

## KNEE DEEP IN NEDIV

NORTHEAST DIVISION BY G.W. HENDERSON

### COFFEE, CRULLERS, HEADS AND NECKS

Nature and geography dictate that we here in NEDiv earn a little time out during the winter months – but that is not necessarily a bad thing. It gives us time to do that repair and prep we put off on the racecars during the season and to become reacquainted with our family and homes and – more importantly – home repairs! Can you say, “discriminator valve?” I knew you could.

I am fortunate in that after shoveling mere meters of snow for a few weeks (hey, the name of this column is *Knee Deep in NEDiv*), I have a place to go to reinvigorate my addiction to motorsports. That place is called BRM Motorsports, and it is the race prep shop and headquarters (located in Amityville, N.Y. – yes, *that* Amityville) where Bruce Miller's and Chris Conigliaro's efforts bring motorsports to the hungry enthusiast.

Bruce has opened his doors on Saturday mornings for the past two years to like-minded motor heads for coffee and doughnuts (providing he and the team aren't away at a race), where everyone can discuss how to make racing a better-oiled machine for all involved. Because his clientele are a varied cross section of motorsport participants across a number of different organizations, it was at one such Saturday morning coffee klatch that I raised the fact that SCCA was looking for member input regarding making head and neck restraints mandatory.

The cross section of participants in the discussion ranged from a dedicated PDX'er in a BMW club to an SCCA National Championship winning open-wheel SCCA racer to a young, new, First Gear-aged clubbie, to a wizened, driver-turned-team owner. The question? Should SCCA mandate or make mandatory the use of head and neck restraints?

First responses within the group indicated the opinions would be split right down the middle. It was a safety issue, right? Why not mandate their use? I mean, we are already doing that with helmets and seat belts and window nets, so why not head and neck restraint systems? But as the conversations progressed, a number of issues came to the surface. If the Club mandates a device, which device will it mandate? There are a number of systems out there arguably doing an equal job. And there are multiple products within manufacturers.

Questions were raised, like does a 20-degree or 40-degree need specialized installation? Or, if the SCCA allows one system, do we have to allow them all? And if I use one in a GTO, ex-Evernham stock car, the seatbelts have to attach differently than in my Spec Racer Ford or Radical – do we mandate belt attachments as well?

The coffee was really starting to flow.

Whose job would it be to make sure all of these devices were properly installed – and further more, that they were properly used when taken to the track? Tech is pretty much the last line of compliance, and grid can barely see down into the closed cockpits.

At this point in the conversation, the 50/50 split started to move more and more to 30/70 against.

What about the issue of liability? If someone has the ultimate bad trip with an unfortunate outcome, does the liability spread beyond the driver to the tech inspector or the grid person or the Club? And would the device have a lifetime or seasonal certification like belt dates? The questions came fast and furious.

The outcome of the discussion that day was not for a requirement; rather, it was the opinion of most of those at BRM that the Club should stick to a recommendation and not a mandate. Now it's up to you to let the Club know how you feel.

CONTACT G.W. HENDERSON  
(631) 491-4075  
geedub@hendersoneast.com

## REVVIN' IN SEDIV

SOUTHEAST DIVISION  
BY SUSAN H. YOUNG

### MIATA DRIVER WINS THE CAROLINA CUP PRO SERIES CHAMPIONSHIP

South Carolina Miata driver and co-owner of Panic Motorsports Steve Bertok finished off his

season with a win in the final Carolina Cup Pro Series (CCPS) race at VIRginia International Raceway, and with it he claimed the CCPS 2008 Championship.

Steve's wife Becca Bertok explains, “The CCPS, a Regional championship series, is a points based team series with cash awards for the top finishers in each race and a cumulative cash prize for the overall points winner. CCPS races are all 45 minutes in length with a mandatory two-minute pit stop. Many teams opt to run one driver per race; however, rules allow for a driver swap.”

Steve began racing in Solo competition in 2000. He learned fast. In 2001 he won South Carolina Region's Solo Driver of the Year Award and the Street Modified Solo Championship in the region and in SEDiv. Then in 2002, Steve went to a Drivers School at Roebbling Road and the track bug bit hard.

Steve completed the 2008 CCPS season with 86 points.

But there have been gremlins along the way. “On Nov. 1, Panic Motorsports traveled back to VIR for our final race of the year – a 13-hour enduro in which we had finished fourth, just 30 seconds out of second place, in 2005,” says Steve. “This year, however, with a



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