

DRIVERS MEETING

Official Publication of the Racing Drivers Club, Inc.
Dedicated to the safety, quality, and enhancement of the SF Region racing experience.
"Your advocate for safe & sane racing in legal cars"
VOLUME 47, NUMBER 6, July 2007

Ott's Thoughts Ramblings from the Racing Drivers Club President

This month I have a topic that I think will be of interest to all of our members and I want to give my analysis of what has happened, is happening & could happen. The trigger factor for this one sided discussion was an RDC member who approached me because he was very unhappy about the SF Region purchasing and stocking spare engines for the Sealed Spec Miata class competitors. I found that he is not alone. Why are we, as a club, providing this service for a very small number of competitors and not for others? In my opinion, the short answer is survival. But in order to explain myself, I need to go into one of my long winded, obscure, discussions. Try to stay with me please.

Even though we don't think about it much, there is a large turnover of drivers in the SF Region every year. We graduate upwards of seventy drivers from school each year, but our number of participants doesn't change a lot. So that means quite a few drivers stop racing every year. Think about how many drivers you raced with even five years ago. How many don't come out much any more, if at all? Sure, racing is expensive and some fall on hard times, but not that many. Why do they quit? How can we keep them from quitting and/or get them to come back and/or just get more drivers to come out and

race with us? After all, the more drivers we have, the better the racing. I have a theory.

It seems to me that one could classify race drivers into four groups: 1. Those who are convinced that they could be the world's best *driver* given just a little time & practice in the right car. 2. Those who are convinced that they could be the world's best *race car engineer* given a little time and money. 3. Those who feel they could be both. and 4. Those who aren't worried about either but are adrenaline junkies or fun seekers and find that racing does the trick in a fairly safe, comfortable manner (compared to say snow boarding). If we assume that this is correct, we can examine what happens when these folks race with us, why some quit, and how we can get them to stay or come back.

Let's take the first group listed above, the pure drivers. **Who are they?:** First, I must say that some really are or are close to being the world's best, or at least the best in the USA. Look at the ranks of professional racing series over the years, and you'll see quite a few who started their careers with our region. The rest, the vast majority, aren't world class drivers, but think they could be. Some really aren't very good at driving and never will be, some could be a lot better.

Why do they quit?: The greats: Some, like Lew Larimer, do get out and race with us frequently. Many move up to more challeng-

ing series. Some occasionally return to race with us, but most probably don't find it challenging enough in the amateur ranks.

Others just age out. They want to participate, but their bodies say no way.

The not so greats or not yet greats: I think that both types tend to quit when they are no longer making any progress, either in lap times or finish position, especially if they feel it is beyond their control. For example some find that driving rules and car preparation rules are not enforced. This allows over aggressive driving or illegal car preparation to determine the outcome of races.

What can we do?: The greats: More off season events, more challenging competition, the fountain of youth? There are only small gains to be made with this group, but we could try.

The not so greats or not yet greats: Here we could provide more driver development as RDC does. We could make efforts to better observe & enforce driving rules. We could also make the results more dependent upon driver ability than car preparation (or over-preparation). We could (given resources not now available) make more effort to ensure the legality of all cars. As a side note, these pure drivers tend to migrate to the spec classes like SRF, FV, FF, CF, SM, FM, etc.. The region is already trying different ways to feature some of these classes and to encourage more participation by making it easier to get into a

tightly controlled specification class such as SSM.

Now let's take the second group listed above, the engineers.

Who are they?: These are the people who like to improve their race cars. They constantly try new things to make the car a little faster or a little better handling. They feel that if they can squeeze out some more performance they will get better results. Occasionally they try stretching the rules because they feel that the most important factor in winning is the car not necessarily the driver.

These guys like rule changes so they can try something new (something that drives me crazy).

Why do they quit?: The engineers will continue as long as they feel there is some other little improvement, trick or rule stretch that they can find to make the car or cars better. They do, however, tend to gravitate toward working all the time and not having time to participate in regional events. Joe Huffaker comes to mind here, as do Scott Rubin and Larry Oka. Many others are out there wrenching every weekend & not racing.

What can we do?: I don't see a lot that we can do other than remind them how much fun it is to come out & drive some more.

Next let's look at the third group the driver/engineers.

Who are they?: These people are the real dedicated group. They recognize that both driver and car are important for success. They spend countless hours trying to improve both.

Why do they quit?: They don't very often. Because they can see problems in either their driving or their car preparation, they don't

know which to blame even if they aren't making any progress. They will however get discouraged if they feel that rules in either area aren't being equitably applied or enforced. Also at risk of quitting are those who really aren't very good at either driving or engineering and can't bring themselves to admit it. In other words those who can't find the fun factor.

What can we do?: Make them feel welcome and enforce the rules.

Lastly, let's look at the fun junkies.

Who are they?: People who will race as long as they have some money.

Why do they quit?: These people have a good chance of continuing to race in regional events. They aren't disappointed if they don't win and as long as they keep scaring themselves and don't spend too much on crash repairs they'll keep coming out. I happen to fall in this group.

What can we do?: Same as with group 3 above.

So what has all of this got to do with maintaining or increasing our participant base? Or more importantly, how does it relate to helping out one small group of participants? If we can make our racing have more appeal to each of these groups, more of them will continue to race with us.

One way is to remove the variables. That means make and enforce stable rules for driver responsibility and for car preparation. Allow some aggressive driving, but not such that it causes car damage or driver injuries. Allow some rule changes, but not so many that one has to hire a

professional engineer to constantly update the cars. And more to the point we started with, encourage participation in spec classes. But maybe not to the point of stocking major parts for a few competitors and not others.

More on this when I hear from all of you out there who disagree with me. Lois & I are going to be on vacation for a bit, but e-mails & letters will work just fine.

On a totally different subject, I want to make public my appreciation to Jim Hileman for the great job he is doing in writing up the race results in *The Wheel*. He writes them up as if he were watching the actual race (which he is) and not just reading the results sheet on the Internet and sending in his story from Brazil or where ever.

I also wanted to comment on the RDC points races that are heating up real well, but I'm out of space.

See you at Infineon. George

DRIVERS MEETING is published monthly for the Racing Drivers Club by **Leijdecker-Ott Bookkeeping & Desktop Publishing.**

RDC address is: 2900 Carolyn Way, Sacramento CA 95818 for membership renewals and changes of address. Allow 4 weeks for change of address and include your old address label, if possible. Subscription is free to all members, included in the annual dues, or \$15.00 per year to non-members.

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Flags

Thanks again to those of you who gave me comments on my diatribe in May's column about communication with flags. I promised to try to do a separate article in *Drivers Meeting*. This is a part of that effort. It is an edited abridgment of a communication sent to me by Steve Borlik, one of our long term members and in my opinion a great, safe driver who usually races in at least two groups at every one of our race meetings. Steve writes:

"Your article gave the theoretical driver coming around turn 3 credit for having seen the flag there before with no incident and deciding the flagger was just goofing off. For me that was a real reach. In my experience, it is the driver that is simply too wrapped up in his driving to be troubled with watching for flags who misses them most and does not react appropriately. As for meaning, one very clear meaning of the yellow flag is to "hurry up and get your pass completed before you get to the line perpendicular with the flag station". My favorite yellow flag meaning is "Surprise reflex test ahead."

Seriously, turn workers should know they have full authority to call late passes under yellow and should do it. It is seriously dangerous to be passing under yellow. My most recent experience was with a driver at Laguna Seca who continued racing to pass three cars, missing three consecutive yellow flags during a full course yellow. Nothing was done about it. That is wrong. Drivers who miss yellow flags should at the very least

be asked to come to a meeting with the safety steward.

During our conversation at Thunderhill, I reflected on the techniques I have learned to use for locating and remembering the flag stations. To wit:

1. At every track I drive, new or old, in every session, I use my warm up lap to identify the manned corner stations. Many times these vary, even at the same track, depending on staffing and volunteer attendance.
2. No matter what, after the checkered flag of any session, I wave to EVERY corner station worker. This not only thanks them for their contribution, but serves as a mental training exercise to help me remember where to look.
3. At tracks I know well, I have learned where I can get a direct sight line to the next flag. One example at Thunderhill would be coming around turn 3. You get a good straight line fix on the turn 5 station from there, long before you exit turn 4 and are going up the hill. You can find lots of places at all of our tracks where you can see several flag stations ahead with minimal eye movement or distraction if you make a habit of it.

A main point I want to make is that drivers will only learn to respect flags when we call them in and penalize their behavior. Observing flags is not an easy skill to learn, especially for the beginning driver who is just learning how busy racing a car can become. These 3 habits I outlined above have helped me over the years in becoming more aware of not just the flags, but the

track situation in general."

I couldn't agree with Steve more. George

[Ed note: Look for June Board

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meeting minutes in next month's newsletter. There was no meeting in July, so we have no approved minutes to publish.]

Group 1 ITE

Dave Allen	1300
Steve Borlik	1200
Miki Cohen	1010
Bob Bradfield	800
Chuck Canepa	420
Bob Stephan	140

ITX

Laura Thomas	780
Bruce Blondin	520
John Schmale	520
Steve Torrence	400
James Thomas	360
William Kirkwood	340
George Day	310
Lars Kornbrink	300
Matt Rose	180
George Ott	160
Bill Harries	140

RX7

Brad Dressen	1000
Gary Smith	540

SSB

Gary Hascall	200
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T3

David Vodden	1200
Tony Lopez	200

Group 2 DSR

Peter Carlotto	760
Andrew Juner	600
Dave Arken	400

FE

John Weed	600
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FM

John Ertel	800
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Group 3 EP

Mike Monegan	740
Bob Stephan	360
Bernie Storc	360
Bruce Ackerman	200

GT2

Dave Allen	1360
Bob Bradfield	400

GTA

Art Muncheryan	400
Rudy Revak	400

GTL

Bruce John	200
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Group 4 CF

David Hallum	980
Robert Morley	380

FF

Dave Jalen	1120
Peter Nosler	800
Ken Rozeboom	320
Eric Costa	160
Ken Richter	140

FV

Ron Wake	1200
Rich Bergin	360
Bruce Fuchiwaki	340

Group 5 FP

Claire Tallman	200
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GP

Patrick Olsen	400
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ITA

Steve Borlik	1200
David Vodden	880
Laura Thomas	660
Kim Henriksen	645
Richard Avril	565
Brian Schyberg	480
Bruce Blondin	420
Lars Kornbrink	395
John Schmale	380
Dean Thomas	340
Matt Rose	335
Ed Koop	320
Michael Niemann	300
Todd Butler	270
Richard Fuller	270
Steve Holifield	250
Jeff Annison	220
Ian Cook	200
Stan Clark	190
William Kirkwood	160

ITB

L. James Ghilardi	1300
James Thomas	400
Lois Leijdecker-Ott	380
George Ott	200

ITC

Wayne Shover	1200
Bill Robertson	200

ITS

Jeff Annison	400
Tim Conners	400
Chuck Canepa	180

Group 6 SRF

Michael Smith	1300
Joseph Pratt	880
Jerry Schmitt	720
Umberto Milletti	715
Bill Booth	635
Todd Butler	620
Lanyll Smith	600
Richard Hatfield	520
Douglas Johnson	425
Chris Jackson	400
Lisa Askew	285
Dan Ditrapani	230
Peter Holst	230
David Harriman	220
Morris Goldstein	130
Drew Carlson	85

Group 7 SMT

Eric Vaughn	860
Kim Henriksen	760
David Vodden	740
Dean Thomas	540
William Haener	520
Laura Thomas	520
Jeff Annison	400
Brian Schyberg	380
Richard Avril	335
George Day	320
Steve Holifield	305
Alan Fudge	225
Gary W. Pendergrass	200
Ed Koop	160
Michael Niemann	160
Stephen Harris-Smith	130
Robert Murillo	120
Bruce R. Blondin	110
Jack Daniels	110
Laura Douglas	100

SSM

Fred Peterson	1160
Steve Torrence	860
Matt Rose	680
Jeff Annison	360
Michael Niemann	140

RACING DRIVERS CLUB - MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Full (Driver and Spouse-Driver) membership is open to licensed competition drivers, past or present including novices. Associate membership is open to anyone. All member households receive the newsletter. Only Full members are eligible to compete in RDC events (Illgen Enduro) or to earn RDC Championship Series points. No points will be awarded retroactively. **All memberships expire on December 31st each year.** Note that dues increase depending upon the date of renewal.

Check appropriate box (es) and circle Renewal or New Member.

- Driver (\$30 before May 15, \$40 May 15 to Sept. 15, \$50 after Sept. 15) Renewal New Member (circle one)
- Spouse-Driver (\$10 before May 15, \$20 after May 15) Renewal New Member (circle one)
- Current Year Drivers School Graduate (Free before May 15, \$40 May 15 to Sept. 15, \$50 after Sept. 15)
- Associate (\$20 anytime) Renewal New Member (circle one)

Please complete appropriate section(s) below. Renewing members need to include only name, changed information, and dues. **Driver** (includes School Graduate) or **Associate** Member:

Name: _____ Race Class(es): _____
 Address: Street: _____
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip code: _____
 Phone #s to be published in directory:
 Home: (____) _____ Work: (____) _____ Cell: (____) _____
 Alternate phone #s (won't be published)
 Home: (____) _____ Work: (____) _____ Cell: (____) _____
 E-mail Address: _____

Spouse-Driver Member:

Name: _____ Race Class(es): _____
 Address: Same as above.
 Phone #s to be published in directory:
 Home: (____) _____ Work: (____) _____ Cell: (____) _____
 Alternate phone #s (won't be published)
 Home: (____) _____ Work: (____) _____ Cell: (____) _____
 E-mail Address: _____

Amount enclosed: \$ _____

Make check payable to Racing Drivers Club. Mail to: Lois Leijdecker-Ott, 2900 Carolyn Way, Sacramento, CA, 95818-3308

Placement Values in Points	
First	200
Second	180
Third	160
Fourth	140
Fifth	130
Sixth	120
Seventh	110
Eighth	100
Ninth	95
Tenth	90
Then five fewer points for each place.	
All finishers get at least 5 points.	

Remember that your points accumulate from date of membership and are not retroactive to 1st of year. For any questions about your points totals, contact George Ott at 916-441-6356.

FREE DECALS

RDC is now offering to send you two free car decals (one for each side). Just contact a Board member at the track or at the numbers listed .

**Racing Drivers Club
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**DRIVERS
MEETING**

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