

## Race Weekend Review, July 13-14, 2013

On July 13th and 14th I participated in the 7th Annual Bert Olson Majors Presented by Lane Automotive in the Spec Miata class at GingerMan Raceway located in South Haven, MI. After my successes of finishing 6th and 5th respectively and being third quickest in the race at the SCCA National at Blackhawk Farms two weeks earlier, I was looking to challenge my abilities at a higher level as a part of the SCCA US Majors Tour. According to the SCCA, "The U.S. Majors Tour is the pinnacle of championship racing in North America...where America's best amateur drivers race." I knew that the level of competition for this weekend was going to be very tough and I was going to have a lot of work to do to meet my goal of a rookie racer of a top ten finish in both races in a field of over 20 more experienced and highly competitive drivers.

On Friday would be practice day. I spent the day learning track, as it was my first time driving on it, and seeing how the car felt towards the end of the day. While observing other drivers' line through certain corners, I realized that the lines they were taking were very wide and were good for driving fast, but they didn't seem to make up much time by doing so. I figured that if I kept a tighter line through both of those sections of the track and make my distance at short as possible, I would be able to gain time on other drivers. After a productive day of five 20 minute sessions, I was feeling confident with the progress I made and I was looking forward to racing the next day.

Saturday would be a fairly busy day of timed qualifying and race 1 and a qualifying race for race 2 at the end of the day. The track conditions were not the best compared to Friday and there was slightly less grip. I managed to qualify 10th out of 25 Spec Miatas in that session. The 21 lap race was fairly uneventful. I lost two positions at the start when everyone bottlenecked at turn 1, but I managed to fight back and bring myself to finish in 9th. I was hoping to carry the momentum from that race to the 10 lap qualifying race.

The qualifying race grid was based on fastest lap in Race 1, which put me 10th. The race would basically be a sprint and finishing position would be the line for the Race 2 grid for Sunday. I was expecting it was going to be a very tough with everyone desperate to finish with a good result. The whole race was full of great battles and everyone was passing or being passed. I lost a position during the race, but after a last lap scrap with two other drivers, I gained two positions and finished a close and hard fought 9th. This put me in a good position for Sunday's race and I was able to sleep well on my result.

Come Sunday, the air temperature was in the mid to high 80's. Based on past experience, the performance of my car would drop in the humid weather and temperature over 80 F. I was not feeling very confident with the car before the race in this heat, but I was still looking forward to another 21 lap race. The start was pretty tight as we went into turn 1 four wide with me on the very inside with some cars actually going off track. I lost just two positions but I soon took one back. After gaining two more positions, I lost a great amount of momentum when the overall leading Corvette from a different class dive bombed me at the last corner. Infuriated with his desperate maneuver, I pressed on and soon retook those positions I had lost. The car was very quick towards the middle of the race and had surprisingly very good top end speed. I managed to gain one more position before the end of the race and finished 7th. Had I not lost momentum from the Corvette, I believe I could have grabbed 6th position. I also was able to post the 6th fastest lap of the race which was only a second slower from my Advanced Autosports teammate and double race winner that weekend, Voytek Burdzy.

Overall, I was elated with the fact that I achieved my goal of finishing in the top ten on both occasions and I was also very happy to be awarded with a free tire for my 7th place finish (Hoosier awards tires to all drivers who finish in the top 8). After my good results in the National and Majors events, I am now qualified to participate in the prestigious SCCA Runoffs in September later this year. I am very happy with the results I have achieved thus far, but more needs to be done in order for me to be in a race winning car.

I would like to thank Advanced Autosports for the great amount of help and support in giving me good results with this car and I would like to thank my sponsors Med Stop, DPR Art Rescue, Quality Mobile Truck Repair, and Tomar Service, Inc. for their support as well and special thanks for Voytek Burdzy for sharing his knowledge and experience with me.

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