

Season's End at Laguna
October 2004

It's Thursday and I'm heading out for Mazda Laguna Seca Raceway with my 14 year old son for the ALMS race, our last SCCA Pro Racing Speed World Challenge race of the year, and the last Spec Miata race of the San Francisco Region Pro SM series. I'm Chairman of the SOM for the Miatas and a very interested spectator for the other races. I have to admit that I like the Spec Miatas and my son likes the ALMS big iron (nowadays, aluminum and carbon fiber) best but we both equally enjoy the tight competition among new, familiar cars which characterizes the World Challenge.

The SFR Mazda series consists of four races, all very hotly contested, at least to some extent due to the \$15,000 purse for the championship. We already have almost 70 entries, more entries than the track will legally accommodate, so even qualifying will be fought tooth and nail. This means that I and the rest of the SOM will almost certainly have our work cut out for us. However, we know that our Social Chairman will be kind enough to hold a couple of beverages for us until we finish with business.

The World Challenge has become one of the top road racing series in the U.S. due to the recognizable cars, the predictably tight competition, and the drivers, who are stars on their own. Look for records to be broken this week end! Jeff Altenberg holds both qualifying and race lap records at Laguna in the Touring Car division; 1:42.939 in a Mazda Protegé while Randy Pobst holds the qualifying record of 1:32.662 in the GT category Audi RS6 and Hans Stuck holds the race recors of 1:34.109 in his BMW M3. It's easy to predict the fall of both race records; they're a second and a half off the qualifying pace.

In the Speed GT Drivers' Championship, Michael Galati currently holds a razor-thin four-point lead over Tommy Archer; Lady Luck could play a big role in the final decision. But the Manufacturer's Championship may be the battle to watch. Audi and Cadillac are tied with 48 points each and both tewms have added a third entry in an all out push for the gold. Peter Cunningham joins the Audi camp and Olivia Beretta sides with Cadillac.

By the time you read this, it will be all over. An exciting conclusion to the SCCA Pro Racing season!

I'll see you at the track!

Gary Pitts