



# New Jersey Bulletin

BMW CAR CLUB OF AMERICA  
NEW JERSEY CHAPTER  
August 2009

<http://www.njbmwcca.org>

Volume 40 Number 8

## BMW CCA Club Racing



Photos by Brian Morgan

Newsletter of the NJ Chapter  
BMW Car Club of America  
PO Box 2305  
Westfield, NJ 07091-2305

# NJ BMW CCA Board Meeting Minutes

New Jersey Chapter of the BMW CCA Board Meeting  
June 17, 2009

Board members present: Larry Engel, James Kavalieros, Barry Stevens, Bob Conway, Al Drugos, Neil Gambony, Ross Karlin, Warren Brown, Deborah Kolar, David Allaway. Board members absent: Jeff White, Jerry Faber. Others present: Paul Ngai, Elihu Savad, Doug Feigel.

## President

Larry Engel called the meeting to order at 7:37 PM at 18 West Grille in Raritan. Larry motioned to waive the reading of the May minutes and Deborah Kolar seconded. Larry remarked on the highly favorable comments he had received on the Thunderbolt school, race and dinner. The organizers were able to successfully work around Tuesday's two-hour weather delay.

## Vice President

Barry Stevens reported that this Friday's meeting at BMW NA will start at 6pm at a new location, and will feature presentations in four separate groups, followed by a combined Q&A session. Various possibilities for upcoming meetings were discussed, including Alba Vineyards near Milford. Barry thanked Elihu and others for the classic BMW display at last week's Deutscher Club event.

## Treasurer

Warren Brown distributed the year-to-date profit and loss statement. Last week's Thunderbolt (NJMP) event will probably yield a \$3000 profit, and other events in 2009 are expected to be profitable. The donation amount for the Westlake School will be determined at a later date.

## Driving Events

**Driver Schools** - No additional report (see above).

**Club Race** - Ross Karlin reported that Bud Merrill and Larry Fletcher will be stewards at the Summit Point race. There will be new flaggers. This will be a three-race event with no enduro, and probably two race groups. There was a discussion of sponsorship opportunities other than shirts.

**Autocross** - Elihu Savad reported that there were 65 entrants in last Sunday's autocross. Elihu indicated that having the July 12th event as a members-only event is not a problem. The autocross helmet program is working well.

**Rally** - The possibility of a rally in conjunction with a July event was discussed, but deemed not practical on short notice.

**Teen Street Survival** - Jamie reported that he has 10 instructors but needs 20-23 for the June 28th event at the Expo Center. SUV's were discussed and they will not be excluded.

## Newsletter

No report.

## Social Events

Various possible events were discussed. Jamie suggested a rally or "poker run". Al Drugos suggested the possibility of a picnic event at the Grand Colonial. Jamie proposed a gymkhana following the autocross at TD Bank Stadium on July 12th. There was a suggestion to make the monthly meetings Sunday events for the summer months. Larry proposed a members-only autocross followed by a membership meeting. It was decided that the July meeting would be a 3-6pm gymkhana following the autocross on Sunday July 12th. Elihu will submit an insurance form covering both events. August was tentatively proposed to be a brewery tour. Larry subsequently suggested a BMW corral at the TD Bank Ballpark, during a ballgame, as a possible August meeting. Al will get possible dates, which will probably need to be a weekday evening. September will be a traditional meeting.

## Website

Bob Conway had nothing new to report.

## Business Manager

Paul Ngai reported that Circle BMW has requested a full-page ad and offered to host a dealership meeting, which may be our September meeting. Paul has been contacted regarding Lime Rock's annual historic event Labor Day Weekend. There will be a BMW car corral on Saturday and Monday, and each BMW chapter will have up to 10 spaces available at no cost for the Sunday concourse. Paul offered to coordinate on behalf of the club and follow-up with event coordinator Fred Jackson. Paul also offered to write an article for the newsletter.

## Old Business

The High Point Insurance affinity agreement was discussed. The agreement has been reviewed by our attorney and BMW CCA National has no objections. Remaining issues are the number of mailings and our lack of a defined sponsorship program. Ross, Deborah, Paul and Warren volunteered to define a sponsorship program. Al moved to formally appoint such a committee, Neil seconded, and the motion carried unanimously. Larry offered to follow-up with High Point. In this context, the XCEL Credit Union proposal was also discussed, with no action taken.

## New Business

None

The next board meeting was set for Wednesday July 15th at 18 West Grille. Jamie motioned to adjourn at 9:34pm and Ross seconded.

Respectfully submitted,  
David Allaway, Secretary

New Jersey Chapter of the BMW CCA Board Meeting  
July 15, 2009

Board members present: Larry Engel, James Kavalieros, Barry Stevens, Al Drugos, Neil Gambony, Jeff White, Ross Karlin, Warren Brown, Deborah Kolar, David Allaway. Board members absent: Bob Conway, Jerry Faber. Others present: Brian Morgan, Elihu Savad, Doug Feigel.

## President

Larry Engel called the meeting to order at 7:38pm at 18 West Grille in Raritan. Ross Karlin motioned to waive the reading of the June minutes. Jeff White motioned to reimburse Larry Engel in the amount of \$261.93 for having replaced Larry Koch's missing iPod from the BMW NA meeting. Neil seconded, and the motion carried unanimously. Larry reported that he received an inquiry from ZF regarding the attendance at the Thunderbolt event, and will respond. Larry reported that he has contacted NNJ PCA regarding their High Point Insurance affinity agreement, but has not had detailed discussions yet.

## Vice President

Barry Stevens reported that Summit Point is pretty much full, with a few more instructors needed. The Gymkhana meeting was a success, although greater attendance was hoped for. The August 11th meeting will be at the TD Ballpark. The September meeting will be at a dealership to be announced. A 'tech day' meeting for new students was suggested by Jamie Kavalieros.

## Treasurer

Warren Brown distributed the year-to-date profit and loss statement. Warren reported that our finances are not quite where we want them. Lime Rock broke even. Summit Point/ITS was a loss. Thunderbolt (NJMP) was about a \$4,000 profit. There may be additional NJMP race-worker expenses via National that we have not yet seen. We have sufficient cash on hand to cover any foreseeable 2009 loss. Barry Stevens requested reimbursement for a registered student at NJMP who was employed as an instructor, and Warren agreed that would be normal procedure.

## Driving Events

**Driver Schools** - Jeff reported that Summit Point is full, with 55 students, plus racers. A discussion was held on extending the "newbie" offer to students with no recent track experience, and this was left to the discretion of the organizers.

**Club Race** - Ross reported that we received a nice thank-you from the Westlake School for the NJMP event. Brian took a photo of each Westlake student in Paul Sedacca's race car. Matt Sweetwood of Unique Photo generously printed and framed copies for each student. Brian reported that this will be the only event covered in the upcoming Racing Lines, and that photo releases have been obtained from parents for that purpose. Ross asked for any photos featuring the sponsor pace cars. It was noted that Bloomfield BMW is holding a 50%-off sale on BMW Motorsport and F1 apparel. Ross reported that there are 22 racers registered for Summit Point, and that Mike Hinkley will be doing tech. VAC will be sponsoring the event shirts. There was a discussion on this summer's crowded race calendar.

**Autocross** - Elihu Savad reported that there were 48 entrants in last Sunday's autocross. There may be a temporary delay in updating the statistics, but a link to the results has been placed on the forum (as a photo only). There has been no response from Six Flags on parking lot availability. An application has been made to Rutgers for the Yellow lot for TSS, to determine cost and availability, for possible use later in 2009 or 2010. August 15-16 will be the E30 Sig-Fest, and the Autocross at Expo on the 16th will be a featured event. That autocross will remain open to non-club members. TireRack Street Survival - Jamie reported that the TireRack Street Survival (TSS) school went really well, with the desired 1:1 student-instructor ratio. He also noted the event name change by the title sponsor. The possibility of another TSS was discussed, limited to 20-24 students, in September or October.

**Gymkhana** - Jamie reported that the Gymkhana was a lot of fun, but not a huge turnout. Neil complemented Jamie on the event organization.

## Newsletter

No report.

## Social Events

Al Drugos reported that he needs a count by Friday (7/17) for the TD Ballpark tickets. Al also noted that he has a potential sponsor for an entire event, if we can provide media publicity.

## Website

No report. Ross noted that the website is not being adequately refreshed, citing the survey.

## Business Manager

No report.

## Old Business

Warren Brown reported on the sponsorship committee appointed by the Board in June. Deborah Kolar distributed the three-tier sponsor ship packages developed by the committee. A discussion of advertising costs led to a request for Jerry Farber to solicit new vendor bids on newsletter printing and mailing. Larry requested additional ideas and input from the committee and the Board, including pricing.

## New Business

Larry thanked the Board for their support in the first half of 2009, and asked those interested in running for 2010 positions to seriously think about doing so.

The next board meeting was tentatively set for Wednesday August 12th. Neil motioned to adjourn at 9:13pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
David Allaway, Secretary

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# The Cone Catcher



by Larry Engel

It's the 27th of the month, and I'm just starting to write this column which is due in Jerry Faber's hands in five short days. Time flies when you're having fun, and yesterday I returned home from another two days of exceptionally big fun at Summit Point. I had to leave early to attend to some family matters, but even one and a half days at the track has an incredibly soothing effect on me.

For a few days after my return to reality, life's little setbacks and hassles don't bother me as much as they usually do. There's something about the after-effect of adrenaline coursing through your veins for repeated 25 minute periods that's terrifically therapeutic. It's also thoroughly addictive. I wish I could have stayed for my last two sessions on Sunday. I'm contemplating making up for it with a trip down to Thunderbolt next Monday. Karin didn't complain when I mentioned it to her. I'm married to an angel literally in two ways - temperament and the surname she got from me.) She doesn't understand the thrill I get from my car stuff, but she tolerates it. Probably because I'm easier to live with for a few days after I return home.

Our Drivers' Schools have remained very popular this year, despite the soft economy. The last two schools have sold out completely, and the joint school and race with DelVal Chapter at Lightning in August is doing well. We're getting lots of great comments about what a nice bunch of people we are, and of course I couldn't agree more. We get the same comments about The Autocross Program, too.

As if you didn't know, this stuff doesn't happen by itself. Every activity we conduct takes a tremendous amount of effort to pull off successfully, and a dedicated group of volunteers make this tough and tedious work look effortless.

The truth is that the successful School and Autocross seasons start the previous winter, when we begin to develop a preliminary schedule. We try not to overlap events, so we discuss possible dates and make preliminary contact with our venue hosts. Jeff White and Elihu Savad begin the early effort for our Driver Schools and Autocross programs, respectively. Ross Karlin, who runs our Club Race effort, also has input at this stage, because the Club Races are run in conjunction with our Driver Schools.

The schedule is fairly complete very early in the New Year, and we begin to negotiate contracts and develop timelines for each event. Again, Jeff and Elihu are leading the charge for us. These guys are always focusing on the little details that elude most of us.

Elihu has a great group of committee members helping out with the Autocross program, many of whom spend part of Saturday preparing for the Sunday events, which generally require arrival by 7:30 AM. Jamie Kavalieros, our Driving Events Chairman, arrives with trailer in tow. In addition to his autocross car, Jamie's trailer has been hauling and storing our equipment for the past few years. In addition to Elihu and Jamie, you'll find Mike, Dave, Ivan, Doug, Walt, Ed, Jon, Mark, Mark, Chris, Chris, and Jeff arriving early to help set up the course. (I'm sure I've forgotten someone, so excuse my oversight.)

On the Driver School and Race side, things are even more complicated. Like the relationship between speed and braking distance, there is an exponential function between the speed at which cars travel at an event and the number of people required to successfully conduct the event. Drivers' schools require a Registrar to gather information on each applicant's experience and vehicle and to process the applications. This is no small task. Dennis Krug had been doing a great job as Registrar until he asked for a break this year, and Jamie has stepped in. (Jamie's wife Dawn falls into the same category as Karin, and BMW Club events are frequently family activities for the Kavalieros'.)

Once the registration is under way, Barry Stevens begins the task of assembling the corps of instructors needed for the school. Barry has recently taken over for Blake Smith as Chief Instructor. Under Blake's leadership, NJ BMW CCA Schools continually set the standard for other clubs around the country. Detailed records on students and instructors are archived and used to further refine the safety, enjoyment, and educational value of our schools. Instructors must pass through a rigorous process just to be able to sit in the passenger seat at one of our schools.

Everybody who has been to one of our Driver Schools knows that the first group they're going to have contact with is the Tech crew - complete with very cool black "Tech Power" shirts. Vic Lucariello is the master of all things Tech in the chapter, and he and his crew work hard to make sure that each Driver understands their responsibility to maintain a safe vehicle. By the way, the Tech crew usually has to arrive at the track at 6:30 AM. (Volunteering to help at our events and sleep deprivation go hand-in-hand.)

I can't even begin to explain the added complexity that occurs when Club Races run with the schools. Ross and Jeff work tremendously hard to keep each group happy. Ross has the Club Race thing down to a science, too. He'll be running around making sure final arrangements are set as he's getting ready to run in the race himself.

I haven't even begun to talk about the other people who help out during our schools, or those that produce the Bulletin or run the website or administer other important club functions. I haven't forgotten Jerry, Bob, Paul, Warren, Deb, David, Al, Neil, and others. I'll be mentioning them in a future column.)

I think by now I've made the point. I'm really proud to be associated with this group of fine people who give so much of their time and talent to help the rest of us enhance our enjoyment of these Bavarian transportation tools we drive.

That's about it for now; I've got to go prep my car for Thunderbolt. So until next month, keep the cones standing!

[larry\\_engel@njbmwcca.org](mailto:larry_engel@njbmwcca.org)

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## Welcome New Members

Eugene Amici  
Christopher Amici  
Robert Bevilacqua  
Jamal Briggs  
Robert Bruno  
Richard Buccarelli  
Raymond Cielo  
Robin Culleton  
Michael Cuparo  
Hilliard Edmond

Tracy Eleasar  
Bridget Ganey  
Scott Garoian  
Vincent Giliberto  
Kevin Gregoire  
Andrew Karsh  
Pavel Kortunov  
Ian Krawcykowski  
Francesca Laurenzi  
Kenfai Lee

Jason Leigh  
Carlos Martins  
William McMichael  
Scott Olsen  
Jerry Pandolfo  
Louis Peters  
Ethan Pickett  
Angela Rizzi  
Frederick Robinson  
Robert Sherrell

Leslie Shrem  
Thomas Tozzi  
Josephine Tozzi  
Greg Trinks  
Bill Vitello  
Tarik Wilson  
Ron Yarashefski





...with Elihu Savad

## The Brains Of The Outfit

AHA! The word we seek in diagnosing a problem. The word that brings understanding, enlightenment, and closure. The word that dispels doubt, provides solution to mystery, lowers blood pressure and lets you sleep at night.

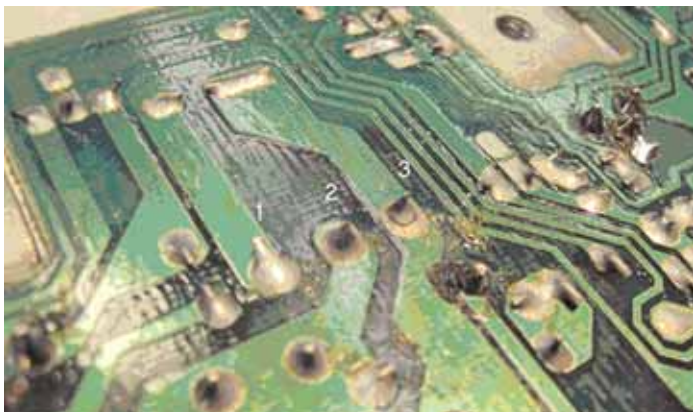
AHA! But it must be tempered with knowing the reason that things are always in the last place you looked, because once you find them you stop looking. Or if you don't see them, you conclude they cannot be there, and move on, so now, although they were in the first place you looked, they will now remain the last place you will look again, still waiting to be found.

My mystery no-start, no-ignition in my '88 M3 has been found, after a recurrence of the original problem. It would crank, but not start, and it also died in traffic, restarting only when the ECU was thumped with a screwdriver handle.

Although I had already removed, opened and inspected the inside of the ECU. Using a magnified loupe, I saw no defective connections. In my arrogance, I concluded that there was nothing to see, even though what I was looking for was in front of me all the time.

Closer inspection under high magnification showed a fractured solder joint right where the power transistor for the ignition coil was connected to the board, #3 in the photo:

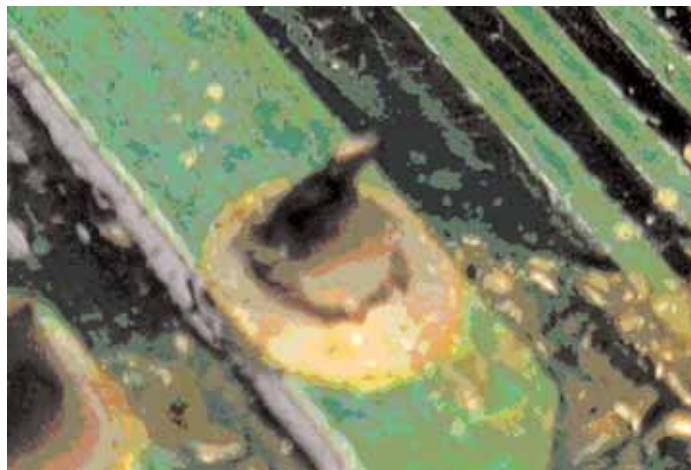
This defective connection provided intermittent continuity, like dirty



distributor points, only harder to find and fix. Once this was found, it was relatively simple to re-solder this connection, and also any other joints that looked suspect, which many of them did. Good solder joints should be

smooth, shiny, without corrosion or pitting. The one above, marked 3, actually moved a little when grasped with tweezers. My thanks to my son, a microsoldering technician, for his skill and assistance.

Since this is a problem that is fairly common amongst all E30 Bosch DME engine management computers, and since it is very disturbing to think your ride will conk out at any minute, it is soothing to know that there is a real problem with a real fix. Replacement DME units may run more than \$1500,



and repair centers charge about \$400, while correcting funky connections may be all that is needed.

I also managed to fix my odometer, which had quit working, while the speedometer was ok. Removing the gauge cluster and replacing a couple of plastic gears solved the problem. This repair is well documented at [www.bavauto.com](http://www.bavauto.com). I also replaced my Service Interval board, which may have been responsible for intermittent operation of my tachometer, only to find that my coolant temp gauge was now intermittent. I was told that the SI board batteries needed to charge, as they only charge when the ignition is on, so the car has to run a few hundred miles. I changed the sensor for the gauge, and all is now well.

I had said that nothing can be foolproof, as fools are so ingenious, but fools can be arrogant as well. Assumptions made on a single inspection can be faulty, so it may pay to look again, more carefully, and not worry about offending your own pride. After all, that is all that may stand in the way.

## Thanks From Westlake School

Shortly after the Thunderbolt Club Race and School in June, we received a nice letter of thanks from Westlake School Principal Dr. Cathy Patla and Supervisor of Instruction David Bailey.

For many years, we have made significant donations to the Westlake School in Westfield, which serves the needs of teenagers with multiple disabilities. These donations have been possible thanks to the generous support of our Club Racers and Race Sponsors. This year, the major sponsors were JMK BMW in Springfield and BMW of Bloomfield.

The letter was addressed to Club Race Chair Ross Karlin and begins - "Words cannot adequately express our appreciation for the fantastic support and excitement you and the New Jersey Chapter of the BMW Car Club again have brought to Westlake School." The letter went on to describe how the students were still talking about their visit to Thunderbolt Raceway and that they were able to see and sit in real race cars. Students were treated to parade laps around the track, too.

Each student who attended the event was able to bring home an assortment of mementos, including shirts, hats, and pit passes. Roundel Motorsports Editor Brian Morgan was on hand to take a picture of each student sitting in Paul Sedacca's E36 race car, and Matt Sweetwood of Unique Photo provided a framed photograph of each student sitting in the race car.

The letter concluded by saying "we wish to thank you once again for everything you, your club members, and sponsors do for our students and our school."

As a club, we are happy to share our passion and joy of driving with the students of Westlake School, and we hope that can continue to do so in the future with the help of our generous sponsors and racers.

- Larry Engel

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## Combined Club Race and Driver School at Summit Point

The Chapter's twelfth Annual Club Race and Driver School was held July 25-26 on the Main Track at Summit Point Raceway.

As is becoming a trend for this year's Driver Schools, the student registrations filled the school. In fact, we even squeezed a couple more participants into each run group than we had in years past in order to meet the demand. Racer registrations were off from years past, likely reflecting the combination of a busy Club Racing schedule and the effects of a down economy. However, everyone there was eager to get down to wheel-to-wheel competition.

On Saturday we were able to run on a dry track for the entire day. School sessions interspersed between racer practice, qualifying, and then the afternoon race. In the race, there was a good deal of back and forth action with Lou Mendola taking the checkered flag as the overall winner. Fortunately the on-track action was devoid of contact or major incidents with a couple of notable mechanical failures including the just-arrived #78 car and the 007 E36-M3 of Bob Solomon who retired due to lug stud failures.

Shortly after track-action ended on Saturday, the skies opened up and the wind howled to give us 20-30 minutes of horizontal rain and rivers running across the paddock. Our intrepid friend Mr. B persevered in the preparations for our traditional track-side BBQ. When the skies cleared, the meal was ready and everyone sat down for a welcome dinner together.

Sunday morning started under the threat of afternoon rain and with track conditions that reflected the heavy rain of the night before. Clearing skies and several run groups later, however, the track was dry and ready for the feature race of the weekend. With starting grid position determined by Saturday's finishing results, Lou Mendola started on pole with Bob Solomon (sporting newly replaced wheel studs) starting at the back of the pack. As the laps clicked down the 007 car picked off one position after another to move up to second place some 16 seconds behind Lou. Then a mechanical failure (smoke and clanging noises are never a good sign) Lou was forced to retire. Bob had gone from last to first in a terrific display of driving. Sunday afternoon was set for our traditional Fun Race. In this event, starting grid positions were drawn from a hat with the possibility to improve position by buying additional positions with the proceeds going to the Westlake School. After a spirited contest, Nafi Coker was the race winner. Congratulations to Nafi!

Our good luck did not last the entire weekend. At 4 o'clock the skies darkened, the rain started again and lightning forced a cessation to activities. By the time the rain had stopped, it was decided that the track was too wet to continue. Better to send everyone home with cars intact and grins on their faces from a great event.

Thanks again to all the participants and volunteers who make our events possible. A special thanks to Gerry Chan who served as our classroom instructor.

Next up is the Joint Club Race and Driver School Event with our friends at the DelVal chapter that will be the inaugural BMW CCA Club Race on the Lightning track at New Jersey Motorsports Park in Millville. The event will run Friday-Sunday on August 21-23. We invite everyone to come down to watch both the school and the racing on any or all of the days. NJMP is

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well laid out for spectators and you will be able to see action at several points around the track.

Also, be sure to remember our September weekend event on the Shenandoah circuit at Summit Point. This technical circuit will make you a better driver and everyone who comes leaves with a great big smile. Finally, be sure to sign up for our Introduction to Driver Schools event in October at NJMP. The event is open to participants of all skill levels but for the first time, we will have a separate run group devoted to students who have never been to the track. We are getting a tremendous response to this event so register now to be sure you can attend.

See you at the track.

Jeff White and Ross Karlin

## 2009 Driver School Schedule

School	Dates	Location
Driver School/Club Race (Joint with DelVal)	Aug 21-23	NJMP Lightning Raceway, Millville, NJ
Shenandoah Driver School	Sep. 19-20	Summit Point Raceway, WV
Introduction to the Track Driver School	Oct 26	NJMP Lightning Raceway, Millville, NJ

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## Summit Point

Immutable "Big Al"



Photo by Ross Karlin

## 2009 Autocross Schedule

Time to get off the Blizzaks. Time to mount up the stickies. Time to look at ads for Yoko, Kumho, Nitto or whatever. Our 2009 autocross schedule is printed below. Note the name change at the ballpark in Bridgewater.

For those who haven't tried autocross, this is the best, easiest way to experience car control at the limit with some big pluses: it doesn't cost much, you wear out only some rubber, and you get to go home and sleep in your own bed. Oh yeah, it makes you a safer driver on the street, and gives a big adrenaline rush!

For those who are regulars, I'm sorry we don't have more events, bigger venues, and earlier dates. I know you are going around muttering "vroom-vroom", just try and contain yourselves.

Aug	16	Autocross	EXPO
Sept	13	Autocross	TDBP
Oct	11	Autocross	TDBP
Nov	1	Autocross	TDBP

TDBP: TD Bank Park, Patriots Park, Bridgewater. Name change from Commerce Bank Park.

EXPO: NJ Convention and Exposition Center, Raritan Center, Edison

- Elihu Savad

# Finish Lines

by Thom Rossi

I was six years old the first time I heard the sound of a whippoorwill. At that time I was living in the Bronx and we had a summer house in Long Island. No, I don't mean some luxurious country estate in the Hamptons; just a plain little cottage in Smithtown. Unlike the Bronx, the nights in that part of Long Island were dark and quiet. That's where my Dad taught me to recognize the distinctive sounds of the whippoorwill's nocturnal call, and I will always associate it with great summer evenings after days spent fishing, hanging around at the beach, or doing whatever with my cousins, my friends, or my older brothers. Unfortunately, life has a way of drowning out the sounds of our youth with new sounds; some good, some not so good. It's been so long since I've heard the sound of the whippoorwill; I was recently wondering whether they had gone extinct.

One of my favorite grown up sounds, of course, is the blast of racer's engines at the moment the green flag is waved to start a race. On the track amongst the racers the collective noise is so loud that it is often impossible for me to hear the sound of my own engine. Consequently, I can't use the usual audible feedback to tell me when to upshift, or indeed to let me know whether I am in too high a gear to lay power down at the critical moment of the start. I've learned to compensate for this problem by having a pre-planned gearing strategy to get me past the green flag and up to turn one. I've also learned to listen carefully for the sound of engines ramping up to the higher revs near the front of the pack. I often use this as my signal that the green flag has dropped because, as a member of the K-prepared class, it is quite common that the race starts before I make the final turn onto the front straightaway.

Close to the top of my least favorite list is the sound of thunder when at the track. Thunder means lightning. Lightning means that the corner workers (flaggers) are coming back to base in a hurry and the track is going to close until the storm blows over.

These past few days at the Thunderbolt track brought all of these sounds back into my life again. The racing was divine. On Monday, after morning practice and qualifying sessions, we held a 40 minute sprint race. The starting field of 34 cars was comprised of all classes ranging from C-modified to the lowly K-prepared (that's me!). This made for very mixed speeds on track, and I could have sworn that the race leaders passed me at least 5 times in the 23 laps of the race (actually they "only" lapped me twice!). The top three racers overall were, in finishing order, Asher Hyman and Bob Ball (both D-modified) and Alfredo Galossi (I-prepared). It was a good race for me, too. I was fortunate enough to qualify at the head of the small K-prepared crowd and win the class, plus improve my overall position from 28th to 21st. It seems that once again, although the K-prepared class is thinly populated, the J-stock and Spec-e36 classes are closely matched to K-prepared in lap times, so there is always someone with whom to race.

On Tuesday morning we were greeted with a different sound at the track: thunderclaps. We all hunkered down in either the garages or in trailers and campers to wait out the storm. Did I mention that the Thunderbolt race track is located on flat, sandy ground about 20 miles inland of Ocean City? There is absolutely no place for the water to go when it rains hard, except to create puddles and rivers around the paddock and the race track. When the clouds finally cleared, we learned that the first race of the day was to start in about 20 minutes! A quick scramble by me and my friends was needed to get the Hoosier-wets on the car and put me on my way to the starting grid. Then a mechanical setback almost kept me from starting the race. Earlier that morning I had been fooling around with the fuel pick up line inside the car's fuel cell. I don't know what I did wrong, but whatever it was, when I stepped on the gas to get to the grid, my engine bogged down big time. Also, when I tried to tighten my safety harness, one of the lap belts came loose from its anchor. Obviously, I was in no condition to start the race. So I limped back to my parking spot in the paddock, fixed my lap belt, and with more help from a friend, fiddled around with the fuel cell until the engine ran well enough to race. Amazingly, the racers still had not been

released from the grid because of the poor track conditions and a few stragglers of lightning strikes, so I was able to get to my starting position and join the pack.

Rain is a great equalizer in a race. Normally, the K-prepared cars finish near the rear because of our low power-to weight ratio. However, in the rain, most of the horsepower available to the faster classes just can't be used! So the race boils down to a battle of wet-weather handling. This gave Scott Reiman (also in K-prepared) and me the chance to have a good competitive race with each other AND pick our way through traffic toward the middle/front of the race. Quite an unusual experience for us turtles amongst the jack rabbits. Rain racing is also an interesting mental challenge because traction conditions are constantly changing as various parts of the track dry or new puddles form, requiring racing line adjustments for every trip around the course, and the frequent use of "fast hands" to correct for a skid or two. Scott pushed me hard by staying right on my tail throughout the race and constantly making my brain shout at me to "hurry, HURRY!!!"

Our final and feature race was run on Tuesday afternoon without rain but with a few wet spots inconveniently located at various points around the track. Again, it was an unusual experience for me because instead of starting so far back in the pack, I started in 11th position overall and actually (for the first time in my racing career) got to see the green flag drop before I heard the engines rev up! In this 25 minute sprint race, somehow I managed to finish 12th despite the fact that this one was run on a (mostly) dry track. I was once again fortunate enough to win my class. For the first time in about two years, the car ran flawlessly throughout the race, so I guess fooling around with the fuel cell did the trick in terms of finally solving my power-loss-on-right-hand-turns problem!

The race was made all the more satisfying by the fact that our chapter's racing chairman, Ross Karlin, once again managed to utilize a portion of the registration fees to make a significant donation to the Westlake school for handicapped children. It is great to have the students visit us for the race and have a chance to meet them and add a little bit of joy to their challenging lives. Kudos to Ross for making this happen every year for over a decade.

As usual, the trackside camaraderie ran high. I got a chance to experience it in a new way this time because Bill Van Ocker was generous enough to share accommodations in his camper with me throughout the event. I got to enjoy two long evenings of socializing with a dozen or so friends as we all sat around the camper telling war stories and tall tales of driving schools and races past, engine break downs, incidents during our long-haul tows to and fro the track, and just about any other B.S. we could think of. For some reason, the conversation seemed to keep coming back to various



Photo by Brian Morgan

mechanical betrayals perpetrated upon us by our race cars: the way a MINI feels and sounds just before one of its wheels falls off; the sour exhaust notes heard just before an S-14 engine blew up; the whine of a failing differential. Eventually the conversations died down and Bill and I climbed aboard his camper. Then I heard something that transported me to a simpler time in my life; a time when I was still being taught to recognize the good sounds of the world and before I was forced to listen for the not-so-good sounds in search of signs of trouble, mechanical or otherwise. Late at night, just before I fell asleep, carried on the breeze from the surrounding woodlands, I heard the gentle call of the whippoorwill. Peace.



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## Life in the Electric Lane - Part 2: On the Road

Continued from last month where we left off after finding out the reduced driving range was now around 100 miles. Due to production space constraints let me summarize the events and then let's get to the question everyone asks: How does it drive?

Despite the disappointment we take the car home. Trisha has fun driving it home. I take the car for a spin around the neighborhood. I will talk more about how the car drives in the next installment of the series but the short take is that the car is very easy to drive. Once you get used to the engine braking when you lift off the throttle, it is actually possible to drive the car and rarely touch the brakes. It is simultaneously familiar (it is a MINI after all) and yet eerily different since the loudest sounds are tire and wind noise; the motor is almost silent. Trisha takes the car to work on Tuesday and answers lots of questions. I take the car to a family function on Wednesday and then Trisha takes the car on Thursday. Because we do not have our charger box yet installed, we are charging the car each night using the 110 volt adapter cord that MINI provides. However, on Thursday night, the car does not charge properly: we have an error message that there is a fault with the high voltage system.

The car was towed first to Mini Morristown then back to Mini corporate in Woodcliff Lake. Morristown Mini has been terrifically helpful throughout the entire program. The same cannot be said for Mini corporate. We were promised calls from them informing us of progress on the repair that never came. The only information we received was from the dealer after they called on our behalf. One week later the car was returned to the dealer and we were back on the road.

So, what is it like to drive the car? In fact, it is generally fairly easy to get used to. The exterior certainly looks like a normal Mini (until you notice the absence of tail pipes out the back) and the interior is totally Mini (until you notice the great huge box that houses the battery where the rear seat and part of the trunk should be). Where the tachometer usually resides on top of the steering column there is a gauge that shows the percent charge remaining and one of the readouts on the multifunction display gives the estimate on your remaining range (more on that later). To start the car Mini now uses a mushroom shaped key that fits into a slot on the dash, you wait for the indicator lights to go out then press the Start/Stop button. This is when things start to get weird - there is no noise. Electric motors don't do anything when they are not rotating so the way you know the car is on is because the daytime running lights are on. Slip the gearshift into reverse (remember that this is a single speed automatic transmission), press the throttle pedal and the car starts to move. Again, there is no noise! This is the part that takes the most getting used to. When the car is in motion, the majority of the noise comes from the tires. For those of us who love our BMWs and Minis for the beautiful music their engines make, this is almost an out-of-body experience: you are pressing on a pedal that is where it should be to make you go, the car is moving down the road like you expect but it's totally quiet. If, however, you want a Zen-like experience, this is the car for you. It also requires an added level of attention to watch your speed since the car has no trouble getting up to New Jersey highway speeds.

Acceleration and braking are where the biggest differences lie. Electric motors generate essentially full torque instantly. That means pulling away from a stop is never a problem; it is easy to spin the front tires if traction is less than perfect. Similarly, acceleration in traffic is not really a problem. Now, the car is certainly not as quick as our supercharged Cooper S. Hauling around 550 pounds of battery pack takes its toll and hard acceleration does have a noticeable effect on your remaining range. If, however, you accept the premise that the niche for this car is as an around-town and short distance vehicle, then the responsiveness of the acceleration is more than adequate. The part of driving that takes the most getting used to is the regenerative braking of the motor. When you lift off the throttle it is as though you are simultaneously applying the brake and the effect can be very abrupt if you lift rapidly. The purpose of this is that the car is designed to capture energy and recharge the battery as you slow down. There is no coasting in this car, you are either "going or slowing". The practical consequence of this is that you can drive the car around town in traffic and almost never need to use the brakes to control your speed. Once you learn to modulate how and when you lift off the throttle it becomes mostly a single pedal car. This can be particularly fun taking corners since you just lift your foot a bit to slow down approaching and entering the turn then press down

again to accelerate out of the turn. You've heard of left foot braking but what about no foot braking! However, when you do need the brakes they are more than adequate. In fact it is easy to notice that the front discs and calipers are larger than on our Cooper S to accommodate the increased weight of the car.

Handling is also where we notice a difference but the comparison may not be fair. Our Cooper S has the factory Sport suspension of the R53 model. To say that it is stiffly sprung is an understatement. On bumpy pavement or over expansion cracks on concrete roads the ride in that car can be punishing. Conversely, anyone who has seen that car on the track knows how well it handles in stock form. The Mini E is definitely set up for more leisurely driving. There is noticeable body roll when turning but the trade off is a more comfortable ride for those around town errands. The car was a visitor to both the Tire Rack Street Survival event and the chapter's Gymkana. In these autocross-like settings the acceleration got the car going quickly but the suspension and tires were really struggling to keep up. Also, the regenerative braking made it difficult to drive the course as smoothly as desired. This is not a driving events car in its current configuration.

So, two months into the program are we happy? The answer remains, no. Our issue with Mini and the installation of the rapid charger remains unresolved. The 110v charging has proven to be substantially longer (50% - 90% more) than the 25 hours we were told it should take and resulted in another trip to the dealer to see if there was a fault. This seems to be another instance when predictions were made based on industrial laboratory conditions rather than real world situations. On the positive side the predicted range on a full charge now generally is between 110-120 miles. I can only surmise this is a reflection of the algorithms the computer uses to make the estimate "learning" about our driving style and what distances are covered on a given charge. It is also true that we have barely needed the A/C this summer (which has a noticeable effect on range when it is run). We still need to carefully plan where we are driving to determine if it is safe to take the car or if we need to rely on the dino-powered vehicles.

Stay tuned next month for an update on our adventures and a discussion of the economics of electric vehicles.

- Jeff White



Running on Empty

Photo by Jeff White

# NJ Chapter Calendar

**July 2009**

Friday, July 17th

Hans Zolet from the Deutscher Club has extended another invite to us to attend their "Beer Garden" festival on Friday, July, 17th. at 5:00PM.

**August 2009**

Tuesday, August 11th

Monthly meeting at the TD Ballpark. See details on page 7.



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## MEMBERSHIP MEETING INFORMATION and LOCATION

The New Jersey Chapter's monthly membership meetings begin at 8pm and are usually held on the third Wednesday of the month at the Deutscher Club of Clark. However, special topics often force a different date; please check the calendar of upcoming events (or the website) carefully.

## MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

All membership applications, renewals and address changes can be done via the BMW CCA National website: [www.bmwcca.org](http://www.bmwcca.org) or can be sent to:  
BMW CCA National Office, 640 South Main Street, Suite 201, Greenville, SC 29601  
800-878-9292 (Mastercard or Visa)

Annual BMW CCA and New Jersey Chapter dues: \$40.00.

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## BMW CCA Club Race at Summit Point



Pit Crew

Photos by Ross Karlin



Happy Faces - the BrainTrust

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## BMW Corral at LRP at Vintage Fest Sept 5th

Gather round one and all!

Rolex Vintage Festival  
4-7 September 2009

The following comes directly from the Lime Rock Park website:

There is nothing like the perfect late-summer afternoons that the Northwest corner of Connecticut produced, and with a breath-taking collection of cars that take to the track, there is no better way to spend Labor Day weekend. Fans discover the glamour, glory and style of historic and vintage sports cars as they claim focus of the event both on track, in the open paddock and during the prestigious Sunday in the Park Automotive Extravaganza.

Sunday in the Park has evolved from what was essentially considered a local car show 27 years ago into a Car Show and Concours extravaganza devoted to automotive beauty, history and diversity. The Park will be engulfed with interesting vintage and historic sports cars, classics, customs and hot rods, woodies, trucks, racing cars, and motorcycles. There will also be marquee car club groupings including Morgan, celebrating their 100th anniversary, Porsche, BMW, Corvette and Aston Martin.

All of this makes for a wonderful day out in the scenic green valley of Lime Rock Park .

Tickets ranged from \$15-80.

Here are the special BMW details!

It looks like the BMW CCA will be assisting with a special BMW Corral this year, which will feature parade laps on Saturday. To get discount tickets, make sure you enter the BMW SPECIAL CODE- 2009BMW - when you place your order. The parade size will be limited, so if you want to participate or have questions please email Paul Ngai New Jersey Chapter by clicking here and typing in your name, CCA number, and Chapter name. There will also be special BMW display parking on the track during Sunday's car show.

Tickets as follows: Weekend \$80/per person, Saturday/Monday \$35/per person - 10% discount with the Special BMW Code.

When ordering tickets on the LRP website, after clicking "Tickets", you need to scroll down and click on to "Vintage Festival Corrals". That will show a box for the BMW Special Code. Sunday in the Park has a \$20./person track admission charge but no charge this year to enter the car show. Also, 10% discount only applies on race days and it is only \$20.

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