on track just to bring the number of class starters up to 7 to improve the Hoosier contingency for those at the front. Considering there was no chance for him to get any of the tires (he finished 8 laps down) AND that his motor was at least partially covered in gas, it was a thoughtful move.

Saturday's race ended Baus, Giere, Panik, Edwards, Graber, Shannon McCue (after contact with an out of class M3), and JP Verbunt (clutch).

Sunday dawned bright and HOT. One qualifying session for both of Sunday's races meant things mattered. At the end of it, Baus was again in front (with a mid-1:08) followed by the rejuvenated Graber, the repaired Mallais, then Panik, Edwards and McCue. Did you notice Brant Giere not on the list? That wasn't an omission of his own choosing. Here's how it went down, in his own words: "I am pretty sore and stiff but otherwise OK. The car? I'll know more when I get it out and talk to Eric or whoever they recommend for body work. Basically a car got two off behind Baus and I



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and in his attempt to get back on track there was contact as we were approaching the kink. I spun and backed it into the guardrail and then banged and bounced along it for a hundred yards or so. Got all the panels except the left front fender. This happened on the first half of the first lap in qualifying! So I feel pretty down and beat up but well be ready for Mid-O one way or another...may have to dust of the 964 cup and race GTS 4." A bad way to start the day.

Race 1 on Sunday started with our guys running amidst a swarm of Miatas. Graber was back but Giere was out with his morning wall contact. Baus started on pole with Graber next door. Baus got the jump at the start and was able to fend him off the remainder of the race. "Cutting through the Spec Miatas was fun and uneventful," he said, but not everyone else was quite as lucky with traffic. On the first lap, Mallais made it past Graber in turn one as they swatted the Jap cars left and right, then extended his lead to three or four car-lengths as they approached the hairpin at the end of the back straight.

And, that's when things went bad.

Apparently, on the way into the right-hander hairpin, an overly-confident (or maybe underly-talented) SE30 driver went blowing by Graber at triple-digit speeds. He claimed later that his foot slipped off the brake but Graber said, "I glanced in my mirror as I was starting the turn and he just flashed by, Mike never saw him coming. The SE30's driver's front corner hit Mallais' passenger-side front wheel at, like, 70 mph." In that moment, Mallais' well-sorted and innovative wide-body 944, the one he'd just spent the entire previous day fixing the clutch in, was crushed. I don't know that a final opinion has been rendered yet but several reports say the car may very well have been totalled and that Mike may be out for the rest of the year. Fortunately, if there's a "fortunately" in all this, Mallais was personally unhurt in the incident.

Add in Saturday's contact between Shannon McCue and a BMW M3 running in the PT class (they got together in one of the fast parts sending the M3 into the wall with, I'm told, pretty severe damage), and it was a pretty rough weekend all around in GTS1. Oh, yeah, and somewhere along the way Greg Panik apparently lost his front header panel (between the headlights) only to recover it later virtually undamaged. A ray of sunshine



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in an otherwise dreary picture.

EVENTUALLY, they actually finished the race. Baus, Graber and Panik were the three still running at the end (Panik's second podium of the weekend).

Sunday's Race 2 saw just three GTS1 starters; Baus, Graber and Panik as everyone else had either broken, wrecked, was too darned hot to race, or had pulled out early to start the drive home. The start was just like the morning race with Baus jumping to an early lead. He started to pull away (not like in the morning) as Graber came over the radio to say that his cutting-out problem from Mid-Ohio and Putnam was back and that he was not going to be competition. Then, the skies opened. None of guys had even considered putting a windshield wiper on the car so they were "racing" on slicks with no vision. The race was black flagged when a swarm of Miatas went off in the kink.

As Panik described it, "Less than 10 minutes into the race the skies opened up. I couldn't see 20 feet in front of me. We were called in to pit lane and then, when it let up a little we were released. It was still raining. John Graber came in with handling issues and Ed Baus followed after driving enough laps for points. I stuck it out in the rain with no windshield wipers and driving very slowly to avoid sliding off the track. The Miatas with their treaded tires had better traction than I did on my Hoosiers but I finished the race in 1st place. It was an odd sequence of events that weekend that made it all happen."

Perseverance pays off for Mr. Panik at the end of a very eventful weekend in GTS1. A little TOO eventful, one might argue.

GTS2

Uncharacteristically, GTS2 started the weekend with only four cars after several registered drivers (including Yours Truly) had to pull out at the last minute for a variety of reasons. Like with GTS1, the GTS2 track record was four years old, a 1:06.372 set by Jim Child in 2006. And, just like with the GTS1 record, that record would take a pretty good beating over the course of the weekend and it was apparent early that that was going to be the case.



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As early as Saturday morning practice, the first anybody was on the track for the weekend, Enzo Campagnolo--who had never been to BeaveRun before--was already down to a 1:06.843, less than half a second off the record. The other three GTS2 cars, Brad Waite, Mike Ward, and Matt Markowicz, in that order, were all in the low 1:07s with a mere twelve-HUNDREDTHS covering the three of them. In practice, no less. Close racing? Um, yeah.

In qualifying, the gloves came off, the heat got turned up a notch, and everybody dropped into the 1:06s with Enzo again leading the pack with a very fast 1:06.114. Not an official track record (because it has to be set during a race), but fast enough for one. Did I mention that prior to this weekend Campagnolo had never turned a lap on BeaveRun? Um...yeah. Quick learner. Qualifying times were so closely packed between the four GTS2 cars that they were gridded contiguously (that's a fancy way of saying "right next to each other").

The start of Saturday's Thunder race was a mess, to be polite about it, but Waite took advantage of the confusion, got a great run, and passed both Ward and Campagnolo to take the early lead into the first turn. Enzo chased him like a stray dog after a juicy bone while Ward was literally on Campagnolo's bumper and nipping at his heels (some good video here: <http://www.vimeo.com/12934077>). Eventually, though, Campagnolo found a way past Waite and, well, that was pretty much the end of that. He was flying on the track, eventually posting a lap of 1:05.537, nearly a second under the record, and running hard to the end with a winning margin of 6.6 seconds.

In his wake, Ward and Waite were fighting door-to-door with Markowicz lurking just a few car-lengths behind and studying their lines. He (Markowicz) figured out a way to get on the gas and STAY on the gas from all the way back in turn 5 (the big long back straight starts at turn 7), giving him a big jump and more speed on that critical part of the track. Then, he worked out a double-apex solution to the turns 10/11 hairpin at the end of the straight which let him carry that speed deeper and a little longer at the other end, then turn quickly and start the acceleration onto the front straight earlier, too. Bottom line, he starts reeling in the dubyas (Get it? **W**ard and **W**aite? The "dubyas"? Their names start with "w"?...dubya? Oh,



never mind). Analyzing his data after the race, Matt discovered his new line onto the back straight was good for an extra 4 mph at the exit of turn 7 compared to his earlier (also fast) session. Try going 4mph faster through a familiar turn and you'll quickly figure out how important that is, particularly coming onto the track's longest straight.

Eventually all that newfound speed paid off (kinda) when Markowicz was able to get alongside Waite going down the back straight and then even pull a nose ahead just as they entered the "kink" leading into the braking zone for turn 10. That's when things got a little dicey. As Matt said, "Suddenly I was sliding sideways at 120 mph with a beautiful view of the inside guard rail. I debated turning into the slide or stomping on the brakes and clutch but by this time I had run out of asphalt and was approaching the guard rail on the outside of 10-11. I turned the wheel left into the slide, applied some throttle and, in a delayed reaction, I was able to regain control and head back up to the front straight." Gotta love four-wheel drive. I've heard from both drivers about this incident and neither is exactly sure how/why that all happened but fortunately it worked out for all concerned.

Well, kinda.

Again, from Markowicz: "I went around two more laps with vibrations, but the car drove straight. I thought to myself, *we must have just touched ever so slightly*. I don't recall feeling any hit, just suddenly I was sideways. I came in after two more laps to assess the car. After the race I meet up with Brad as we are both baffled by what transpired. To our best investigation we determine that at that speed in the kink we must have drifted into each other(it wouldn't take much as the rear end is already light at that point). No major damage involved just some muck clean up underbody and straightening of splitter supports." So, that ended Matt's day while the dubyas kept at it. For a while.

A few laps later, while Markowicz was still trying to decide if he had a problem or not, Waite was again in the middle of bad action when, making what observers have said was a good pass on the inside of a very slow Corvette in the kink, when the Corvette turned in on him, the two hit and both cars headed toward the guardrail. Waite, fortunately, was able to save it but the Corvette hit the guardrail pretty hard. Waite's day ended then, too.



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So, Saturday's slam-fest ended with Campagnolo in first followed by Mike Ward then Waite and Markowicz both in the pits four laps down.

Sunday dawned bright and hot. In qualifying, Enzo again put his stamp on the field by qualifying on the pole and winning the race. However, his shiny new track record, barely 24 hours old and still not out of its original wrapper was snatched unceremoniously from his loving hands, thrown on the ground and tromped into submission by Mike Ward who posted a 1:05.229 in the race in his effort to get to the front. Interestingly, he finished third of four in the race behind Enzo and the suddenly very fast Matt Markowicz only 4.6 seconds back.

Here's how Markowicz described it: "The race started in nice formation (much better than Saturday). I make a few adjustments to my double apex line through turns 10-11, making full use of the track surface (I'm still amazed at the data capture and its usefulness). I have now made the straight longer and can spend more time at wide open throttle. It takes a while to get close enough to Mike Ward, but eventually I'm able to take the pass safely. I finish in second place after Mike and and I work through traffic. Mike and I talk after the race about a car that seems to be holding us up a bit and possible racing out of class.

Waite was a distant fourth. Discretion being the better part of valor, after all his Saturday incidents (and missing his splitter which certainly didn't help matters), Waite decided to back it down a notch Sunday and go for a clean day of racing and no new marks to remove from his fenders. Successfully, I might add.

It's worth noting that the SLOWEST of the top three cars, Campagnolo, ran a 1:05.623 while Markowicz had a 1:05.429 and Ward the aforementioned 1:05.229. That's fast and close racing!

Enzo put his toys away for Sunday's second race to get a head start on his drive back to Motown, so Race 2 saw only 3 GTS2 cars. Ward and Markowicz fought it out tooth and nail, ending with Markowicz in front for an excellent win by a margin of just 0.165 seconds, with Waite following a respectable 35 seconds behind.



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GTS3

I would love to give you a long and detailed story about the weekend's GTS3 racing but, unfortunately, the boys are being mum about it. Can't get your name in lights without sharing a few details, gents!

Here's what I DO know:

Saturday's qualifying saw Kevin Ogrondnik at the front of the group with a flying 1:03.807, already a few ticks under Sasha Clark's 2006 record of 1:03.994. Ogrondnik was closely followed by Vern Anderson, who considers BeaveRun a home track (1:03.921), Korey Deason (1:04.466), and Michael Statnick (1:05.814). Marty Lutsch, working the kinks out of his new car, brought up the rear of GTS3.

Saturday's race was hard-fought with several class lead changes. Korey Deason's video: <http://www.vimeo.com/12946960>. Ultimately, then finished Anderson, Deason, Statnick, Ogrondnik, Lutsch. Interestingly, the top four cars had fastest laps separated by less than six-tenths of a second. Close stuff.

Sunday's qualifying saw Anderson on top with a 1:03.863, followed by Ogrondnik and Deason less than half a second behind, while Statnick and Lutsch filled out the field. Sunday's race 1 was extremely close (Korey's video here: <http://www.vimeo.com/12980146>) with them Anderson ultimately taking the checker followed by Deason and Ogrondnik BOTH less than four seconds behind. Notably, ALL THREE drivers were under the existing track record, if only by a touch. And, surprisingly, their speed was in reverse finish order. Anderson managed a 1:03.934, Deason a 1:03.929, and Ogrondnik, finishing in third, was fastest of all with a 1:03.916. THAT is close racing.

Race #2 saw only three GTS3 starters, Anderson, Ogrondnik, and Lutsch, with them both starting and finishing in that order. Anderson and Ogrondnik ran very close to one another, finishing with Anderson in front by only 1.395 seconds.

GTS4

GTS4 was a two-car field with Jeff Amos in his silver and pink 996 and Joe



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Magalotti in his beautiful green 911. Saturday, Magalotti's car broke a shifter prior to qualifying so had to start from the back of the GTS field. Unfortunately, making his way through the field, Magalotti got together with a slower car, effectively ending his weekend. Here's Amos' version of the weekend...

"With the green car out, I did have fun with the NASCAR Truck until he ran out of gas! LOL. Finished 1st in class (of course) and 3rd overall, damn Vipers! I was catching the black one but ran out of time. During race #2, had fun with Vern a GTS3 Bimmer who evidently knows the track well, set a track record chasing me, and is a past national BMW CCA champ I found out. He also saved my weekend by having a nut that disappeared Saturday morning from my lower shock mount. What a noise, scary! I did catch a hardball-size rock to the windshield from a AI Mustang during race #2. Wasn't planning on doing the third race but I need the points and Vern and a friend convinced me to stay. I think he wanted to try and beat me. Got a good start and was moving through the pack when I caught the NASCAR truck and was screwing around with him when he broke loose entering six. I lifted like a moron steered right and spun into the Armco. Cracked a taillight and tore a 3-inch hole in my bumper Got back on track after the safety crew said it was ok and finished the race."

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

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