

#### Newsletter of the Mohawk-Hudson Region, Sports Car Club of America December 2020

# The REport

#### Hola, ciao, moshi moshi, salut...

For those of you who haven't met me, my name is Eric "EJ" Smith, and I'm a 19 year SCCA member. I've been the Assistant RE since 2014, a Solo competitor since 2000 and the Solo Timing & Scoring Chief almost as long, I serve on the MoHud Solo Advisory Committee, held a road racing competition license for a few years, participated and instructed at MoHud PDXs, and am an active Flagging & Communication divisional license holder. If you race at Thompson, Lime Rock, Palmer, or some other tracks, I'm one of the flaggers in the day-glo orange coat on station.

On behalf of the MoHud Board and the region's members, I'd like to thank our friends Jim and Trish Bucci for their many contributions to our region and its programs over the years. We wish them well on their retirement and their new Florida adventures. Jim's handed the wheel over to us, and we're going to do our best to keep the region on the pole.



The current pandemic has thrown us some challenges in conducting business as usual as an SCCA region, but we'll try to keep it as normal as possible. We may have to substitute some Zoom meetings in place of in-person get-togethers here and there, but hopefully that won't be for long. We're discussing how best to handle our traditional Annual Meeting & Awards Banquet in January - stay tuned for an announcement expected no later than mid-December as to which way it will be held. We'll issue information on the website (MoHud-SCCA.org), our Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/groups/MoHudSCCA), and via the Knock Off email list once a decision has been made.

Here's to green flags for 2021,

~ EJ Smith Acting Regional Executive

*In this month's issue*: Board Items; reports; two MoHud ice-racers score down south; the annual gift guide; a bit of MoHud history; and who's the best F1 driver.

# Coming Events: December and...

- **December 2**: Wednesday. 7:00pm. Monthly membership meeting via Zoom. EJ Smith will blast e-mail the membership with details.

- December 2: Wednesday. 8:00pm. SCCA Time Trials "Town Hall" online. See this month's Track report, on the following page, for more.

- January 9: Saturday. Approx. 5:00pm. MoHud Annual Meeting and awards presentation originally scheduled for the Saratoga Automibile Museum will most likely be a Zoom session. Details are still being worked out. As with the December Membership Meeting, EJ Smith will blast e-mail the membership with details in mid-December.

# Thanks, guys



Just before Jim and Trish Bucci headed south

to their new home, MoHud Board members dipped into their own pockets to present a note of appreciation and appropriate wearables to the *RE Emeritus* and *Rally Master* in the name of the Club.

Looks like the presentation was a hit...



# **Track** -- Time Trials and Track Nights

**The Board of Directors has created a new Standing Committee,** pursuant to Article IV, Section 2 of the Club's Constitution & Bylaws, to be called the *Track Committee*, said committee to be charged with advising the Board on matters relating to Time Trials and Track Nights, in particular the growth of Time Trials at the regional and divisional level.

In creating the new committee, the board noted that "Nationally-sponsored track nights and time trials have become extremely popular among present and potential SCCA members, providing participants with activities that can act as stand-alone interests as well as providing a progressive ladder to road racing. Track nights and Time Trials are exciting, and appear to have great potential for expanding SCCA membership. These national activities have earned Mohawk-Hudson Region's local recognition and involvement."

It should come as no surprise that Aashish Vemulapalli – known hereabouts as "the Ambassador of Time Trials" has accepted the position of Committee Chairperson. Following is his first regular report:

-- **One could call 2020, a season to remember or the season to forget**. On the Time Trials side, the (SCCA) program was able to hold all tour events except the event at Auto Club Speedway, and the event at Nelson Ledges (the latter was picked up and run by the local Region). We now look forward to 2021 and the promise of a new season.

Following the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event at Thompson Speedway, that was well-attended as well as staffed by MoHudders, the 2021 Time Trials National Tour will return to the Northeast to Palmer Motorsports Park. This event will run in tandem with Global Time Attack and will feature the GTA pro classes in addition to the SCCA Time Trials classes. The change of venue is a good thing as Whiskey Hill will provide a new challenge for drivers to set a fast lap and also set the lap record.

Time Trials Nationals will take place at NCM Motorsports Park as always but will move to a mid-June date in order to avoid a packed end of season for national office staff. June 10-13 are the dates finalized for this 4-day flagship Time Trials event. This event is well worth the long haul to Bowling Green, KY and should be on the radar for everyone that is interested in Time Trials.

Scanning the calendar, there are plenty of events next season within the realm of plausibility as follows:

1. March 13-14: National Tour at Virginia International Raceway – possible for those that trailer their car given that we may have snow on the ground here as well as snow tires on our cars.

- 2. June 10-13: TT Nationals at NCM Motorsports Park
- 3. July 3-4: Palmer Motorsports Park with Global Time Attack
- 4. July 17-18: GingerMan Raceway

**On December 2<sup>nd</sup>, at 8 PM**, the SCCA will be a hosting a virtual Time Trials Town hall to discuss how Time Trials fits into the overall SCCA program offerings as well as updates about rule changes for the next two years. There could also be surprise news at this townhall about an event in the Ohio/PA area at the end of August. You may register for the townhall at the following link: https://timetrials.scca.com/announcements/231-scca-time-trials-virtual-town-hall-december-2-2020

The season will conclude with the MoHud Track Star award. Information about this year's awardees will be included in the next KnockOff.

~ Aashísh

# **Road Racing**

### MoHuders, Adapted to Weather Above the Blue Line, Show Southerners how to Run in the Cold

MoHud SRF3 racers Jeff Lehner and Pat Stringer competed in the New Jersey Road Racing Classic at NJMP back on October 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>.

MoHud's 2017 Driver of the Year, Lehner dominated and won Saturday's first race, with Pat finishing 5th.

Sunday's 18 lap feature race was run in a constant cold, windy rain - which was perfect for a couple of AMEC Ice-racing champions. Jeff and Pat ran away from all other competitors and battled with close & clean racing for many laps. Stringer eventually managed to take the lead and work through lapped traffic to take the win by 14 seconds.

In the process, the pair had lapped the field up to third place!

It was a great way to wrap up the SRF3 season - and prepare for the upcoming 2021 AMEC ice-racing season!

Pat Stringer MoHud SRF3



Pat (R) and Jeff (L) celebrate with what else: ....a "cold one!"

**Speaking of the ice - racing season**, the *Adirondack Motor Enthusiasts Club* has projected a season starting with the five Sundays in January, noting that additional Saturday dates may be added if weather conditions dictate a shorter than usual racing season.

Keep track of their doings at < icerace.com >, while registration is handled through < http://icerace.motorsportreg.com/ >

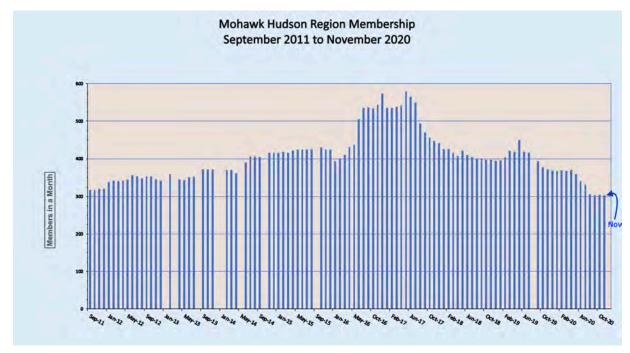
# Road Racing, cont'd

### Some additional pictures from Pat and Jeff's October venture down south (Jersey)



"Close and Clean Racing"

Rode Wet but Put Away Dry



### The Monthly Membership Graph

# Membership Report- December 2020 -Jim Garry

Mohud Membership Chairman

< mhr.membership@gmail.com >

**Mohawk Hudson Region membership stands at 302 as of mid-November 2020.** After steep dropoffs in the earlier part of the year our numbers have been stable for the past four months. Membership is expected to hold at this level for the winter months because most new memberships begin in the spring and summer and thus there aren't many members for us to lose via non-renewal at this time of the year. All in all we held out pretty well during this difficult 2020. We began the year at 367 members, which means we dropped about 17%. This is obviously a big loss but for a pandemic year which resulted in a shutdown of many businesses and activities in this state; it coulda been worse. Hopefully with lessons learned regarding running events under pandemic protocols, our membership will return to stronger levels in the coming Spring.

#### **New Members**

Our last new members joined in September and were previously reported.

#### **Significant Anniversaries**

This month **Peter Kroth** and **Tom Taft** celebrate significant anniversaries. Tom's an enthusiastic autocrosser and Pete is a dedicated race flagger. I asked them to send some words describing their SCCA experience from the perspective of their anniversaries. They obliged with the following.

#### Tom Taft - 5 Years

"It has been a great 5 years. THANKS! I have really enjoyed three major parts of autox. First and most importantly, are the friendships and close personal relationships that I have been blessed with and have yet to make. Second is the safe, cheap, legal way to experience the rush and thrill of driving a rear wheel drive sports car at and (hopefully) just beyond the "limit". Third is the opportunity to compete in a sport where it is of absolutely no advantage to have an attitude with any competitors. Fourth (free extra), the entire "scene", car prep, rolling up to the event as the sun rises, seeing my autox posse, friendly trash talking, the mental challenge of the course walk, nerves on the start line, relief and big smile after a "safe spin", at least one clean relatively mistake free run, decent results hopefully, more friends, "see you next week". Pack up and go back home without a trouble in my mind and a big old smile."

#### Peter Kroth - 20 years

"What can I say? SCCA has certainly led to some big adventures ... things I never dreamed I'd do. Indianapolis for Runoffs. Brooklyn for Formula E. Mid-Ohio for IndyCar. Montreal for the Canadian Grand Prix.

... But it all comes down to this. With SCCA, you come for the racing, but you stay for the people. I've certainly made some interesting friends ... people with whom I would otherwise not be associated. Thanks for sharing your love of the sport and love of cars with me.

I can't wait for the next 20 years."



# The Annual Gift Guide

#### Traxion TR 1-500 roll-up creeper/mat

If you are over 40, you will appreciate this foam-filled creeper every time you have to get down on the ground to fix whatever underneath your car. Also makes a good exercise mat.

46" x 25" About \$35 via Amazon.



#### **Old Engine Oil Black Ale**

A wonderful Porter that has a double life. After quaffing, cut the top off and use as a pen or pencil holder.

About \$15 for a six-pack, but hard to find.

(And a thanks to Dave Cowie)





# More Gifts...

#### Nuvolari and the Alfa Romeo Jimmy Murphy and the White Duesnberg Racemaker Press (racemaker.com)

In 1968 illustrator Raymond Briggs teamed with Bruce Carter to produce several non-fiction books on a 8 or 9year-old reading level. *Nuvolari* recounts Tazio's dramatic victory over the home teams at the 1935 German Grand Prix. *Murphy* recounts Jimmy's victory in the 1921 French Grand Prix. We think the subject matter would make these appealing to youngsters up to 13 or so.

Revived this year by Racemaker Press, the titles can be ordered separately for \$15 or \$25 as a boxed set.

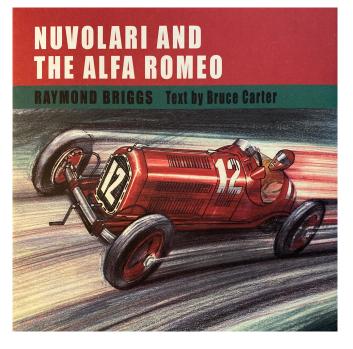
And for older "kids," Racemaker has a long list of racing titles.

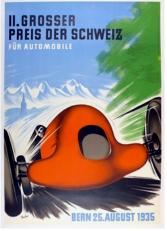
#### **Vintage Car Posters**

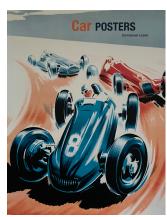
Collecting original car posters is not for the faint of wallet. They are pricey investments that may or may not be a good idea in your 401-K account, as a knowledgeable advisor can tell you.

The *Grosser Pries* poster seen here will run you about \$14,000 from *VintageAutoPosters.com*.

But for less than \$30 you can order a copy of Emannuel Lopez's book *Car Posters*, from Amazon, and get the same visual enjoyment as owning an original print.





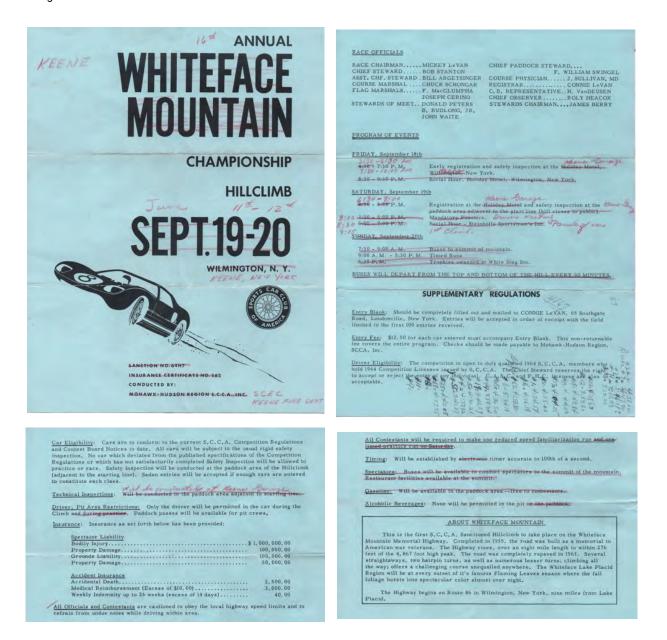


# Hillclimb

# Your MoHud history minute for the month... ~ Greg Rickes

Mike Hartson, who organizes the Keene Hillclimb Reunion, always keeps his eyes out for artifacts and has a lot of contacts in out of the way places. He recently came across the original entry form for the 1964 MoHud Whiteface Hilclimb. It was marked up to serve as a template for the (non SCCA) Keene Hillclimb, but fortunately the original details are preserved.

I've accumulated a fairly comprehensive archive of Whiteface Hillclimb information, including various photo collections, the event's souvenir program, the Knock-Off report on the event with final results, a dash plaque, and now the entry form. At one time I think I had a copy of the complete results but I recall I may have passed them on to the MoHud archives before scanning them.



**General Membership Meeting, November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020**, Gateway Diner (Albany), approx.20 attending Call to order: 7:05pm. In the absence of Jim Bucci, Assistant RE Eric Smith conducted the meeting.

Previous month's meeting minutes accepted unanimously.

Membership Report - the Region now has 302 members, down from 305 members the previous month.

**Treasurer** - Paul summarized previous month's income and expenses. He also provided a summary of the previous year's bank balance compared to the current year.

**Solo** - Six loaner helmets have been ordered for next year's program. The Solo Committee has not yet had an opportunity to discuss next year's race schedule and use of the race venue with the Poughkeepsie Region. Year end Solo Awards Ceremony arrangements are under discussion.

**Street Survival** – The school is tentatively scheduled for <u>April 25, 2021</u>. A School is also tentatively scheduled for October 2021. A final date has not yet been determined. Saratoga Auto Museum is the proposed site.

**Rally** – 11 teams participated at the Road Rally. Teams traveled to 8 different check points, primarily along the Hudson River. Dinner following the event was at the Dinosaur BBQ. Spring Rally is in the planning stages. Tentative date is <u>April 11.</u>

Time Trials - no report.

Activities - no report.

Competition - no report.

**Old Business** - Annual Banquet is planned for January 9th at the Saratoga Auto Museum. There will be a limit of 50 attendees. Reservations will be initially opened up to SCCA members. If there are additional openings an invitation will be extended to non-members.

**New Business: Officer Elections** - Paul made a motion to change the date for Region officer nominations from November to December. Rich Welty seconded the motion. It was passed unanimously. Sal Baisley was nominated for the Assistant Region Executive position and Shelby Blanchette was nominated for Secretary. Incumbent directors have offered to remain in their roles. We need to fill the vacant Competition Chair position previously held by Jim Bucci. The Board will meet to discuss the vacant position.

**New Business: Time Trial Committee** The Membership discussed the need to create a Time Trial Committee. Paul proposed a motion that a proposal be forwarded to the Board to consider establishing a Track Committee to focus on Time Trials and Track Night activities. The motion was seconded by Shelby and approved unanimously. There was discussion on the relationship between the proposed Time Trial Committee and the current Competition Committee. The proposal will be discussed by the Board at their next meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.

~ Ron Bass, Secretary

### Board of Directors Meeting, November 9th, 2020, via Zoom

Call to order: 7:10pm. Acting RE Eric Smith conducted the session.

#### **Annual Meeting and Membership Meetings**

Contingency plans for general membership meetings and annual banquet were discussed. In the event the State issues limits on number of people that can gather in one location, the Board will explore the possibility of holding a Zoom meeting for the annual banquet.

#### Revamp of Standing Coimmittees (Article IV of the MoHud Constitution and Bylaws)

Paul Malecki offered the following, as previously presented at the November Membership meeting:

That the Board, pursuant to Article IV, Section 2 of the Club's Constitution & Bylaws, create a new standing committee to be called the *Track Committee*, said committee to be charged with advising the Board on matters relating to Time Trials and Track Nights, in particular the growth of Time Trials at the regional and divisional level.

In support, he submitted the following statement: "Nationally-sponsored track nights and time trials have become extremely popular among present and potential SCCA members, providing participants with activities that can act as stand-alone interests as well as providing a progressive ladder to road racing. Track nights and Time Trials are exciting, and appear to have great potential for expanding SCCA membership. These national activities have earned Mohawk-Hudson Region's local recognition and involvement."

The proposal was adopted.

#### Discussion:

The Competition Committee Chair has previously been responsible for managing and reporting on all race activities. To better reflect the interests of the Membership and the Committees' focus, the Board discussed eliminating the current Competition Committee Chair and replacing it with two new Committee positions - a Time Trial/Track Night Committee and a Road Racing Committee. The current Solo Chair will remain in place. The Board also discussed possible members who may be interested if filling the new Chairperson positions. The changes will be further discussed at the next General Membership meeting.

#### **Regional Executive Position for 2021**

Eric Smith has agreed to accept the nomination for this position.

#### Discussion:

With the move of Jim and Trish Bucci to Florida, Eric assumes the role of Acting RE until the next Annual Meeting, as per Article V, Section 2, a, and b, as well as Article III, Section 1, of the Constitution and Bylaws.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:45 pm.

~ Ron Bass, Secretary

# The KnockOff Journal

### This Month...

- Rating Drivers



### Who's the Best Formula 1 Driver Ever?

Greg Rickes shoved the following note under the door of the KO Editorial Offices the other day:

"The prestigious journal The Economist rarely venture into matters of motorsport but recently they applied their high level of analytics for ranking the all-time Formula One drivers. Their statistical model addressed the nuances of changing points systems, number of races in the season and even the technical aspects of car development and team structure. The study was developed by Andrew Bell at the University of Sheffield, ranking all 745 drivers in Formula One history.

They came to two conclusions:

1) Cutting edge car-making has replaced daredevil driving as the main source of success in Formula One

2) Taking all factors into account the best drivers in Formula One are ranked as follows

Juan Manuel Fangio
Jim Clark
Alain Prost
Jackie Stewart
Michael Schumacher
Lewis Hamilton
Alberto Ascari
Ayrton Senna

Let the lively discussion begin."

**The Economist article** is an update of a paper originally published by Bell and others in 2014/2016, with *The Economist* extending the data to include the 2019 Formula 1 season. The original was titled *Formula for Success: Multilevel modeling* of *Formula One Driver and Constructor performance, 1950 – 2014*.

The study attempted to explore the influence of the driver, the team (from 1979), weather, the track, and year for each race the driver started. Each analysis was based on points, similar to those awarded in the Driver's Championship, assigned to the driver's finishing position. Using a *cross-classified multilevel* statistical model, the spread of performance (variance) was used, along with "filters" that ignored unusual instances, to arrive at a percentage estimate of how each factor (driver, team, etc.) contributed to the driver's finish.

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### **Best Drivers: II**

The 2015 results, continued through 2019, suggest that the team – the car and its support resources – has been more important than the driver, and is becoming more so as the cars become more complex. However, when a race is run in the wet, the driver becomes more important than the car. Also, the driver accounts for more in races run on street courses than on permanent circuits.

One might think that between 2015 and 2019 rankings might not change much. But observe:

#### Driver Rankings

2015	2019
Fangio	Fangio
Prost	Clark
Clark	Prost
Senna	Stewart
Alanso	Schumacher
Piquet, Sr.	Hamilton
Stewart	Ascari
Schumacher	Senna
E. Fittapaldi	Not Reported
Hamilton	Not Reported

While Hamilton's rise up the list is not surprising, the jumbling of every place except 1<sup>st</sup> is startling at first glance. There are several possible explanations, some easily understood, others not so.

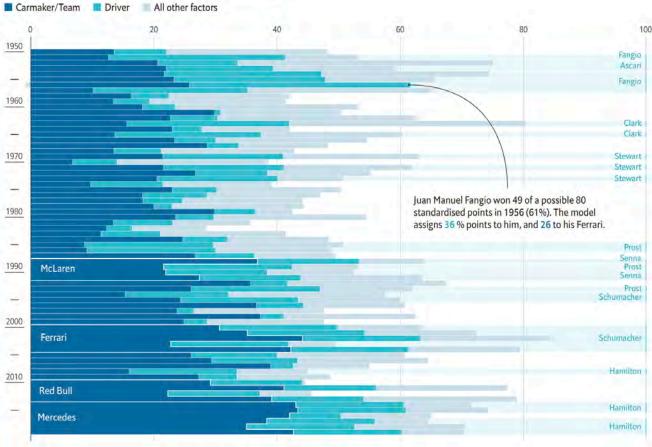
First, while *The Economist* article references the 2014/2016 study, it does not include an authorship for the 2019 update. Perhaps Bell and his team were not the authors of the update. Or, *The Economist's* update may have used statistical models that were similar but not an exact replication of the 2015 models. That could help explain the disparities between the two listings.

Second, the addition of four more years of competition results would lead to some changes in a statistical analysis of the entire database, as the rise in Hamilton's rank shows. As 83 races were run from 2016 through 2019, one would expect that an analysis based on variances within each factor (driver, team, etc.) would lead to a number of shifts. But the significant downgrading of Senna and the sudden appearance of Ascari remains puzzling without some further explanation.

Moving to the most significant projection of both studies – that the team matters more than the driver – the following page contains *The Economist's* graphic chart of the relationship over time.

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### **Best Drivers: III**



Relative importance of car quality to driver skill for champion driver Standardised Formula 1 points\*, expressed as % of maximum possible

"Ten points for first place, six for second, four for third etc.

**All very interesting**, but in this editor's opinion, all very primitive and missing the key measure in rating drivers: their *racecraft*, the combination of skill, experience and attitude in competition that sets them above others in an already talented group. Jackie Stewart suggested this in a controversial podcast earlier this year (controversial for his apparent antipathy toward Lewis Hamilton) when he pointed out that earlier F1 drivers had experience in a variety of races in different types of cars rather than limiting themselves to a single series, making them more deserving of "best" honors.

So how to measure racecraft? - We should look to a study of *qualifying* compared to *race day*; not just the placing, but the lap times of the driver in each session compared to the placement and lap times of the other drivers in those sessions. -

Yes, such a study would require both a robust statistical model and powerful computing power. But hey, have we no Watson?

In the meantime, what's your ranking of the best F1 drivers since 1950. And why? Send the KO your comments. - Ed

*Bell, et al., Formula for Success: Multilevel modeling of Formula One Driver and Constructor performance, 1950 – 2014. http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/96995/ - and - The Economist, October 17, 2020.*