

FIRST GEAR

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DILLON MACHAVERN IS QUICK TO LEARN, MAKING HIM QUICKER ON THE TRACK

In 2011-'12, Dillon Machavern served notice he was a force to be reckoned with in Spec Miata (18 podiums and 13 wins), but at this year's opening National Club race in Sebring he made an emphatic arrival in SCCA U.S. Majors Tour racing when, at just 17, he won GT-1. Asked how much seat time he had at the difficult Florida track in the Falcon-bodied GT-1 car Tommy Riggins had built for Dillon's father, young Dillon's answer was simple, direct, and to the point: "Zero."

Steve Bertok is not surprised. "Dillon learns *really* fast," Bertok says, "and it doesn't matter what car it is. Steering wheel and a gas pedal, he can drive it quickly. I watched him at a test day driving his Spec Miata, the Falcon GT-1, a Datsun 510, and a V8 stock car, jumping from seat to seat to seat without a second thought. Amazing."

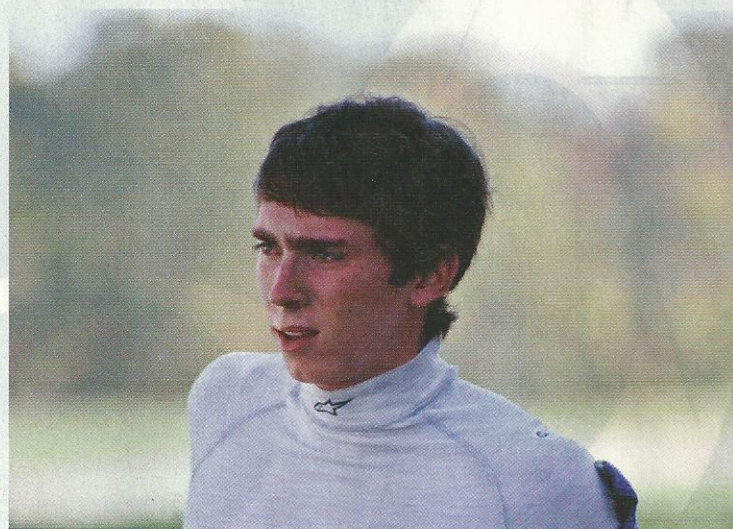
This is not to say the precocious Machavern isn't well aware of his racing environment. "The Falcon and the Miata are completely different," says Dillon. "Because of the amount of power in the Falcon, you left-foot brake and you don't use the clutch to shift. Your straightaway speeds are significantly faster and braking points have to be adjusted."

While the GT-1 car's raw power helps give him the adrenaline rush he enjoys in racing, Dillon doesn't in any way slight the Miata. "I've learned a lot of race craft driving in Spec Miata," he says, "because of how closely matched the competition is and the number of cars on the track." He's also capable of blowing the doors off everybody else, setting the Spec Miata lap record at VIR in October 2012.

Good racing genes have to take



Dave Green



Patrice Machavern

READY TO GO
Dillon Machavern races everything he can get his hands on, from Spec Miata to GT-1 (BOTTOM LEFT) - all with a healthy amount of success.

some credit for all this talent. Dillon's father, Dave, began SCCA racing in 1981, and has participated at both the Club and pro level, in addition to competing in the Grand-Am Rolex series, the Firehawk series, and the V8 Stock Car series. His accomplishments include Regional and Divisional SCCA championships, as well as being the four-time champion of the V8 Stock Car series and the 2003 Grand-Am GTS class championship.

"When people meet Dillon he appears quiet and reserved," says Dave, "yet I know that it is his determination and tenacity that belies his laid-back nature. When he turned 15, he approached me and had already researched his path to an SCCA license. From the time he completed the Skip Barber schools to the present, he is always looking forward to the next opportunity to be on track and is always physically and mentally prepared. His goal is to learn and to win."

"My dad has been racing all my life," says Dillon. "I remember watching some of his races on TV when he was running Grand-Am. Some kids watch football, I watched car races. When I was 14 I started to go to my dad's races."

While Dillon began driving shifter karts in 2009 in the F1 Boston Junior

It is [Dillon Machavern's] determination and tenacity that belies his laid-back nature"

DAVE MACHAVERN

Racing League near his home in Charlotte, Vt., going SCCA racing was not a foregone conclusion. "I played baseball from the age of 5," says the outfielder/catcher, "and was a member of the 2005 Vermont State Champion 9-10 Little League All-Star team. Then I played Babe Ruth and high school baseball. I hung up my bat and glove just before my junior season began [last year]."

While Dillon belongs to the Central Florida Region because of his father's long relationship with Florida-based Tommy Riggins, he lives in Vermont, where his father owns the Heritage Automotive Group (Toyota and Ford dealerships). He is a senior in high school and, in the fall, will be attending High Point University as a BSBA candidate in the School of Business. While Dillon acknowledges he would like to go pro racing, he would also like to own his own business someday, "preferably having to do with cars." There go those genes again. ●

WHAT COLOR IS THE SKY?

"I've never seen a better attitude on such a young driver," says Steve Bertok, the owner of Panic Motorsports in Columbia, S.C., who preps Dillon's Spec Miata. "Takes a lot to get him excited, be it good or bad," he continues. "When he wins, it's kind of like 'Well, that's what we came here to do.' And, if things go wrong, 'We'll just have to do better next time.'"

"When we first met him, he was really shy," says Steve, "and getting information out of him about what the car was doing, what he liked to eat, what color the sky was, was our first challenge. But what was once a tough shell to crack is now a big smile, handshake, and open conversation."