



THE



KNOCK OFF

October 2026 Issue

The Publication of the Mohawk-Hudson Region SCCA



Chris Brassard in turn 7 "the toe" of Watkins Glen during the Fun One September 19th

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www.mohud-scca.org



<https://www.facebook.com/groups/MoHudSCCA/>

Late Breaking News

In Memory of DJ McArdle (courtesy of Harry Adalian)

It is with great sadness that we share the news that our friend and longtime motorsports family member, Dermot "DJ" McArdle, passed away today (9/28/26).

DJ was a familiar face to generations of members of both the Mohawk-Hudson Region SCCA and the BMW Car Club of America, particularly the Patroon Chapter. For decades, DJ gave an extraordinary amount of his time and energy to the sport and the people in it.

Whether he was competing, instructing, organizing an event, working grid, helping with a driving school or Time Trial, or simply lending a hand to someone who needed it, DJ was there. He was one of those people whose contribution went far beyond driving a car — he helped make the events happen and helped countless others enjoy the sport.

Many of us have memories of DJ from Lime Rock, Watkins Glen, Palmer and other tracks throughout the Northeast. Just as important are the friendships, stories and experiences shared in the paddock over all those years.

DJ's passing is a tremendous loss to the SCCA and BMW CCA communities. Our thoughts are with his family, friends and everyone who had the privilege of knowing him.

Godspeed, DJ. You will be greatly missed.

— Your friends in the SCCA and BMW CCA motorsports communities



From the Editor

This month we once again get Jim Garry's report on his sojourn to Nebraska for the Solo National Championship. I think his article epitomizes the SCCA experience and what makes this club special. It's not just about the competition but meeting up with friends, sharing advice, commiserating on the lows, sharing war stories both on and off track.

On the road racing front check out Paul Malecki's summary of Diane and his adventures at the Fun One at Watkins Glen. As he left the track he teased me with the advice: don't go on track with your Apple watch on. Read on to find out why!

And thanks again to Theresa Lux for a report from The Pig Roast and The Fun One as well as Pat Clair's Solo Season Wrap-up.



It's hard to beat the pure visceral thrill of keeping your right foot planted through the esses at Watkins Glen.

What's Happening

- October 7, 2026** **General Membership Meeting. 7pm (dinner at 6pm). Metro 7 Diner. Route 7, Latham NY.** <https://metro7diner.com>
- Sept 29-Oct 5, 2026** **The Runoffs National Championship – Road America, Elkhart Lake, WI**
<https://www.scca.com/runoffs>
- October 18, 2026** **Tire Rack Street Survival. Saratoga Auto Museum/SPAC.**
<https://www.motorsportreg.com/events/mohawk-hudson-scca-26-2-saratoga-automobile-museum-tire-rack-street-survival-218085>
- October 22-25, 2026** **Time Attack National Championship, Eagles Canyon Raceway, Decatur TX.** <https://www.motorsportreg.com/events/scca-national-time-trials-eagles-canyon-raceway-trial-637587>
- October 25, 2026** **Revolutionary Rally. I-87 Exit 12 Malta Commons behind Cumberland Farms.** <https://www.motorsportreg.com/events/revolutionary-rally-northway-i-87-exit-12-park-ride-scca-mohawk-hudson-685929>
- November 4, 2026** **General Membership Meeting. 7pm (dinner at 6pm). Metro 7 Diner. Route 7, Latham NY.** <https://metro7diner.com>

Check out the full regional calendar at:

https://calendar.google.com/calendar/embed?src=4l0pcskqj0sbmtg8scke5et658%40group.calendar.google.com&ctz=America%2FNew_York

Plan your 2026 Runoffs watch party today

Sat Races: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TC43ARipWCY>

Sun Races: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GVIRDxbJSyA>

DRAFT EVENT SCHEDULE



Held under 2026 General Competition Rules
Road America | 4.048-mile course
Sanction #26-RO-64086

QUALIFYING

HAGERTY RACE DAYS

Sessions will run consecutively.
Subscribe to Sportivity notifications for updates: 26-Runoffs.



260

THURSDAY
OCT. 1



BRAKE-THROUGH
PERFORMER

FRIDAY
OCT. 2

Q1 Run Groups - 16 Min	Q2 Run Groups - 16 Min
T3/T4/STL	T2/AS
EP/HP	FF/F6
FC/FE2	
SM	Q3 Run Groups - 19 Min
FA/P/P2	T4
FP/B-Spec	STL
SRF3	T3
STU/SMX	EP
FV	FC/FE2
GT1/T1/GT2	SM
LUNCH	HP
T2/AS	FA/P/P2
FF/F6	LUNCH
	SMX
Q2 Run Groups - 16 Min	B-Spec
T3/T4/STL	FP
EP/HP	GT2
FC/FE2	SRF3
SM	STU
FA/P/P2	FV
FP/B-Spec	T2/AS
SRF3	GT1/T1
STU/SMX	FF/F6
FV	
GT1/T1/GT2	

TIRE RACK

POLE CELEBRATION



63 RD RUNNING

Championship Races: 13 Laps or 40 min., whichever elapses first.
Race times are cars on course times.

	SATURDAY, OCT. 3	SUNDAY, OCT. 4
8:05am	Anthem	
8:15am	T3	T4
9:15am	STL	EP
10:15am	HP	SM
11:15am	FC/FE2	FA/P/P2
12:00pm	LUNCH BREAK	
12:15pm	GRID WALK	
1:00pm	GT2	B-Spec
2:00pm	SMX	FP
3:00pm	STU	SRF3
4:00pm	FV	GT1/T1
5:00pm	T2/AS	FF/F6

REGISTRATION & TECH INSPECTION

DATE	REGISTRATION	TECH INSPECTION *EXPRESS TECH ONLY
Sept. 27	8am-Noon: Prep Shop Only Noon-8pm: Open for All	2-8pm*
Sept. 28-30	7am-6pm	7:30am-6pm
Oct. 1-2	7am-2pm	7:30am-6pm
Oct. 3	7am-12pm	7:30am-6pm
Oct. 4	7am-10am	7:30am-6pm

Hours subject to change;
Oct. 1-4 Registration open 30 minutes before posted hours for volunteers.

ACTIVITY CALENDAR

MONDAY, SEPT. 28

6:00pm-8:00pm*

Volunteer Worker Refuel
RA Center

TUESDAY, SEPT. 29

6:00pm-7:30pm*

Track Walk - Enter at Pit Out

6:00pm-8:00pm*

Volunteer Worker Refuel
RA Center

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 30

6:00pm-8:00pm*

Track Walk &
Turn 5 Tailgate
Enter at Pit Out or Turn 5 Cut Out

THURSDAY, OCT. 1

6:00pm*

FV Hall of Fame Ceremony
Victory Circle

6:00pm-9:00pm*

Volunteer Worker Refuel
RA Center

FRIDAY, OCT. 2

6:00pm

Tire Rack Pole Awards
Victory Circle

7:30pm

Worker of the Year Presented by Mazda
Victory Circle

SATURDAY, OCT. 3

6:00pm-8:00pm*

Volunteer Worker Refuel
RA Center

6:45pm-9:00pm

Block Party
Victory Circle

SUNDAY, OCT. 4

6:00pm*

Memorial Toast
Drivers & Volunteers Welcome
RA Center

*All times are approximate









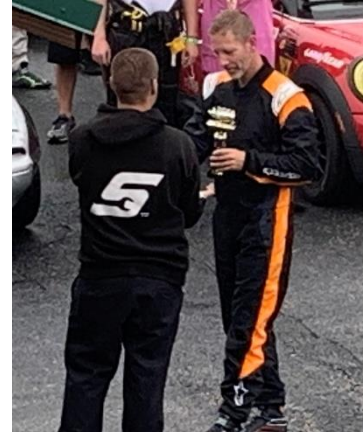

Tales from the Track

The Pig Roast at Palmer - By Theresa Lux

New England Region Pig Roast at Palmer Motorsports Park - NERRC Race #6

Whiskey Hill Raceway was filled with racers, workers, family, and friends September 12th and 13th. Over the course of the weekend, racers had the opportunity to participate in one qualifying session and three races.

Mother nature provided a glorious racing day on Saturday with a sunny blue sky and comfortable temperatures. Sunday held a vastly different story. Anticipating rain overnight and into Sunday led to a symphony of impact guns Saturday night after dinner as many racers changed from slicks to rain tires while the ground was still dry. Dinner consisted of the traditional bar-b-que pork and chicken accompanied by coleslaw, macaroni & cheese, and cornbread. The popular "Ice Cream Emergency" food truck completed the evening with bowls of ice cream and choice of toppings. Racers woke on Sunday to dry ground that did not last long as the predicted steady rain arrived before the first group was called to the Grid for Race Two. Due to the heavy rain and flowing rivers on the track a few opted to head home or wait for better weather in the afternoon making race groups slightly smaller for Race Two. After lunch the rain continued into the Feature Races eliminating victory laps. Trophies were handed out under by the Contact Impound pavilion. By the end of race group 3, the rain was replaced by fog. Fog settled down the hill onto the track eliminating visibility for drivers and workers thus Race Control paused the races until the air cleared.



View from Timing: Austen Levesque accepting his 1st place Feature Race trophy from Vince Gentile



Leon Zavos helps Steve Zavos roll the car out of impound after Steve takes 1st place in Race One. Dave Reynolds (Tyler's Dad) in the background.

Ahead of the race weekend, Tyler Reynolds flew in from Texas on Friday for a test day. This allowed him and his crew to make adjustments finding the perfect carburetor on the third try for his #33 - 2001 Citation. Three was also his starting place after qualifying and the number of FV races he finished. Racing in the same session was Stephen Zavos in FVR. Steve and his brother Leon arrived early Saturday morning for Steve's turn with the #199 - 1985 Volkswagen Predator P3. He secured first place in Race One and Race Two.



Ed Zemeck exiting Impound after Race One on Saturday

Ed Zemeck took advantage of the nice weather on Saturday racing his SM2 1990 Mazda Miata car on track. Car #38 spent the night at the track and opted out of racing on Sunday. Austen Levesque (#88 - 2017 Toyota GT86) has had a few car challenges this year but all of that was in the past as Austen raced into 3rd place in Race One. Bettering his finish in the rain and out racing his competitors, Austen took 1st in Race Two and the Feature Race. Points from these races will move Austen into 2nd place for the NER T3 Championship.

Last but not least was Group 7 with 4 of our racers. In the EP class, Anthony Kalkandis raced with his #35 - 1990 Porsche 944 S2 on Saturday. Jim Cutler broke another track record for C-Spec racing to 1st on Saturday in the #192 - 2012 Mazda 3. This adds another track Jim has successfully broken his racing record this season.

Taking 1st place in qualifying and in all three races was #68 Sal Baisley (1985 Madza RX7). Points from these races move Sal up three places in the NER IT7 championship race tying him in 3rd place.



Vince Gentile sharing Tech will be checking air filters on the GT2 class cars after Race One on Saturday. Richard Welty also worked in Tech this weekend

Before his last race, Max researched track conditions talking to Group 4 and surveying visible track locations to determine which tires to run now that the rain had stopped. With standing water in some locations and water spray throughout the course Max decided to run with rain tires which aided him in crossing the finish line first. Max won the Feature Race for his class by over 24 seconds. Another racer went out on slicks hoping to follow along in a dry line that never materialized. Max currently has 8 race wins for the season and remains the points leader for the NER B-Spec Championship.



Three Feature Race 1st place winners from Group 7: Max LuxRamos, Jim Culter, and Sal Baisley

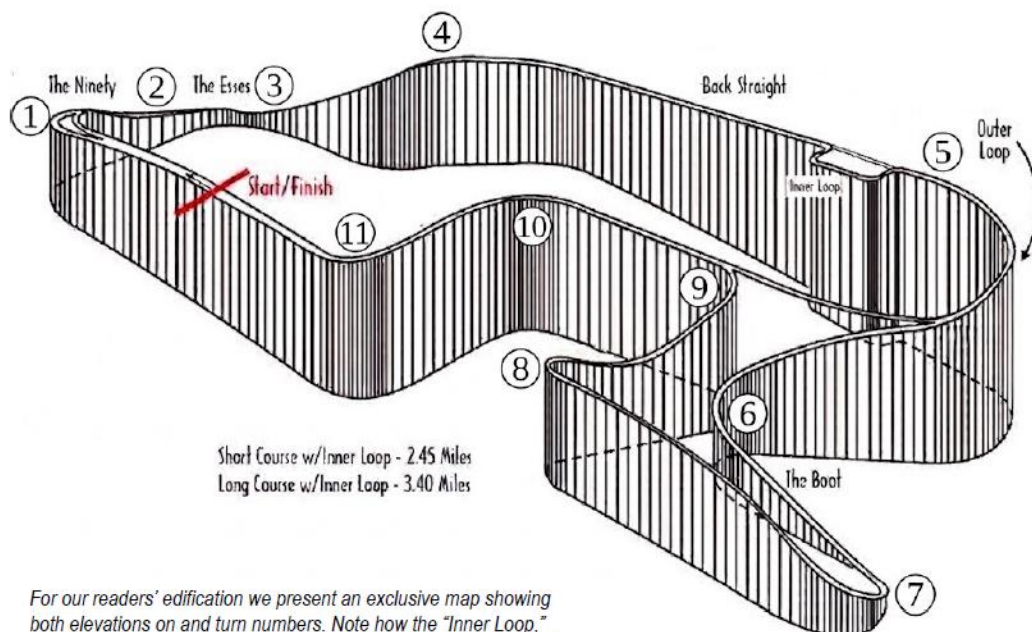


Palmer's rainy Sunday gave way to... Palmer's foggy Sunday @ Turn 9

The Fun One @ Watkins Glen with D'nP Malecki

- By Paul Malecki

While Lime Rock is our "home" track, Watkins Glen is our favorite, so despite work and home improvement projects that kept us busy for the last five months, we made early plans to run at the Fun One. Diane in her BMW-Mini R58 B-Spec and Paul in a Mini provided by Frank Schwartz and his Grass Paddock operation. Both of us running in H-Production.



For our readers' edification we present an exclusive map showing both elevations on and turn numbers. Note how the "Inner Loop," "Bus Stop" to all of us these days, has no turn number... the result of a decision similar to the infamous LeMans alterations of the Mulsanne Straight.

Last year's trip to the Fun One was interrupted by a trailer flat tire, courtesy of Kathy Sheehan's overdone traffic "improvements." This year's trip was interrupted by a 1-hour crawl from I-90 Exit 39 to the rest stop two miles away. Appears that some jerk in the left lane, going above work zone speed, never considered that a construction truck might be coming into the left lane from aforesaid work zone.

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Fun One cont'd II...

After dropping gear off at the hotel Thursday afternoon, 6 O'clock registration at the track exhibited the usual confusion. It was well after dark before our cars were snug in Garage 5.



We had signed up for the Friday test-and-tune. Four sessions. And while I love the cockpit TV screen on my Garmin, I was not loving the streaming data it was providing. But by Session 4 the lap times had come down 12 seconds, so life was good. Diane was satisfied/not satisfied with her times, but she was doing OK.

Post-practice side note to local restaurants: putting salt crystals on a hamburger bun does not make the dish a Beef on Weck. I know what a real Kimmelweck roll is. I grew up in Buffalo.

Saturday: Group 1 qualifying. Only 15 cars showing up, so it was a pleasure compared to last year's overpopulated Group 1 (40+ cars).



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Fun One cont'd III...

Out on the track... Oh crap! The Garmin is not working! I rely on it to tell me my plus and minus after each corner as a reference for the next lap. But I didn't have a clue as to my times, so I was pushing as best I could. Toward the end of the session, coming out of Turn 10, I went right to let three cars by. As I started to go left where I usually lift a smidge before 11, I realized I was entering way too fast. I lifted while still starting to rotate. Mistake! So completing the inevitable spin, the car backed smartly and quickly into the inside steel barriers. "Ouch," said my helmet.

After a few tries, the Mini came back to life and I proceeded with something metallic obviously dragging. A whole lap, dragging. When I came off the track, people were wildly waving me to the impound. "Are you okay? You called 911. Are you having trouble breathing?" Turns out my Apple watch had "detected a collision" and called 911 automatically. My only "hurt" was anxiety about the car being repaired in time for the race – about an hour away.

Meanwhile, over the public address system, repeated several times: "Attention in the Paddock, Attention in the Paddock, do not wear your Apple Watch while racing! Leave your Apple Watch in the paddock!"

At this point Frank and few of his racing buddies- Tom, Nancy, and Tom- crawled into action. Crawling was required to somehow remove the rear muffler system, repair it, and make sure it would survive racing while not impeding the performance of any suspension bits. Also, there was some body work that required attention; mostly with racing tape. Damage control was completed with 10 minutes to spare. What a crew!



Before and After -- Compare and Contrast...

Fun One cont'd IV...

"Attention in the Paddock, Attention in the Paddock! Group 1 to the Grid!"

We go through the drill. I help Diane get belted in and ready; Frank gets me belted in and ready; Frank finally gets around to getting belted in and ready. Grid marshals get us lined up and out. Garmin is working, pace lap is orderly, and we are green-flagged for racing.

For the first few laps I'm stuck in a lap-time-rut, but the Garmin + 's and - 's tell me what I need to know, and the lap times start coming down; except when the fast pack starts lapping me.

So after about 5 laps I'm doing nicely coming in to the Bus Stop. Gentle brake at the 100 marker, go nicely over the transition pad and start powering through the arc that avoids the three curbs that lead to Turn 5.

Bang!

Midway through the arc somebody hits my passenger side in a passing blow. This guy passes outside through the gravel that is not a part of the track. Couldn't he pass me on the inside...or wait until we were entering Turn 5? Clearly, he was entering the Bus Stop way too fast. At least his damage was more than mine.



Rest of my race was fine. Diane finished without incident.

Later, dinner at Seneca Lodge with the gang. Change of weather coming could be felt as we left in a light rain.

As predicted, Sunday morning dawned with hard rain, moderating with lighter rain. Diane decided that as long as her car was still without a racing scratch, she'd keep it that way by not leaving the garage for the day's racing.

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Fun One cont'd V...

It's been a number of years since I ran on wets, so Sunday morning I decided to venture out during qualifying simply to get the feel of how the Mini's Hankooks gripped.

Once on the track, found out I couldn't see more than a foggy view of the course. My glasses had fogged up and couldn't get them clear, no matter what I tried. Decided to call it a day after two laps.

The rain let up, and following qualifying groups cleared the standing water, but I decided not go out on a greasy track without being able to see clearly through my glasses.

Only 14 cars started the Group 1 race. Some 13 minutes into the session, double yellows started waving. Word was that somebody in a Datsun had gone too fast into Turn 1, blasting right through to imbed himself in the tirewall at the outer edge of the track. And while I didn't see it personally, I've imagined how it looked.



Channeling Icarus?

8 Minutes after the incident, race ended under the yellow.

In retrospect, had I gone out and finished I would have been third in HP. Oh well, I'll solve the glasses-fogging-in-wet-weather problem before I go racing again.

We had fun during the weekend. We saw a number of MoHud racers, and spent enjoyable time with the Cutlers on Saturday afternoon.

Trailing home Monday was easy. Traffic was light and we had a following wind.

Life is ~~good~~ great!

~ D'WP

The Fun One at Watkins Glen - By Theresa Lux

"The Fun One" sanctioned by the Finger Lakes SCCA Region at Watkins Glen International pulled in double digit MoHud racers over the weekend of September 19th and 20th. Racers competed within 5 of the 7 race groups on the long course Saturday and the short course on Sunday. For a handful, this was their first SCCA race of the season.

Paul (#6) and Diane Malecki (#44) ran in a pair of Minis (2009 Mini Cooper and 2013 Mini Coupe) in the HP class. Robert Wright (#90-2012 Elan DP08) qualified in the FC class. TJ Hanifan (#55-SSM- 1990 Mazda Miata) and Jennifer Cuddy (#90-SM- 1999 Mazda Miata) shared the track in race group 4. TJ took 1st place in both races.

Chris Brassard double dipped in group 2 and 6 with his 2016 Ford Spec Racer Ford 3 (#26). Chris took 1st place in the SRFx class on Sunday. Along with Chris in group 2 was Chip Van Slyke (#34- 1986 Crossie 62F) where he took 2nd place on the long course for the FF class. Doug Garrison (#10-SCCA Enterprises SRF3), Patrick Stringer (#40-SCCA Enterprises SRF3), and Jeffery Lehner (#71- SCCA Enterprises SRF3) were also in group 6. Jeffery finished first on the long course and second on the short course.

Continuing their winning streak from the weekend before, Jim Cutler (#192- C-Spec- 2012 Mazda 3) and Austen Levesque (#88 -T3 -2017 Toyota GT86) each took first place for their car class on the long course. On the short course, Jim took 1st and Austen came in 2nd.



A gaggle of Spec Racers drifts through turn 7 "toe" of the long course at Watkins Glen during the Fun One September 19th.

2026 Solo Season – A Look Back

By Pat Clair

The 2026 Solo (autocross) season proved to be very somber, busy and successful!

Remembering Andy Furlong –

We will be eternally grateful for the new timing equipment donation from Andy Furlong before his passing. In addition, the IUE-CWA Local #81981 made a donation to MoHud SCCA in his memory. As you may know, Andy requested his Atomic Rabbit be available to drive during our Solo events - and was driven in all four events!

The New Bus -

A new-to-MoHud 2015 Chevy Express minibus was purchased at auction to replace the 1998 Chevy Suburban minibus. So far, the 2015 vehicle has proven to be a good fit. Winter projects may include remediating some rust and a coat of paint.



Registrant Fee Increases –

The 2026 season saw a small increase in entry fees. The Chiefs (Solo Chair; Chiefs of Waivers, Workers and Tech; Timing & Scoring, Registrar) entrant fee increased \$10. Regular member fee was unchanged. The Weekend registrant fee increased by \$5 due to SCCA increasing the Weekend Membership charge from \$15 to \$20 per entrant. Below is a comparison of charges, fees and net profits MoHud realizes from each registrant.

	2025					2026				
	Actual Charge	Minus Actual MSR Fee	Minus SCCA Event Fee	Minus SCCA Weekend	Net Amount	New Charge	Minus Approx MSR Fee	Minus SCCA Event Fee	Minus SCCA Weekend	Net Amount
Solo Chief	\$25.00	(\$1.49)	(\$16.50)		\$7.01	\$35.00	(\$1.96)	(\$16.50)		\$16.54
Individual	\$50.00	(\$2.68)	(\$16.50)		\$30.82	\$50.00	(\$2.68)	(\$16.50)		\$30.82
Weekend	\$70.00	(\$3.63)	(\$16.50)	(\$15.00)	\$34.87	\$75.00	(\$3.86)	(\$16.50)	(\$20.00)	\$34.64

Financial Breakdown –

Below is the summary of each Solo event with Net Total, Registrants and Registrant Type:

<u>Solo</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Net Total</u>	<u>Registrants</u>	<u>No Shows</u>	<u>Members</u>	<u>Chiefs</u>	<u>Weekend</u>	<u>Late Fee</u>
1	07/12/2026	\$721.57	62		42	4	16	2
2	07/26/2026	\$659.68	61	3	47	5	9	6
3	08/09/2026	\$1,023.24	70	1	41	5	24	7
4	08/30/2026	\$677.77	62		43	5	14	5

Total \$3,082.26

Net Total includes additional expenses (EZ Pass, bus fuel, water, ice, lime, chalk) pertaining to each event.

New this year, a \$10 Late Fee was assessed if the registrant signs up after Friday 11:59pm, as this causes extra time spent recalculating heat splits, assigning workers to their posts, sending extra correspondence, additions to timing software, verifying loaner helmets, etc.

The number of registrants this season were *phenomenal*!

Many, many *volunteer hours* were expended to make sure the course was designed, set up, taken down; waivers issued; vehicles checked for safety issues; timing and scoring calculated and published; financial transactions processed; and much more.

***** A huge *THANK YOU!* to all who helped make this Solo season a success. *****

2026 SCCA Solo National Championships

My 32nd Nationals

-By Jim Garry

On the face of it, my lowly finish at the 2026 SCCA Solo National Championships would seem to be standard operating procedure for me for the past decade. Nothing to see here. Just ol' Jim going slow as usual. But there was a lot more to it than that.

This year one big change was driving without a co-driver for the first time in decades, something I had considered for years. In 2026 I finally went forward with not doing the "co-driver dance". This yielded less stress for me. Another change, though not planned, was the sparsity of events I attended. Heading into the Nationals, instead of the usual 17 to 20 events, I had only 9 due to health issues which I had mostly recovered from but were causing considerable fatigue. At any rate, in none of my events had I driven quickly ... a combination of the car not handling well and poor driving. More on driving later.



As the days counted down toward decision time to go to Nationals or not, I stepped friend and a former co-driver from the early to mid 2010s, Will Schambach. He told me he wanted to go for the drive, to talk with people, and check out the cars, the varied tow vehicles, and even the trailers. It was a wonderful offer which I gladly accepted and Will found a co-drive in a B Modified car, the class we co-drove in together more than a decade ago.

Due to low seat time, the car being off, and my health stuff, my philosophy for this event was to accept that last place was a strong possibility. I told people I'd be a participant, not a competitor. I'd focus on enjoying the people and having positive social interactions.

The 21-hour, 1300-mile drive to Lincoln went very smoothly and was fun, full of varied discussion topics. We arrived on Saturday afternoon, found our paddock spot with New England Region, said hello to folks, checked out a few things, and then had dinner with my friend Ben Martinez, who also happens to be a multi C Mod National Champ (plus one from another class).

Over dinner the topic of discussion wound its way to my car and I filled him in on the lack of success I've had since its reassembly in 2022, having bought it as a bare frame with no engine, transmission,

suspension, etc. Ben listened intently to my description of its current handling characteristics and settings, then recited a list of four or five things to change.

Since we didn't exchange any quantitative information, I was skeptical but agreed to make the adjustments. We'd meet on the grid of the Test and Tune course the next morning and Ben would take a few runs in my car before handing it over to me for a few more.

The next morning was hot. Indeed, the heat index would reach into the 100° category later that day and for the next few days. As part of an ongoing effort to tune the carb I changed some jets and then met Ben. He took three runs and reported that the car was nice to drive and pretty quick. A pleasant bit of news. He also thought power was reasonable.

Then I took my first run and within one corner and half of a slalom I knew the car was very good for the first time since I've owned it. Even the jetting change seemed good. I was only 0.1 sec behind Ben's best time in my car. Of course, in his own car he went another $\frac{3}{4}$ second faster but hey, he's a great driver and has been winning in it for many years. I felt very good about all this.



I call my car a "Frankenstein" car because as I assembled it, parts came from many different sources. Some didn't meet original specs and required modification including manufacturer updates. The many suspension changes carried out over years brought this Frankenstein into a reasonable range, which I felt I had accomplished during the previous year. But the final subtleties were eluding me. The time was ripe for someone else to step in and offer suggestions. I almost got

Mark Daddio into the car in August but he's simply too tall. Having Ben drive it was great timing.

Early this year I disconnected the front anti-roll bar which made the car finally feel neutral. But the resulting inside wheel spin gave away any time found by the neutral handling. In retrospect the handling was a bit too on-the-nose during the season and made it difficult to trust the car entering corners. It had been reattached for the T&T as one of Ben's suggestions.

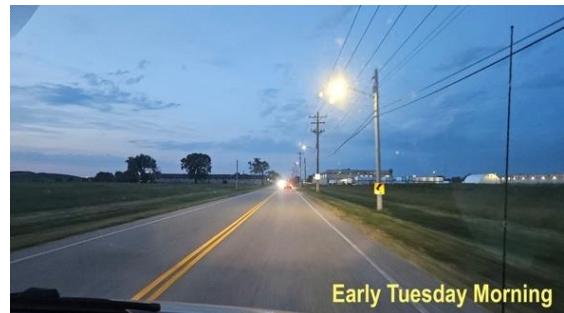
The only concern taken from this T&T is that when the new Nationals tires were mounted to scrub them in for two runs the car went to oversteer. That happened soon after the previous runs, so it wasn't related to conditions. Hoosier staff agree it may be due to the rear and front tires being manufactured about two years apart. But I decided I wouldn't make any changes until after my first run on the Nationals West course on Tuesday, if needed. But that conservatism cost me. Unless you know your car is good, Nationals can be a T&T also!

The next day, Monday, we arrived back on site to get check-in and tech over with early. I had time to take the car over the scales to check my weight (min weight is 1100 lbs) and calculate how much fuel to use as ballast. The courses opened for walking right on schedule at 10am. Knowing the heat index would again rise to over 100° by 1pm, we squeezed in a lot of walking, had lunch, hung out in the van with the AC on full, and eventually retreated to the hotel room to ride out the desert-like conditions. Will went back to the site after dinner for a couple more walks but I lay low.



Early Tuesday morning, pre-competition, we got in a few more walks before the heat descended. Both of us drove in Heat 5 (last heat of the day), Will on the East, me on the West. I worked 2nd heat, Will 3rd. We both had the same job, "Clipboard". This is an intense task as this worker must write down every car that passes through their work station, mark if it's "clean" or write down the ID of the cone(s) hit (referring to a map), or indicate if the driver was off course or got a re-run. This record takes precedence over the information radioed in to T&S. If you're distracted when getting the cone ID for a car that passed through, there's another car coming in 20 seconds and it would be easy to miss that next car. Several times I had a panicky feeling that I had done so but that wasn't the case.

A few hours later, in grid for 5th heat I felt tired. But as the start of the heat approached the fatigue faded and my focus amped up. I actually felt excited because of the car changes! A New England Region friend, Eric Scholz, was acting as my crew during my runs. It was great to have someone young and with an engineering mind helping and to debrief with. Thank you, Eric!



The West course was a traditional autocross design and I liked it but couldn't visualize it entirely at first, a 2026 issue with me. My initial run was OK, but I suffered a lack of commitment to the throttle. Yet had I not hit a cone right at the end, I would have been in 3rd place. Of course, this year C Mod attendance was extraordinarily light, plus we lost an entry on his way to the event. So we were only at 9 drivers.

I also noted the pesky oversteer remained from yesterday. We made a shock change, feeling that the oversteer originated at turn in. Yet the second run though faster, was much like the first, with oversteer and the driver not committed to the throttle. I had fallen to fifth but felt like 3rd was in reach.

Before heading out on the last run we added a small amount of front anti roll bar rate. As a result the car picked up quite a bit of understeer and I experienced front scrub in all the corners, even having to lift in the fast slalom because the scrub caused me to be late on entry. But a successful commitment to throttle paid off, negating time lost by the push. Though no faster, I remained in 5th. Fourth through eighth were separated by only a quarter second. Of note, I realized that during the runs I had felt good energy and was hardly aware of the heat. The mind works wonders.

Over the past 5 years, the amount of front anti roll bar I had just dialed in would have hardly made a difference. So the push I felt as a result of the adjustment was a real surprise. But now that the car was much improved, that same small amount made a big change, a conclusion I only arrived at days later. Too bad. Had I realized this, my adjustment for the next day would have been to set the bar halfway back toward where it had been instead of all the way.

Wednesday saw a break in the heat. It was warm but only in the 80s. 1300 SCCA members were grateful.

The East Course, designed by Hall of Famer Karen Babb, was very different from Tuesday's course. This one was much longer and visually different yet easy to follow. Compared to the West, speeds were slower *and* faster and there were some very cool elements where a smart driver could make time. Although it took a long time to walk it, this was a great course.

Waiting for 4th heat to finish, I was feeling fatigue when once again energy returned as competition neared. Unfortunately, my brain was a bit foggy. I committed two large errors on run 1. The first was in the fast sweeper after the opening slalom. I entered at full throttle in 3rd gear, as planned, but a small straight section I planned to brake at before the apex came and went with barely a swipe at the brake. The next part of the sweeper tightened heavily into a slow turn leading to a fast section. Having missed my hard-braking opportunity and not wanting to spin under the brakes in this decreasing radius section I gently slowed from speed and had to drive along the outside wall, losing much time. The rest of the run went well until the final corner, a tight-ish 180 which I stunningly drove into like it was a 90! It meant exiting early and picking up all the rubber clagg that lay on the outside of the turn.

I'd fallen to 7th. Back in grid I checked the tires and they looked just like an F1 car's tires after the cool down lap when drivers purposely drive through the pick-up to add weight to their cars. Eric and I got to work cleaning the fronts. The rears were cleaned at the start by using the biggest burn out I've done in this car. Tires were OK.



Before that 2nd run we had again tried to cure some of the oversteer. Remember, I didn't yet understand why the slight stiffening of the front bar had created so much understeer, so instead we softened front rebound but I didn't think it would help much. It didn't. And I made the same mistake again on the fast sweeper! Duh. My run was 2.7 seconds better but everyone was going faster and I remained in 7th. Based on yesterday's lesson on my 3rd run ... an incorrect lesson ... we left the car alone for my third run and like yesterday my run was the same time as my second run. I did clean up that fast sweeper though likely was now too conservative there. Very disappointing.

Here's a new one I never experienced at Nationals ... Impound's scales were closed because, I guess, the East course had experienced so many delays during the day and it was getting late.

While waiting in Impound I pushed away the disappointment of my finishing position. After all, I had accomplished everything I originally set out to do. I had supported my class and made friendly social connections, going out of my way on occasion. I even had a good time! If my pal the multi CM National Champion hadn't helped improve the car's handling, I would have been completely satisfied with 7th. How ironic ... get help, improve, feel worse.



Also during Impound, we CM drivers discussed tactics to try to draw current CM drivers back to Lincoln and to enlist new entrants. We'll be working together on that over the winter.

Now as promised earlier in the article, I'll explain my poor driving. "Desperation Driving" is a term I coined years ago for a type of poor driving. Plenty of people do it. When a car isn't working the way you want it to, and you can't adapt, you start to drive harder and harder. You don't want to give up speed gained on the flat-out portions, staying on the throttle as long as you can and abandoning well established corner entry techniques. You brake really late and really hard, upsetting the chassis. And you lose patience which often means failing to correctly set up a corner. This results in (1) lower speeds in the corners, (2) off line driving, (3) poor set up for the ensuing elements, and (4) often taking a longer line which causes lost time.



This can be summed up with another technical term ... the on-track experience becomes a "shit show". Was I aware that this was happening over the past few years? For sure! But it's tough to change with a frustrating car. Patience disappears. Nevertheless, for all of my mistakes on these courses I had moments of pure driving satisfaction in some elements. I just never put it together.

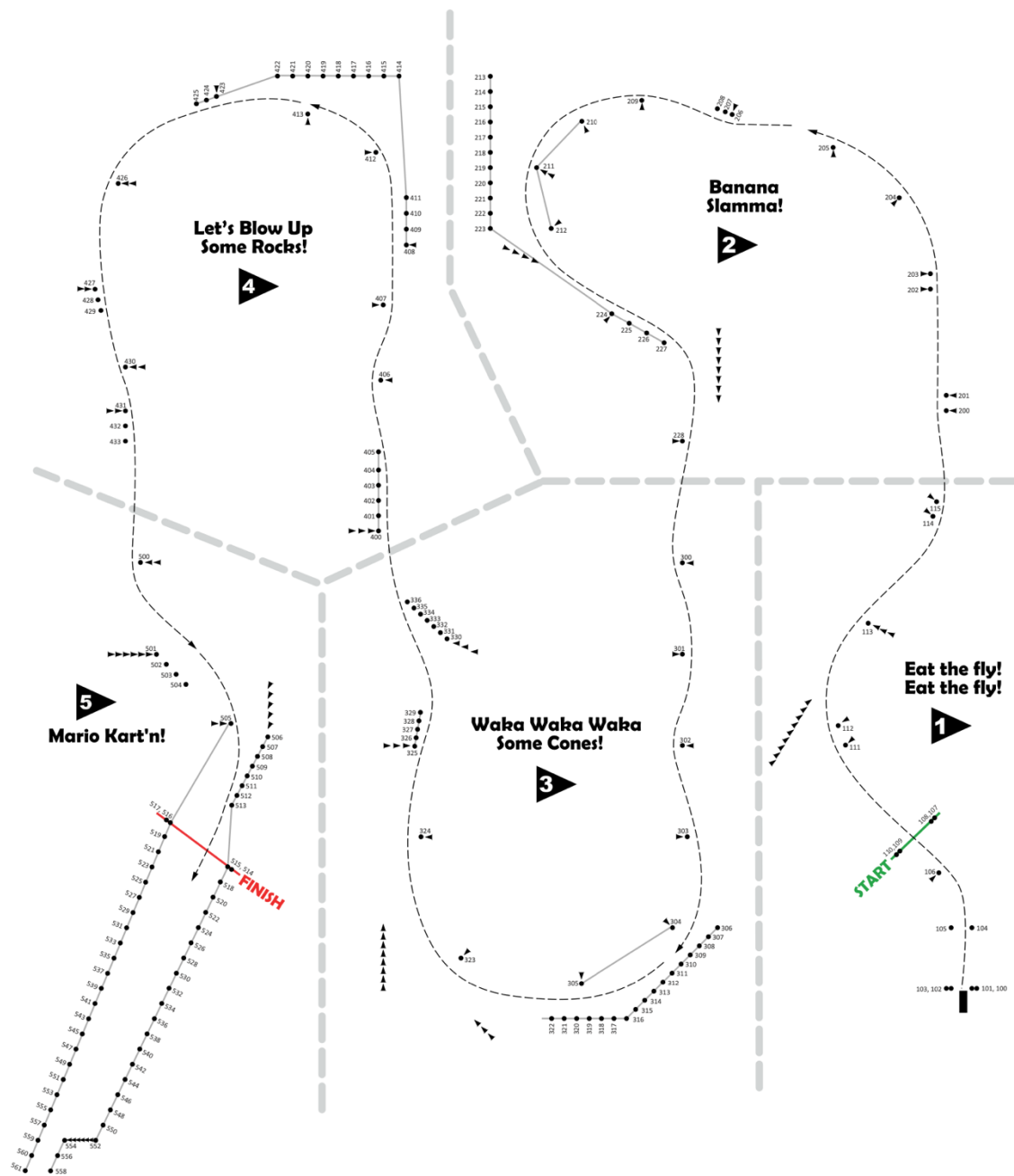
Our ride home went really well despite picking up a screw in one of my brand-new trailer tires. We just left it alone. It only caused an occasional loss of a few pounds of air. And here's something new I had always wondered about during past trips. Approaching Lincoln, 80 minutes before the Nationals site, drivers have a choice of either staying on I-80 or splitting off onto I-880. I'd always stuck to I-80. On a

whim, I asked Will to exit onto I-880 to I-29 to I-680. We were rewarded with a much less traveled route with gorgeous scenery which cost but an additional five minutes. We took the same route heading home.

For next year there's strongly justified optimism that my car will need only a few tweaks and the driver will be able to concentrate on returning to driving in a way that led to much enjoyment and satisfaction in the past. I had been close to deciding to find a new autocross ride for 2027 but that has now been put on hold.

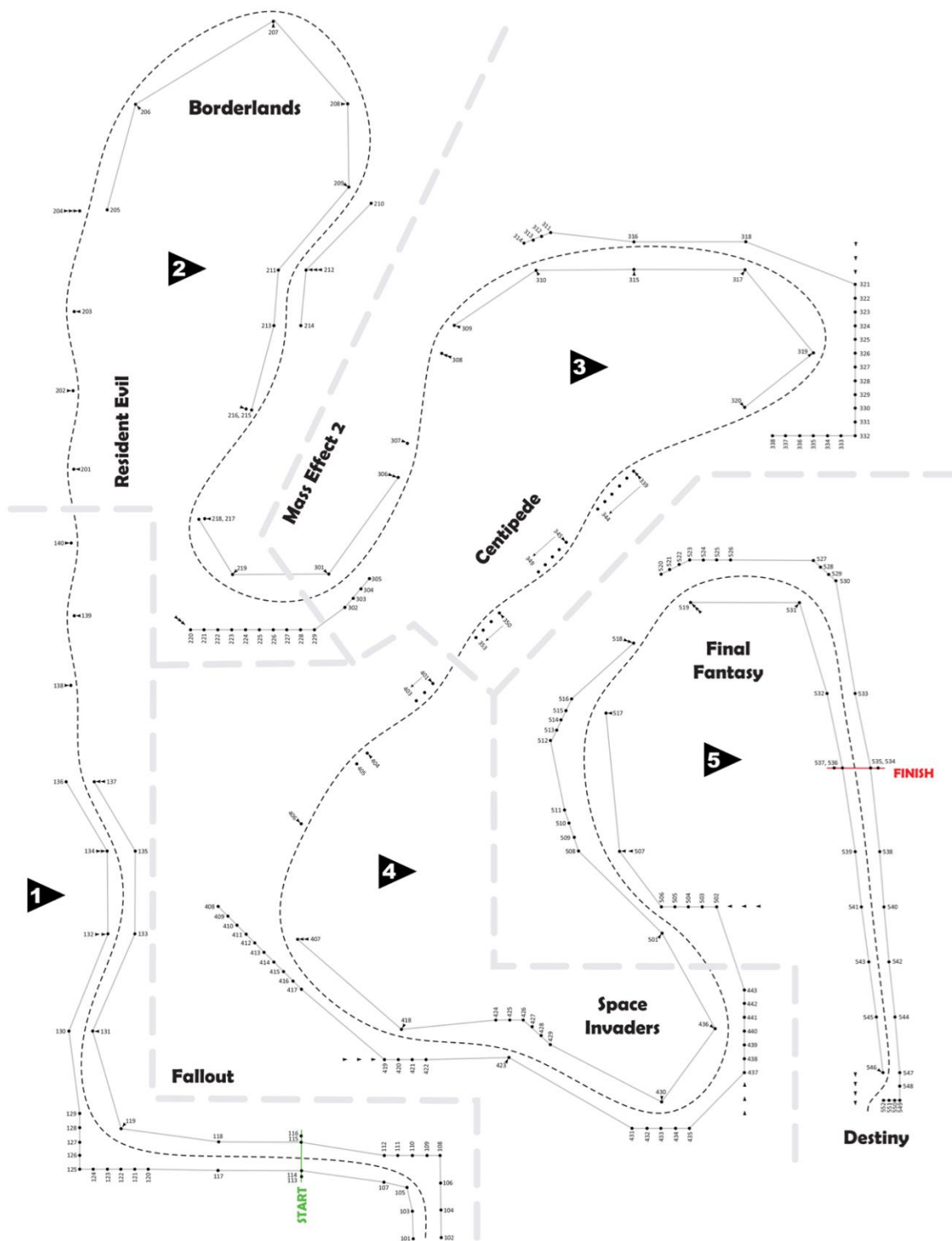
What I took away from this event was a further underscoring of the importance of friendship. My C Mod pal didn't hesitate to provide me with a better setup suggestion. Friends I rarely see found me or vice versa and we had enjoyable catch ups with each other. The old friend I had been co-driving with until this year continued his friendship with me, including having my wife and I to his house in Vermont for a long lunch. And finally, Will Schambach is an extraordinary person who went well out of his way to shepherd me to Lincoln and back when I wasn't feeling well and allowed me to experience yet another Solo Nationals, one of the greatest motorsports events in the world. Thank you Will, so much. I hope I can return your kindness.





WEST COURSE

Level Up!
by Jeff Vineyard



EAST COURSE

World of Conecraft
by Karen Babb

AI Joins the Team

~ Paul M.

As a racer, when you have a question about your car or driving technique, you seek out the advice of someone you trust. A racer friend, an owner of a similar car, a social media group, or some well-known how-to book or video. But sometimes the advice is contradictory, or incomplete. When you want an answer that's more like an article from Consumer Reports or Cook's Illustrated, who ya gonna call?

I use advanced level subscriptions to ChatGTP (Chad) and NanoBanana/Gemini (Nano) for grunt work daily, so when I had a question about spark plugs for Diane's BMW-Mini, I gave my AI assistants the task.

The car is an R58 Mini Coupe built to B-Spec by Runoffs champ Alex Ratcliffe in the late Summer of 2024. It has a N16B16A Mini engine and has logged 3 races and a number of events with SCDA since. Several vendors have suggested that NGK and Bosch plugs are appropriate for racing; I asked Chad to prepare a detailed report. The result ran to 6 pages.

Here's Chad's primary recommendation:

Recommended B-Spec setup

Plug: NGK ILZKBR7B8G, stock no. 97968

Heat range: NGK 7

Gap: 0.032 in. (0.8 mm)



NGK fitment information specifically identifies the 97968 for the 2012 MINI Cooper Coupe 1.6, and the published OE-type gap is 0.032". The N16B16A applications likewise specify 0.032".

For your particular application, I would not go to a colder plug. The restrictor actually strengthens that conclusion. Your engine spends considerable time at high RPM, but the restrictor limits cylinder filling and therefore peak combustion heat and cylinder pressure. A colder plug offers little benefit and increases the possibility of fouling during warm-up, grid time and low-speed paddock operation.

I also wouldn't tighten the gap to .028" merely because it's a race car. That's useful on higher-cylinder-pressure turbo applications where spark blowout becomes an issue. Your restricted naturally aspirated N16 doesn't have that problem. I'd run .032" unless actual plug examination or data shows a reason to change it.

>>>>

AI Joins the Team cont'd

In addition to a lot of discussion and comparisons, Chad tossed in the helpful advice that everything would go smoother if you had a 12-point 14mm thinwall magnetic flex socket with a long extension ready to extract the old plugs and put in the new after using compressed air to clear out the deep recess in the head where the plugs resided.

So I got the NGKs, which were set to .31, replaced my older 14mm socket with a magnetic one, and then called my neighbor to stand by to observe the procedure – several UTube videos made the extraction of the ignition coils that sit atop the plugs to be a difficult job. Max LuxRamos had told me that it was really quite simple. Just take off the small cover, disconnect the wires, and give the coils a good pull. Max was right. The whole job, including the plug swap and insertion of new coils took less than 15 minutes.

Now, having a little confidence Chad as team member, I asked for the run-down on brake pad wear. The car came on lightly used pads, and the spares included a new set of fronts and rears, each friction pad having a 14mm.

First I checked to see that current and spare Carbotech pads were the right series for club racing on the Mini. That satisfied, Chad came up with the following: *For your 2012 MINI Cooper R58 SCCA B-Spec race car, I would use 4 mm (about 0.157") of remaining friction material as the practical replacement point for the Carbotech race pads, front and rear—and I would not start a race session with fronts already near that measurement.... My race-weekend rule would be:*

6+ mm: race without concern about thickness.

4-6 mm: usable, but measure after every session and look carefully for taper.

4 mm: replacement point before an important race/session.

Chad also mentioned the demand on the fronts being critical, particularly heat as the pads wear, and suggested be more conservative with front pad thickness. As the pads all around measured in the 10 -11mm range, and showed no signs of significant taper from the visible edge, I feel we're OK in that department for the Fun One.

And, in anticipation of the Fun One (you're reading this afterward) I asked both Chad and Nano to discuss Watkins Glen long-course turns 6 and 7. Both recognized that the Mini, as a *momentum car*, has very different concerns than the higher-powered majority of cars on the track. Chad's basic take: *For your 2012 R58 B-Spec Mini, I would build the Watkins Glen Long Course lap around one overriding principle: do not give away momentum that the Mini cannot readily replace. That means several lines will differ materially from the conventional high-horsepower school line.*

While both Chad and Nano both stated the basics, Chad cited more sources and appeared to have a better handle on the analysis. We shall see...



AI Approved for R56 BMW-Mini B-Spec



You can get an occasional-use 12-point 14MM thinwall magnetic integrated sparkplug tool from places like Amazon, or you can go fancy...

~ *PaulM*. Crew Chief and bottle-washer for #44 R-58 BMW-Mini B-Spec; Diane T. Malecki, Owner/Driver

Treasurer's Report

Mohawk-Hudson SCCA Treasurer's Report - October 2026

By Pat Clair

On **August 31, 2026**, the accounts totaled **\$25,066.44** –

- Checking/Money Market \$ 9,893.25
- 6 Month CD #1 (Matures 11/05/2026) \$ 5,057.49
- 6 Month CD #2 (Matures 09/07/2026) \$ 5,086.51
- 6 Month CD #3 (Matures 01/04/2027) \$ 5,028.19
- Savings \$ 1.00

September Banking Activities (To Date):

- Solo #3 (08/09/2026) finalize expenses.
- Solo #4 (08/30/2026) income and expenses.
- SCCA Membership Dues (July 2026) income.
- Quarterly MailChimp reimbursement (Used for mass emails).
- Purchase stamps.
- CD #2 Matured – Transfer interest to Money Market; Renew 6 Mo CD.

As of **September 20, 2026**, the accounts totaled **\$26,825.58** –

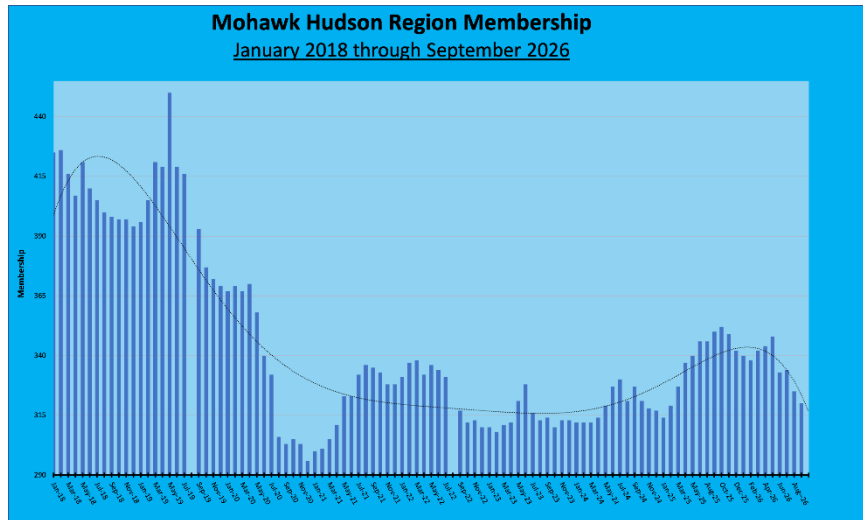
- Checking/Money Market \$11,738.90
- 6 Month CD #1 (Matures 11/05/2026) \$ 5,057.49
- 6 Month CD #2 (Matures 03/09/2027) \$ 5,000.00
- 6 Month CD #3 (Matures 01/04/2027) \$ 5,028.19
- Savings \$ 1.00

Upcoming Financial Transactions:

- SCCA Membership Dues (August 2026) income.
- September interest.
- Tire Rack Street Survival (TRSS) at Saratoga Auto Museum (10/18/2026)
- GTA Rally – Revolutionary Rally (10/25/2026)

Membership Report

As of September 25th, Mohawk Hudson Region membership stood at 320. From a recent high mark of 352 in October 2025 our numbers have tumbled 22 members in a year. And that's despite a stellar MoHud autocross season. Perhaps people who aren't seriously involved in a club activity or two are letting their memberships lapse, hoping for better times in the future?



New Members in September

Alejandro Gordon, Niskayuna

Welcome Alejandro!

Significant Anniversaries in October

5 Years

Robert Horvers - Robert lives minutes from our autocross site.

15 Years

Lindsey Burckhard - Lindsey is active in our autocross program and is of course related to Tracey and Russ.

William Jandrisits - William has been an active club racer but has not raced so far in 2026.

Raymond Rankins - Raymond is interested in club racing and autocross.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Meeting Minutes from Membership Meeting on 9/2/2026

Meeting was called to order by RE Sal at 7:00 PM

Motion to accept minutes as written in KO, Vince, seconded by Sal. All for.

Membership Report- See Membership Report Published in Knock Off for more details.

Knock off Report – Current issue is out, and includes some recaps of a couple races, and time trial. Please have all entries to Chip by the 20th of the month.

Treasurer's Report - See the Treasurer's Report Published in the Knock Off for details on the club's financial and CD accounts.

Solo Report- Solo had a great year. Attendance and weather was great all year. Averaged around 60 participants.

Solo Nats – Will and Jim going.

TRSS- Instructor email going out before 9/6/2026. We are sitting at 7 students. This is our first event when Patroon gets 10%, SAM, and Mohud get 45%.

Rally –Next GTA is October 25th, 2026. Appears we will be starting in Malta. Registration should be opening maybe next week[week of 9/7/2026]. EJ to reach out for more details so he can start promoting it.

Track - The official MoHud calendar has been recently updated with all the local track events. Note: Bring someone new to track night in America, itll be free.

Activities - No further club activities have been planned.

Road Racing – Fun One at the Glen Oct 16-17.

Old Business – Bus is up and running great. Need to still make a plan for getting rid of the old bus.

New Business – Revamped process for getting tow funds. Will be \$100 per person with a cap of \$1000.

Brian from Selkirk asked if anyone goes to NJ. Most answered no, due to distance. Has a 98 M3 and is trying to get more seat time.

A motion to end the meeting was brought to a vote by Peter and seconded by Vince. All present members voted and the motion passed "All for."

The meeting ended at 7:32 PM

Regional Directory

Board of Directors

Regional Executive

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MoHud.RE@gmail.com

Assistant Regional Executive

Vince Gentile
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Matt Fraley
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Treasurer

Patricia Clair
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Director

Russ Burckhard
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Director

Chip VanSlyke
chip87@gmail.com

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Solo (Autocross) Chair

Russ Burckhard
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Road Racing Co-Chair

Paul Malecki
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Tire Rack Street Survival Program

Matt Fraley
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Road Racing Co-Chair / Scrutineer

Richard Welty
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The Knock Off (Newsletter)

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Merchandise

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Webmaster

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