

N.A.S.A.

National Auto Sport Association

H.P.D.E.

High Performance Drivers Education

August 11,12, 2018

Autobahn Country Club Joliet Il.



High performance driver's education. Our classroom instructor said in our first session "the best and most important performance modification you can make to a car is the nut behind the steering wheel." He was not kidding. I came away after a total of 9 on track and 6 classroom sessions a better, more accurate, relaxed, and confident driver than I was at the beginning of the weekend and this is brief narrative of how it all went down.

Friday 8/10/18

I arrived at the Hampton Inn in Joliet (which was recommended by N.A.S.A. and a great place to stay.)

Saturday 8/11/18

I am awake before the alarm went off. I arrived at the track, found my paddock space, put on my numbers, grabbed my tech form and went to the tech area with the car and my helmet. They really went over the car. Correct roll bar? Yep. Helmet? Yep. They grabbed all 4 wheels and shook the daylights out of them looking for any loose suspension components or bad hub assemblies. Brakes? The Hawk HPS brake pads were only a week old, and the fluid was changed out with dot 4 at the same time. The hub assemblies were replaced last month, and the power steering fluid was replaced with an anti-foam fluid. I then got my tech sticker and took the car back to my paddock area. Next was to go to the main instructor's tent for a H.P.D.E. and Hyper-Drive drivers meeting. There we received our weekend ID, another wrist band, and was introduced to our individual in car driving instructor. My instructor's name was Mark and he told me he has been racing since a kid, starting with shifter carts and working his way up to sports cars. Mark and his wife race a pair of N.A. Miatas and the Autobahn is their home track. We then went back to my paddock area so Mark could look over my Miata and we talked about what my expectations for the weekend were. We then got ready for our all H.P.D.E. and Hyper-drive on track 5- lap warm-up and orientation session. While on track Mark asked me, "have you done a lot of auto-crossing?" I told him "oh yea". His reply was, "I kind of thought so. I can tell by the way your driving. Autocross is like a boxing match where the car never settles down. Road racing is more like a ballet where your hand movements and application of the brake and throttle are smooth and balanced." He also said, "we will spend the time unlearning those habits and practice smooth inputs of the brake, throttle, and steering. Then we will start to work on proper braking points, corner entry speed, using all the track, apex execution, smooth hand movements and worry about the speed later as that will come as you get better at placing the car where it belongs to corner properly."

After our first session on track it was time for our first of six classroom sessions where we were able to discuss what we wanted to work on and talk about the evaluations our in car instructors gave us after each of our eight track sessions. We were given assignments to work on during our next track session along with what

our in car instructors recommended. The rest of the track sessions on Saturday were practice, practice, and practice. I decided after the second session it would be cooler in the 90 + degree heat to run with the top up and just unzip the rear window. Turned out to be a good thing as just before we went out for our last session the clouds gathered, (I was able to get the rear window back up in time.) and the rains came. Mark said "I like racing in the rain and when we get on track we will be running at about 75% and offline as a few of the corners on this track puddle quickly." The interesting part was the Porsche GT that passed me on the long straight just before turn 11. I saw the driver clip the apex on 11 and setup for turn 12 and at this point I slowed way down as I thought to myself, this does not look good. The car hit several inches of standing water, did about a 540-degree rotation and came to an abrupt stop in the puddle facing me. The driver's eyes, as we motored by, were rather large. Fortunately no one was hurt and the driver was able to dry the car out so it was back on track Sunday morning. The rain stopped just before we completed our session. Well, at the very least I washed all the bugs off the front end.

The "high speed car wash" was the last session of the day so all the cars were put away and everyone gathered at the main timing building for the awards dinner and refreshments. I was offered and declined any adult beverages as I had to drive back to my hotel with numbers on the car and that just seemed like a bad idea.

Sunday 8/12/18

Got up, and went to the track and my paddock space. Once there I met with Mark and we discussed our plan for the day. First of all Mark was taking his Miata out on track for a 7 lap run. I asked if I could ride along, grabbed my helmet, hooked up the headphone and mike and off we went. Marks car has similar suspension, and the same tires with a faster nut behind the wheel. What a fantastic learning experience that was. We talked about what and why he was doing what he was doing, and I got to feel the car working the corners. There is in my opinion nothing better than feeling a car very similar to my own moving around on a road course for a learning tool. Now all I had to do was try and duplicate what he had shown me. By the last session on Sunday afternoon as I came through turn 10 and down the long straight I commented to Mark, "didn't we just come through here"? He laughed and said "yes we did, you have gotten that much quicker." I would never have believed on Saturday morning that I would be running laps that quickly on Sunday afternoon.

Am I going back? Do Miatas do corners? Think about coming along the next time I go. Hang out, do the Hyper-drive and H.P.D.E. 101 introduction. Go for a ride along in a racecar or two. Have a great time with the bend over backwards, friendly helpful people of N.A.S.A. As our classroom instructor said, "You will never be able to look at an on ramp again without looking at the apex and driving line."



Zoom Zoom

Don Gervais