

Behind the Scenes in SCCA Speed World Challenge
July 2004

This week end (July 18) the SCCA Speed World Challenge and the SCCA Formula Ford Zetek Championship shared the bill with the IMSA-sanctioned American Le Mans Series at Infineon Raceway. Dale Earnhardt, Jr. made a big splash when he ruptured his fuel cell at the top of the course resulting in a truly explosive fire. Fortunately, two of San Francisco Region's best course workers John Schmale (recently profiled in Sports Car after being named BF Goodrich Worker of the Year for his service as a Pit Marshal) and Michael Cantu (a member of the famous Cantu SCCA worker family who usually works as a Starter) were on hand first to fight through the fire encircling their corner station and then to participate in the rescue of Dale. With the help of the Emergency Services crew coordinated by SFR's John Bass, the rescue was completed successfully and the rest is history.

But the racing, not crashing excitement was mostly in the SCCA Speed World Challenge GT race. What a great job Mitch Wright and his staff are doing in balancing the competition! How many times do you see cars from four different manufacturers, in this case Porsche, Corvette, Viper, and Cadillac finishing 1,2,3,and 4? What a race program!

For the spectator, the heart of a racing event is the excitement of not knowing who will win. Want to take bets on who will win the next F1 race? You see my point. Manufacturer participation is the economic lifeblood of professional racing and you can bet that no manufacturer is going to finance a racing effort if he has no chance of winning. Another way to say this is that if only one manufacturer can win, the others will not play for long. Mitch and his associates review the results of each race and adjust parameters such as weight, inlet diameter, and aerodynamics to try to make the next race as equal as possible. You can bet that the winner doesn't like getting "adjusted" but he keeps coming back because the SCCA Pro Racing management has shown over time that they will not tolerate a runaway champion. Can you imagine the political savvy required to tell Cadillac that they're going to get adjusted until they are competitive but not a shoe-in?

With this kind of technical knowledge combined with political skill, Mitch probably will run for public next. Watch out Arnold!

See you at the track.

Gary