

Walsh second in Runoffs debut

Redmond racer recounts trip to podium



STORY AND PHOTOS

BY JIM WALSH

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TOPEKA, Kan. — It's been a long road from Redmond to here. Seven SCCA National races got me the NOR-PAC GT2 Divisional Championship and an invite to the SCCA National Championship Runoffs in Topeka.

The August Last Chance National in Topeka let me see the track for the first time. Tuesday, Oct. 2 in test week, I saw the track for the second time. Then I was off for some personal travel (my sister's wedding), and back in town Sunday, Oct. 7, in time to register and run a single qualifying session each day from Monday through Thursday. Two days off, waiting and watching other races, then at the track at 6:30 a.m., to ensure the car is ready, especially with the on and off rain and mixed weather forecast for the race,

Sunday, Oct. 14.

This was my first Runoffs, and I made some rookie mistakes in qualifying. Three of the four sessions were "split sessions" with the GT1 cars, though we were given 10 minutes each, the checkered flag seemed to fly at about the 7-minute mark, always when I seemed to be heading down the front straight on a flyer with open track (finally!) ahead of me. In the final qualifying session, I missed a shift at a critical point on my fastest lap, but still improved a tenth of a second, which was enough to move me from seventh to fifth in the incredibly tight GT2 field.

The 8 a.m. GT2 warmup was dry, but there was a threatening weather system on the radar. I was feeling good, feeling relaxed, went out to get the feel for the track and the car again,

as it'd been three days since I was on track. With a 10-minute session, I only got four laps.

Came in, took a fuel sample in to make sure we were clear, it came back fine, looked like the fuel testing problems from earlier in the week were solved. I heard from one of the fuel testers that a tank of contaminated fuel had been delivered early in the week which had caused a lot of the problems, but they didn't overturn the DQ's of all five unleaded fuel runners on Monday, so I'm not sure if that was a rumor or fact.

I have to thank Bill Meyers and Bill Gail for the weather help, and Jeff Lin and Dave Sauntry for getting us in touch with them. Bill Meyers got up at an unreasonably early hour on the weekend to give us a personalized weather forecast, so we were confident running dry tires for the race, in some pretty threatening weather conditions,