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## GTS Drivers Make a Great Showing at Mid Ohio

Just to get it all out on the table, just so there's no question in anybody's mind, just so everybody is ABSOLUTELY CLEAR about my position on this particular subject, I'm going to go out on a limb right here in the very first sentence of this letter and say that there is no better, closer, or faster GTS1 or 2 racing anywhere in this fine country of ours than right here in the Great Lakes Region.

None. Nada. Zip. Zilch.

You think you're fast? Come here and prove it because there are a bunch of guys saying you're wrong.

As you may have inferred from the above, last weekend saw some GREAT racing at Mid-Ohio, including a couple of substantial reductions in the track record. While we had entries in all five GTS classes, the real story, as you may also have inferred, was in GTS1 and GTS2.

### **The war of the wings**

As recently as last year there were no wings, zero, in GTS1 and very few in GTS2. To be exact about it, among the Great Lakes Region's GTS2 regulars, at the beginning of last year only Paul Milligan (BMW), Matt Markowicz (Audi), and yours truly (Porsche) had wings...at least I think that's right (apologies if I forgot yours). Okay, there were some smaller spoiler-wings on some of the 968s but REAL wings, BIG wings, were few and far between. By mid- to late last season Sean Tillinghast had joined the fray in his modestly-winged Beemer and Brad Waite had added a big one to his 944. But that, as they say, was it.

Period. End of story.

On Saturday last, a total of ten GTS2 cars showed up to race, ALL OF WHICH had wings and splitters. Not spoiler-wings, WINGS. Big ones. And, just for good measure, about half the GTS1 class had added aerodynamics of some kind, too. And, everybody in both classes was fast.

How fast? VERY. Fast.

Let me give you just a little teaser: Prior to this weekend, the GTS1 track record for the Pro Course was set by Christian Cook way back in September 2007 with a 1:42.576. That record held for all of 2008 AND 2009 but was not only beaten this past weekend, it was CRUSHED. By almost two full seconds. In GTS2, the existing track record--which was lowered several times last year down to



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1:38.301 (Scott Good)--was dropped yet again this weekend by yet another full second (and change).

With all of GTS (except GTS1) running in the Thunder group--that's the faster race group for those who can't keep the names straight--GTS cars qualified in 4th (Korey Deason, GTS3), 5th (myself, GTS2) and, on Sunday, 6th (Enzo Campagnolo, GTS2) OVERALL. And remember, this is running with the Corvettes, Mustangs, Vipers, the triple-F R cars and everybody else, most of whom have V8s.

And, that's with--Korey excluded--sub-200 horsepower cars.

Oh yeah.

And, for the record, all of the cars involved were dynoed this weekend, so I can say with relative certainty that nobody was cheating (or if they were, they were very good at it). It was just damned fast racing, front to back.

Enough of a teaser for you? Fine. Let's get to the details:

## **GTS1**

Have you ever found yourself lying awake at night thinking, "I wonder how long it would take to change an axle in a 944 if you were REALLY trying"? I'm sure we all have at one time or another and--good news!--we now have an answer, courtesy of Ed Baus & Co. who managed the feat in 15 MINUTES FLAT thanks to the motivation provided by not starting the process until about 30 minutes before the green flag on Sunday.

There I was, minding my own business, wandering around the upper paddock--which had somehow become the unofficial GTS1 Central--when I looked over and saw John Graber running alongside the rear of the green-and-silver Baus *Polizei* 944 as it rolled through the pits. Personally, I was more than a little worried he was going to get his noggin snagged on the wing--which looked to be substantially wider than the car--but apparently he was listening to the axles. All I know is he jogged, relatively unscathed, along both sides of the car for a few yards then turned and SPRINTED back to his own pit, grabbed a jack, then sprinted across to Ed Baus' pit just as the racing cop car came to a halt. From there it was, excuse me ladies, nothing but assholes and elbows as the GTS1 contingent attacked the rear of Ed's car in earnest. Fifteen minutes later, good to go.

Damn.



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Including Ed and his brand spanking new axle, GTS1 enjoyed a field of 9 cars, more than enough to qualify for Hoosier contingency tires all the way down to third place, and oh did they fight for them. Mike Mallais and Mark Wolff hauled themselves all the way here from Canada to fight with the aforementioned John Graber and Ed Baus, along with regulars Brant Giere, Greg Panik, Bill Edwards, Jim Ginter, Nick DeCuzzi and Shannon McCue.

Everybody's winter work was on display. Graber, Baus and Panik were all sporting full-on wings and splitters, each with a different configuration. Baus had the wing from his GTS3 911 (<http://tinyurl.com/y25fdoj>), Graber had one he'd made in his garage (<http://tinyurl.com/y7eo8af>), and Panik had a two-stage aluminum job from IFC Racing. Giere, not completely buying into the wing thing took the middle road with a substantial front splitter and, following a little sphincter-tightening test session on Friday, a Lexan rear spoiler borrowed from Graber.

Of all the GTS1 contingent, Mallais may have done the most radical work this winter. Using a couple of extra fenders, a hunk of scrap sheet metal, a welder, and what I suspect is more than a little Bondo, he hand-fabricated a 4" wider 944. It was a mighty impressive bit of engineering and/or bodywork for a guy who claims not to really know what he was doing. You can see it here: <http://tinyurl.com/yykhlb8>

Not only did it look good, Mallais' car was a screamer, starting on pole and winning both days while, in the process, laying down a blistering 1:40.876 on Saturday for a new track record. Things were so quick on Saturday, in fact, that the top THREE GTS1 cars--Mallais, Graber and Baus--were all under the previous track record and the next two, Giere and DeCuzzi, were within about a second of it.

On Sunday, the morning practice looked like the whole GTS1 field was going to take a beating as Mallais put down a 1:40.735 and the next-closest car in class was Baus with a 1:43, but fear not. When it counted, which is to say during qualifying, Graber put his back into it and matched Mallais' 1:40.687 with a 1:40.998 of his own, followed by Baus, Giere, DeCuzzi and Ginter.

At the start, it looked like a two-man race with Graber and Mallais pulling away from the rest of the pack. Mallais' speed, though, was unbeatable and he could consistently pull a gap on Graber due in part to a continuing fuel pick-up problem in Graber's car. As they caught and dismissed with traffic, Graber was able to close the gap but ultimately Mallais had the measure of the field, ending the race with a 9.6 second gap over Giere and Baus, both of whom were able to take advantage of Graber's fuel issues. Nick DeCuzzi came home fifth--first of the non-aero cars--followed by Ginter, Panik, Edwards and McCue.



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Over the course of the weekend, Mallais, Graber, Baus and Giere ALL set personal best lap times. Great racing from front to back. Congratulations, guys!

## **GTS2**

As mentioned earlier, GTS2 had a field of 10 cars, every single one of which carrying a wing. And what a collection they were, from half a dozen or more sources, home-built and otherwise. Of them Enzo Campagnolo EASILY won the prize for biggest wing and biggest splitter (compensating for anything there, Enzo?) and his results confirm the value of that choice. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Enzo included, nearly all of the guys set new personal best lap times this weekend, which kept everybody excited. The best of those bests was my Saturday qualifying time of 1:36.891 which, although unofficial since it wasn't set during a race, was 1.5 seconds under the GTS2 lap record. That was followed by Sean Tillinghast with a 1:37 and Jim Stevens, Enzo, and Mike Ward, all of whom had laps in the 1:39s.

That great qualifying put me on the front row with Korey Deason (GTS3) and a full row of GTS3 and 4 cars between us and the next GTS2 car (Stevens, after Tillinghast was DQ'd at the dyno). As it turned out, the out-of-class buffer it didn't really matter because by the first turn Stevens and Paul Milligan--who had come from 6th to 2nd--were hot on my tail. Milligan fell to 3rd over Madness and then he and Brad Waite fought back and forth for 3 or 4 laps until they got together slightly and Waite found himself sliding backward on the track at the bottom of Madness with his eyes WIDE OPEN as Ward, Campagnolo and Milligan all scattered to avoid hitting him.

Tillinghast, who had been forced to start from the back, made the most of the confusion and jumped past Waite, Campagnolo, Ward AND Milligan to move from 7th to 3rd in the space of about 100 yards.

Everyone continued except Waite who thought he'd been hit much harder than he actually had. Following the rules to a T, he lowered his window net to alert the corner workers that he was OK only to have one of them run over and say, "Why are you sitting here?"

"I was hit," said Waite, imagining the rear of his car crushed in.

The corner worker took a quick reconnaissance run around the car then returned to the window and said, "Where?" Unfortunately, Waite can only re-connect his window net with the seatbelts off so by the time he had everything back in place he'd dropped several laps and decided to cut his losses and park it.



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Meanwhile Wellborn Jack--no, NOT Jack Wellborn, Wellborn Jack...Jack is his last name--who had completed Comp School just the day before, was flying around the track in his perfect white Porsche 944--a clone of Brad Waite's car minus the orange--in pursuit of Matt Markowicz's Audi A4. I think I owe Wellborn an apology for this because his car was so absolutely perfect that, in the GTS Driver's Meeting earlier in the day I'd joked about somebody needing to put a mark on it.

As it turned out, Wellborn marked it himself. Coming out of the Carousel with the beginning of a run on Markowicz, Jack got on the gas early and hard. A little too hard, it turned out, because when the front right tire touched the curbing on the right, the tail started to come around. He caught it, thought he had it, then as the road crested and turned toward the front straight the rear end came around again the other way, spinning him nose first into the end of the pit wall and throwing parts over half the track. And, putting a mighty big dent in the front of his formerly-perfect Porsche.

A lesser man may have cried, but not Wellborn. Not an hour after the incident he came bouncing into my garage. I asked if he was OK and he waved it off then said, "I'm sending it back to Steinel's and telling them to have it fixed for Putnam in May because I HAD A FUCKING GREAT TIME OUT THERE!" Yep. Junkie. We're going to like this guy.

Saturday's race ended with a win for me and a new official track record of 1:37.212, followed by Tillinghast who had made it past Stevens when he, too, spun, followed by Ward and Campagnolo. Second through 5th places were covered by less than two seconds, so you know the racing was hard and close.

Sunday was more of the same except suddenly Campagnolo was driving like the other Enzo. In qualifying, I took the class pole with a 1:36.868 but Enzo, showing a worrying disrespect for tradition, was HARD on my heels with a 1:36.890. We were followed by Tillinghast, Waite, Ward, Stevens and Milligan, ALL of whom were in the 1:37-1:39 range. THAT is some serious qualifying.

Early on in the race it looked like I might notch up another easy win as Tillinghast and Campagnolo got racy with one another, giving me the chance to pull out a reasonable lead. However, running on tires left over from Putnam Park last October, as the race wore on my car started pushing badly everywhere but in the fastest turns. Although the car was still turning reasonable lap times (only one of the last six laps wasn't in the 1:38s or less), once Campagnolo got rid of Tillinghast for good he put his head down and put on a driving exhibition.

With consecutive laps of 1:37.4, 1:37.9, 1:37.8 and 1:37.6 Enzo eliminated my 3-second lead and was literally on my rear bumper as the white flag flew and--



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considering the way he'd been catching me up until then--that was worrisomely close. EASILY close enough for him to have a shot for a pass. Knowing there was only one more lap, I drove a--well, let's just say that if he was going to get by he'd have to go the long way around.

However, in the Carousel, the 180-degree right hander just before the front straight, I over-cooked my braking, pushed toward the outside of the turn, and watch helplessly as Enzo tried for the inside pass (photo here: <http://tinyurl.com/y7w4wt6>). Ultimately, I managed to hold on for the win by a scant .289 seconds but another lap or two and Enzo would most certainly have taken the win.

Sunday's GTS race finished Good, Campagnolo, Tillinghast, Ward, Stevens, Markowicz, Lewis, then Waite, who had to retire early with a deflating tire and Milligan, who'd zinged his motor about halfway through. Like with GTS1, Hoosiers to the top three places.

### **GTS3**

The weekend's GTS3 racing can be summed up with two words: Korey Deason. Korey qualified on the GTS pole both days and won both races, although not without Jamie Frauenberg (who moved himself down from GTS4 to have more cars to race with) making him work for it.

Saturday's race saw the two of them mixing it up with each other and Jeff Amos (GTS4 911) from flag to flag. Everybody was running very hard, swapping places and dicing for the lead. Ultimately, it was all Korey, followed by Frauenberg, Joseph Fawsitt, and Bob Smith who had been forced to retire early.

On Sunday it was more of the same except Korey led from flag to flag, followed by Frauenberg (18 seconds back) and Fawsitt.

### **GTS4 and GTS5**

The two fastest GTS classes were, sadly, single-car classes this weekend. The previously-mentioned Jeff Amos brought his beautiful siver and pink (really, it looks better than it sounds. See here: <http://tinyurl.com/y64vv42>) T-Mobile 911 GT3, a car he shares with Freddy Baker. Yes, THAT Freddy Baker.

In GTS5 we saw Gary Kachadurian in his Fall-Line Motorsports BMW while his son Jack, whom we saw in a similar car last year at Grattan, tore his way through the Spec Miata class.

### **A great weekend**



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For once, I've had so much to write about from this weekend that I actually had to edit some of it out. THANK YOU to everyone who contributed.

The weekend was great, the racing was fast, and things progressed without serious incident...um...except for Wellborn's scuffing of his nose.

**Next up, Putnam Park, May 14-16**

Get it on your schedule. You KNOW there's going to be great racing at Putnam because there always is. Don't miss out on it!

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