

execute that plan, the lower my lap times got. I think I'll keep it! :-)

I was creeping up on my rivals when, on the third lap, I see a yellow at the turn 3B station. A 911 was broken down on the back straight, off the track, driver's right. I kind of glanced at it and continued chasing the Miata in front of me, but then was alarmed to see an unprotected worker running toward the car from the turn station and I moved left to stay as far from him as possible. That was a huge reminder — gotta drive carefully in a yellow zone people! The workers' lives literally depend on it.

Later on in that same lap Greg, who had been breathing down my neck since the back straight, got underneath me in 8 and slipped past, but I got a run on him coming out and was preparing to pass him just after the kink when I saw the double yellows come out. Three boring laps under caution later, they got the Porsche pulled to a safe location and let us go again. I got a KILLER restart thanks to some lucky timing on the gas pedal and my wife's excellent green call, and motored by Greg before we even reached start-finish.

The first lap after the restart was nuts, as the caution had bunched up the entire group again and the Miatas had to pick our way through some slower out-of-class traffic. A novice driver in an M3 got passed on the outside of turn 2 by no less than six Miatas, but she did great all weekend staying out of everyone's way and out of trouble.

Down into 3A-3B and on the back straight the track looked like a crowded grocery store parking lot, with cars going every which way and (mostly) staying out of each other's fenders. I found myself drag racing at the end of the back straight with Skip Yocom in his Rabbit, and opted to follow him through 5-6 because it was the safer thing to do and it would have slowed both of us WAY down to go through there side by side. I got alongside him going up the hill and passed him just after 7 — good, clean racing in my opinion. I'll have to ask Skip to make sure he agrees! :-)

The remainder of the race was spent trying to hold the fifth-place position I had at the restart. Greg was chasing me down but spun right behind me in 8, then a lap later Geoff Cochran got collected by another 911 who spun in 8. James Wetter appeared to have checked up big time in that melee, because when I caught him between 8 and 9 he was going quite slowly.



It's not all roses for Mr. Newton

Pat Newton's weekend at Portland International Raceway on July 1 didn't end as happily as his Memorial Day weekend at Pacific Raceways, "so my honorable record of running a Spec Miata with all original sheetmetal came to an end. ... It was our 30th race weekend so that's not a bad lifespan," he said. Here's the crash: http://pat.nwspecmiata.org/race_videos/portland_ouch_july07.wmv.

ABOVE: Newton's Spec Miata awaits repairs after the crash.

BELOW: Four hours later, Newton's car sports a lot of red racer's tape.



Unfortunately I didn't think there was enough room between James and the turn 9 apex (i.e. giant concrete wall) for me to slip through into third, so I had to slow way down and go through behind James. That allowed Bruce Wilson, who had spun early on but caught up during and after the caution, to go screaming past me and get into a bumpdrafting-fest with James, and the two of them had a significant lead on me going into turn 2.

Luckily I made up some ground on the brakes and in the following turns, so I was close behind Bruce heading onto the back straight. James missed a shift back there, allowing Bruce and I to scoot by, and now I was in fourth.

The next couple laps were all about keeping James behind me, which I did

somewhat effectively until halfway through the final lap, when I had a run on Bruce up the hill out of 6 and decided to try and get by him for the last podium spot. That was ill advised, as my inside line through 8 killed all my momentum and not only let Bruce (and his Rebello engine) cruise ahead of me to reclaim third, but also gave James a run on me and he got me by half a car length at the line, so I ended up fifth. Oh well, I had to try it.

Fast lap in the race was a 1:43.4xx, which I was pleased with. Next stop :42s! I would love to get into the :42s with a \$150 engine, that would just be too cool.

Thanks so much to the NWR officials and workers for putting on another great race weekend.