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NATIONAL AUTO SPORT ASSOCIATION

NASA Midwest Inc.
5250 Grand Avenue
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Chicago, April 26, 2011, NASA Midwest, Inc.

Messy Weather, Clean Racing!

944 Spec Midwest opened its season to cold, wind, rain, and a little snow, but persevered to have a great event nonetheless! New comp school graduates, close racing, and decimated track records were all on tap. The weekend started early with Ken Frey and Anita Loeb successfully completing comp school with the support of Bennington Motorsports, who brought four cars to this event, including the rental "Green Machine" for Loeb to pilot.

Bennington Motorsports was in action early on Saturday, fixing a sticking oil pressure relief valve that cropped up in Joel Karns' 944 after it's winter hibernation. Joel was quickly back in action, with full oil pressure.

Once again, Nick of Bennington Motorsports was able to keep all cars on track through the weekend, including three newly built race cars. Equally impressive was that all the 944 Spec Pilots managed to avoid incident throughout the weekend despite the heavy rain. In Saturday's race, Neal Agran found the wet line early on and managed to stretch an 11 second lead, leaving Ray Freundt and Eric Kuhns to battle for second.

Freundt held second place early in his new car, while Kuhns kept up the pressure, eventually getting by when Freundt had a little tank slapper. There were several spins in the rain mixing up the field further back, but everyone stayed clear of contact through some heads up driving. Series newcomer and Pro drift racer Dan Pina used his superior car control skills in an impressive debut in the "Green Machine", with Loeb now driving that car in the Thunder race group to complete her weekend. Unfortunately for Agran, his impressive lead started to dwindle with his battery, as his alternator failed early in the race. Even running without wipers to save power, Agran was forced to retire and give the lead to Kuhns for the win. He was followed by returning racer Freundt, series new comer Dan Pina (podium first time out!), then Karns, comp school grad Ken Frey, Michael Dalton, and Sudhir Chikkarra.

Karns' race exploits from Saturday are detailed in his blog here: [Joel's "Conflicted Racer" Blog](#) Here is Joel's summary of Saturday's events from his blog:

I was following the rental car which was driven by [Dan Pina](#) (Dan is a professional racer and drifter, founder of Drift Patrol & Drift Techniques) and he was sideways half the race and easily pulling away from me. I didn't know about his background at the time and felt really slow as I was gapped so quickly. I built up a comfortable gap from Ken who was doing well keeping up with me as I was then pushing a little bit harder and experimenting with lines. On lap 2 in Turn 7 (a kink on the long back straight) I hit a puddle on the right side of my car which



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caused my car to jerk to the right and then proceeded to lose control ensuing in the highest speed spin I've ever had – neatly coined “code brown”. Instinctively, I got both feet in to protect the transmission, clutch and engine from various shocks caused by the spin, and the real benefit is it locks up all four tires causing you to slide straight and somewhat predictably considering the situation. Ken who was behind me had to take evasive maneuvers and also spun. I was able to get Lisa back under control pretty quickly even though I was playing in the dirt too. I got back up to speed and kept on playing with different lines even trying to compress braking zones leading to a nice little 4 wheel off in turn 1 (I was able to go off slow and maintain control and quickly get back on track). After many laps of driving alone, I caught up with Sid who earlier went off and tapped the tire wall in turn 1 but was able to get back under way with minimal damage (Autobahn uses brand new tires for its tire walls – I guess used tires don't perform as well for some reason). I was preparing to pass him when I decided to change lines quickly (track was drying a little as the rain stopped) – which lead to another creative but slow speed spin. Mental note – just because it looks dry, doesn't mean it is. Neil who was leading the race had issues all his own as his alternator died and he was running off a small battery – and just two laps from the finish it died on him and he had to park the car. I finished 4th out of 8 in my class and 18th out of 28 (please note the Spec Miata's started well before our pack so it is hard to compare how I did overall as many other cars in our run group started about 1/2 a lap ahead of me).

Sunday

Sunday Morning dawned cool dry, and fast. Despite losing his power brake booster, Kuhns was running under track record times (while developing a strong right leg!), and claimed the pole position, followed by Agran, and Freundt.

Kuhns pressed hard early on, hoping to avoid engaging the crafty Agran in a direct race with his leaden brakes. His race can be seen here: <http://www.vimeo.com/22685180>. After several laps Agran was able to close the gap, and after a great battle of side-by side racing, was able to get by Kuhns. In turn, Kuhns was soon able to adapt to his boosterless brakes better as the race went on, and continued to engage Agran in an epic, race-long battle, which Agran later commented was "what Spec racing is all about" - close, and clean. Kuhns seemed to have a slight edge in power, and Agran in braking, making for a thrilling cat & mouse battle. Agran persevered this race. evening up the win tally for the weekend, and decimating the existing track record by 1.2



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seconds with a 1:41.3! Argan and Kuhns were again followed by Pina in the Bennington Motorsports rental "Green Machine", then Freundt, Karns, Frey, Dalton, and Chikkara.

Karns cut about 4 seconds off his lap times this weekend, getting tips and sharing Traqmate data with series hotshoe Agran. Driver development and data sharing are hallmarks of 944 Spec Midwest. With more drivers acquiring Traqmate systems this year, it was really interesting to see who made time where, and how. Everyone benefited, and got faster through the weekend. It's nice to see this level of transparency in club racing! Karns comments from his blog:

After the session I was able to sit down with Neil and go over my lap times. By looking at the raw data I was able to see I was not threshold braking for several corners and "chicken lifting" for a couple other corners. The 1st half of my lap I was w/in a quarter second – but the 2nd half of the lap I was 2.75 seconds slower. After learning this data I went over the track map and mentally prepared for what I needed to do the next session in practice.

This is what we do!

Join us for the next race at Putnam Park, where the new Great Lakes Region joins up with the Midwest in a crossover event for the first time, making what is sure to be a record field for 944 Spec racing in the Midwest!

For complete results and lap records, please see ww.nasamidwest.com.

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