

2014 Solo Nationals...An Unexpected Journey *Steve Bollinger*

The season got off to a slow start by missing the first two events. The first due to son Ross's graduation, and the second due to an Alaskan Cruise, both scheduled long before the SBR season was planned. The first, and only 2014 event in the Sprite had been our June event at Grissom. In addition, development work continued on the V6 Miata and it looked like it was going to get enough attention to be a somewhat complete car by the end of the year. It made it out to a BMW event on August 10th and did fairly well on very old tires, but broke a power steering hose. The plan was to get the hose fixed and take it to the Hoosier Challenge to check things out before getting it to the track day at GingerMan. The gearing was not correct but that is a task for over the winter. All of this meant that we had no plans of going to Lincoln for the Solo Nationals this year.

Then on Thursday, August 14th I got a phone call that changed everything. The request was a simple one. A longtime friend and competitor from Topeka, Kansas was having engine trouble with his X1/9. He was not able to get it fixed in time and also was not able to find someone to give him a ride. He was getting desperate since the cutoff date for withdrawal was the 15th and was aware that I was not registered for nationals yet. The proposal was for him to pay my late entry fee if I would come to Lincoln and let him co-drive the Sprite. Since the last day to withdraw was Friday he needed an answer soon.

My first thought was "No way." I had two weeks to get the car, trailer, and tow vehicle (it had a heating problem) ready, to say nothing of the driver. Having only been in the car once so far this year I didn't feel I could personally be ready. On the other hand, this was a friend reaching out for help and I was feeling depressed at not being at the last nationals ever for the class. In 2015 GP would be no more. The



Steve Bollinger
Six Time Solo National Champion!

answer to him Friday was "Let's do this" so we were off to the races so to speak. Then the reality of what needed to happen started to set in. The time line that unfolded was roughly as follows:

8/15 – Reassemble Miata so I can get it on the ground. I needed the space to swap engines and prep the Sprite.

8/16 – Street Survival – I had committed to being a volunteer but was released early since there were plenty of volunteers. Disassemble, clean, and inspect head.

8/17 – Rebuild head and install on engine

8/18 – Install engine in car

8/19 – Get car running and recheck things. Flush tow vehicle cooling system

8/20 – Trailer night - Grease wheels, adjust and bleed brakes

8/21 – Load Sprite on trailer for Hoosier Challenge

8/22 – Truck radiator failed over lunch, find a replacement and install. Used old coolant since I wasn't sure this would fix things yet. Could be a head gasket, leading to \$\$, and time. Maybe a new vehicle.

8/23 – Leave early for Grissom in dense

fog. Car ran great. Came in 4th on index. Have dinner with Ross followed by huge cramps all through left leg, but get first good night's sleep in over a week.

8/24 – Car still runs great. Plan to bleed brakes and clutch before putting on trailer. Broke left front king pin on 3rd run. Still did well on index. Cancel bleeding. Get it home with creativity and check spares for required parts. Luckily I had them. (It takes approximately 2.4 sprites to keep 1 running.)

8/25 – Order new tires. Try to fit new suspension parts. Left leg is starting to hurt.

8/26 – Try to fit new parts (again) and resolve why ride height is increased. Take it all apart again. Left leg is getting worse.

8/27 – Leg is somewhat better. Mount new tires. Find why ride height changed and work on solution. (Springs not seating all the way down on perches.)

8/28 – Take suspension apart again, make more changes. Decide it's done. Leg is no better and starting to concern me and wondering if I should let my co-driver know I may not make it.

8/29 – Flush tow vehicle and install new antifreeze. Leg is killing me. Can hardly walk. Drive truck to urgent care facility to have leg checked (Blood Clot?? Took truck to thermal cycle new coolant to get air bubbles out). End up in hospital. They want to fix it, I just want to know if it is OK to Drive 10 hours on Sunday. Texted Dave Gushwa that I may not make it Sunday morning to caravan to Lincoln. Get home around 10:30 cleared to go. Start thinking about what things absolutely must be done.

8/30 – Updated Dave Gushwa that I would be leaving with him at 6:30 AM in the morning. Wash car and load on trailer. Oh yea, spares. Need some just in case. Almost forgot about spares. Tools – Need

Cont'd on page 3

SBR MONTHLY MEETINGS

Where: Beef 'O' Brady
 Days: First Tuesday of month
 Time: 6:00 pm board meeting
 7:00 pm general meeting
 Who: All are welcome!

Bob's 19th Hole
 is the location of our
 unofficial meeting after
 karting on October 7th
 26582 U.S. 20, South Bend

SBR CONTACT INFORMATION

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Not a SCCA Member?
Go to www.scca.com
Choose South Bend as
your local region!

SBR Calendar

September
 2 Club Meeting
 7 SBR Track Night at GingerMan
 28 Solo @ Tire Rack
October
 7 Karting at MRP
 19 Solo @ Tire Rack
 25 SBR Rally
November
 4 Club Meeting(Elections)
December
 2 Club Meeting(Free Food)
January
 17 SBR Annual Banquet

Karting

When: Tuesday, October 7th
 Arrive at 5:30 pm
 Where: Michiana Raceway Park
 61870 Crumstown Hwy,
 North Liberty, IN
 Bring: Nothing. Everything is
 supplied. Must wear long
 pants and closed-toe shoes.
 Who: SBR members only.
 Cost: \$35, or just \$25 if you
 worked our race, Street
 Survival or a Lane event.
 Format: Team event. About 30 min.
 of track time per entrant.
Reservations required. Contact
Jeff at re@sbrscca.org

Getting SBR Activity Points

Activity	Points	Activity	Points
Race Chair	400	Car Show Display	75
Assistant Race Chair	200	Solo Co-Chair	75
PitBoard Editor	200	Race Worker/day	50
Website Manager	200	SBR Race Driver	50
Race Chief of Specialty	200	PitBoard Article/page	40
Associate PitBoard Editor	100	Rally/Solo Worker	40
Rally Series Chair	100	SBR Meeting Attendance	20
Solo Chair	100	Car Show Booth/day	20
Solo Series Specialty Chief	100	Rally Navigator	20
Event Chair	100	Race Crew/day	20
Program Director	100	Rally/Solo Driver	20
Club Officer	100	Race/Solo Meeting	20
Event Co-Chair	75	RoundTable/Worker Seminar	20
		PitBoard Picture	10

FREE DUES

We started it! Hold one of the following positions; National Race Worker, Pit-Board Editor, Race Chair, Street Survival Chair, RE, Solo Chair, Treasurer or Webmaster. Half off dues for: Activity Points Keeper, Division Race Worker, Secretary and various Solo Chief positions.



www.facebook.com/SBRSCCA

Wanted Your e-mail address

It would help us contact you quickly about SBR events if we knew your e-mail address. To see if we have it, follow these steps:

1. Go to www.scca.com
2. Log in (green button)
3. See if e-mail is listed under contact info.
4. If not, click on update.

Buy Tires-Help SBR

When purchasing items from The Tire Rack, first go to our web site at www.sbrscca.org, click on the Tire Rack link at the bottom of the page and then make your purchases. By doing so, the South Bend Region will earn a little extra dough!

Solo Nationals Cont'd

some of them too. Cut Grass, pack, load truck. Actually done at 9:30 that night.

8/31 – Drive to Lincoln, stretch and massage leg on the way, It keeps feeling better. Arrive to paddock and find reserved spot taken, but get another, register, tech and weigh car. Add 15 lbs. ballast to be sure. Exhausted. Notice paint burned off of trailer fender (was fine in Omaha) and assumed it was just extra load from tools and road construction. More to come later. Learn that the car I expected to be the big competition (Honda) had withdrawn due to a spun bearing.

9/1 – Warm-up event for co-driver went well, car seems fine, co-driver doing fine, adjusted carbs, then found the cause of the fender issue, a broken spring on trailer. Where to get one on Labor Day? Tractor Supply Co. of course.

There was more, but these were the highlights.

First day of competition was interesting. We started to see significant amounts of fiberglass coming out of the exhaust, but past experience had shown that new mufflers were just as quiet as old ones so I dismissed it in light of the other hurdles to overcome. The absent Honda in the class should have been very difficult competition according to reported results at other events. There was a TR4 entered with two drivers that was a complete unknown. The good news was that they weighed in 600 lbs. more than us. The bad news was that they had more engine, a lot more (2150 cc vs 1275 cc). Turns out they were very quick and put on lots of pressure. After the third runs I was feeling good since I was in the lead, but only by about 0.15s. Since everyone considered this to be the horsepower course, we looked for a better day on Wednesday. However, Tuesday was the most technically difficult allowing the driver much latitude how he took the course. I usually do better on this type of course.

The second day was also a surprise. The course was more defined with more slaloms and tight offsets. The popular opinion was

that a Sprite would do better and we were looking forward to having a little advantage for a change. It was clear after the first run that this would not be the case. A friend from Kansas City reported that apparently I had nudged a cone on my first run, but not enough for a penalty. This was a bit close for my liking so I focused on cleaning things up. Then the sound steward came by to let me know that I was near the limit. Since we had a two driver car we could be in trouble since we had to make twice as many runs with required corrective actions between each one if we went over. This was the first time I have had a problem with sound but was prepared...for a single driver.

I slowed down on the second run but still held the overall lead. The TR4 was ahead for the day by a few thousandths and I was standing on my first run of the day. Since I seldom improve significantly and my first is often the quickest I felt the win slipping away. Then the sound steward approached again to let me know I was at 102 dBA, over the 100 dBA limit and some form of corrective action would be required before any more runs could be taken. Rather than focus on my driving I had to put another plan in place for sound. Fortunately I had a plate to install that would deflect the sound vertically and had been tested to provide a 3dBA reduction in the past and should make things OK, but just barely. The steward agreed it was an acceptable solution and allowed us to proceed.

My co-driver made his run, and the sound steward reported that even though the attempt we had made should have been a good solution, our readings had actually increased more. We decided that the muffler was just failing and getting louder faster than we were reducing the noise, but he still needed me to make another change if I wanted to make any more runs. At this point I could only change the direction of the discharge, which is very close to the definition of unsportsmanlike conduct according to the supplemental event rules. I discussed the change with the steward and he agreed to let me make the change. Fortunately it was easy once we cooled the exhaust with the water bottle, but still a

distraction I would have been glad to avoid.

Over the years Kim and I have developed a routine where we mentally replay the run analyzing what worked well, what didn't, and looking for opportunities. With the distraction of a co-driver, and the noise issues, I was not focusing on this as much as normal. Now it was time. I replayed my runs several times after the second run looking for anything...little things. Surely the TR4 would do better as he had on Tuesday so it was all or nothing time.

The final run unfolded much as I had practiced in my mind, hitting the correct braking, apex, and throttle points resulting in an improvement of half a second, which is huge for me at this point. The TR4? He pushed out on two corners and slowed down. I later found that he had a brake issue on his last run. Very unfortunate as they were worthy competitors and not the way I like to see a win but car preparation is part of the competition. My co-driver ended up in third, but was happy with his performance taking 1.5 seconds off on his last run. The noise levels were down below the required 100 dBA, but it sounded much louder in the car with the exhaust now directed under the car.

It was a wonderful feeling after the heat was over. Partially because I had won the last GP title, but mostly because it was earned. It also was great from everything leading up to it and including the unexpected competition. Next year GP will be recombined with DP and EP. At this point it appears that we will have unachievable weight allowances, but will be allowed to use 10" wide wheels. Its hard to say what the result will be, but taking off almost 3 seconds will be a huge challenge.

I wish that Kim and Ross could have been there to share the moment. We always compete as a team and they were missed more than I had thought. When I look at everything that had to happen to get there, it is truly amazing and I appreciate both them, and the title more than ever. My recommendation for future events, plan a little bit further ahead. It makes for much less stress. But as always, take whatever steps you can to do your best.

SBR HAS SOLO EVENTS COMING UP ON SEPT. 28 AND OCT. 19TH. CHECK www.sbrscca.org for info.

South Bend is Having a Road Rally!

What is the heck is a rally?

A rally is a timed driving event on public roads.

How many people are in the car?

A minimum of 2, but you can have more.

What does the navigator do?

Read the directions provided by the Rally Master and help ensure that the driver stays on course.

What does the driver do?

Listen to the navigator and try to follow directions.

What car can I use?

Any street legal car, SUV, pickup truck or minivan etc.

Are the roads all paved?

Maybe.

If I can't speed, how is it fun?

I don't know, but it is. Rallying requires a whole different set of skills. Communication is key!

I've never done this, is that OK?

You bet. Rookies tend to do very well.

What equipment will I need?

Writing utensil, watch and a speedometer. GPS is very helpful as is google maps on a smartphone.

When is the rally?

Saturday, October 25th from 3:00 pm until 6:00 pm-ish.

Where do we meet?

At The Tire Rack.

How much?

\$20 per car.

What if I have questions?

Contact Dennis Jennings at gridman1@att.net

***SBR IS GOING KARTING. ALL SBR MEMBERS ARE INVITED
SEE PAGE 2 FOR DETAILS. DON'T MISS OUT!***