

TRACK TIME

By Brant D. Nystrom



Last month, I described the process for getting started in track-based events. Since that column, we have participated in our first track weekend of the season; a PCA Driver Education (DE) event sponsored by the Alabama Region. We ran at perhaps the nation's most beautiful race track and home of the Porsche Sport Driving School - Barber Motorsports Park. About a dozen track fanatics supporting six cars from Kentucky took part in a field of nearly 150 drivers. We braved the elements (snow on both Saturday and Sunday) which has become a common theme at our traditional first event of the season (last year, we were plagued with thunderstorms and a tornado). However, in spite of the conditions, we all had a great time, met many like-minded drivers and support staff, and cultivated friendships that will last far beyond the weekend.

Unlike last month's column where I focused on the process to take part in a DE event, this month, I'm going to focus on "the whys". YES – OF COURSE, driving on a race track is the thrill of a lifetime, but there are so many moments associated with a track weekend that stand out in my mind, I wanted to share a few of those with you. First, for the "tinkerer" in all of us, preparation for an event involves a process. Gather up your helmet, driving gear, and event forms to name three items on my ever-growing checklist. Scheduling the obligatory inspection with your local shop of choice (the guys at Foreign Affairs Autowerks are very experienced in track inspections) offers an opportunity to reacquaint yourself with old friends and talk track. Even after years of participation, the anticipation of the first event of the season brings excitement, butterflies and an anxious nervousness to my stomach.

Next, the road trip. Looking at my cell phone, I had no fewer than 30 texts from my racing buddies proclaiming "race weekend ahead", "looking forward to passing you", "don't forget your car this time", etc., etc., etc. Then there's the

excitement of loading equipment and cars, and the shared smiles as we roll out of the parking lot. Even now, years beyond our first event, our rally cry can be heard “guys, its track weekend”.

At the track, we unload and set-up our home in the paddock. This too is a fun time. Excitement abounds, and after the quick on-site tech inspection, we all watch as new cars arrive. If you like car shows, this could ruin you forever. All types of vehicles are tracked. Not only do you see Porsches, Ferraris, BMWs, vintage race cars, and so on, but you get to hear them all run, see them inside and out, and know that these are not mere show cars; these guys run them and love to talk about them. You get to meet other drivers, spouses, mechanics, photographers, buddies, and car lovers just there to experience the whole thing.

As a side note, we usually travel with at least 2 people per each car taking part. Events are very spouse friendly and will accommodate supervised children. Additionally, we would be lost without the mechanical support folks and photographers that join us at each outing. If you are interested in a future track event, please feel free to contact me to join our caravan and utilize our support personnel.

Back to the event. Following a healthy night’s rest (this may be a bit complicated at your first event or two), we head to the track early to attend drivers and instructors meetings. We all love to complain about the early roll-call and endless question and answer sessions. Then, the run groups begin, and everyone becomes focused on the task at hand – becoming a better driver. The evenings are filled with long discussions about driving techniques, shift points, vehicle attributes, and occasional close-calls.

By the end of the weekend, everyone has a greater level of respect for their vehicles and fellow participants. We exchange business cards, phone numbers, and email addresses, as well as future event plans and rendezvous points.

Make no mistake about it, a track weekend is full of hard work. But we all work together in a spirit of partnership and competition. None of us can enjoy the track without the participation of others, and in the end, all of us that take part at each and every level, love this sport. It feels significant; it brings an enormous sensation of accomplishment; it gives us hope, excitement, joy, and sometimes disappointment; but in the end, this individual sport has given us camaraderie and friendships that we never had before. It’s the people that make this great, and I am forever grateful to racing and the PCA for bringing such substance and real living to my life.

If you have interest in joining us at any upcoming event, or would like more information on PCA DE events and what is required to join-in, please feel free to contact me: brantdnystrom@gmail.com

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PICTURE CAPTIONS IF WANTED:

PIC1: New Porsche Turbo S & GT3 4.0

PIC2: Bob Lovejoy Tearing Up The Track

PIC3: Our Guys Admiring A GT-40

PIC4: Your Author & Track Chair On Tack

PIC5: Kentucky's Michael Miller Flying By

PIC6: Bob Lovejoy's 996