

# Inner Walter Mitty thrives in Club Trials, Track Trials

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Forgive me as this article is way overdue. I became interested in Club Trials about three years ago. As someone who has had a little influence helping to sponsor Miatas and represent the Mazda name, at the time, I was at the track often as a vendor, spectator and occasional pit crew.

I have been a fan of road racing even before my wife and I started attending races at Laguna Seca. I still have my poster of Elio De Angelis in front of Nelson Piquet. At some point I had Walter Mitty dreams of getting on the track myself, but never had the money to finish the Lotus Elan rebuild project I was working on.

There are spectators and participants, and usually I tend towards the latter. Perhaps you or a friend wants to get on the track and enjoy their car to the fullest. Do the fully prepped cars intimidate you? Whether it's the expense or a lack of experience building a car, it can make this first, experimental step seem like a giant leap — especially if you're not sure how deep you want to get into this.

These days many of our daily drivers are pretty sophisticated and can seriously threaten older prepared sports cars, even in stock trim! With some attention to the car's condition and some basic safety equipment, (helmet and long sleeves, to begin) you can start to enjoy a Performance Driving Experience, what SCCA calls PDX.

"SCCA memberships and competition licenses are not required. These events offer the opportunity to improve driving skills while giving the curious rookie a taste of competitive motorsports action."

You will receive instruction from drivers who have experience and your maximum safety and enjoyment in mind. We love to share the thrill with someone taking the first step into quenching their need for speed. Without going into specifics here, you



Contributed photo

**Steve Clinton, Brian Holstien, Mark McClosky and Neil Bryant represented the region at NORPAC'S Track Trials championship in Reno, Nev., last year.**

will learn some basic high-speed skills as well as some safety maneuvers that will serve you well in that Commuter 500 you do every day as well! After the morning instruction and exercises you start to do some fast laps in the afternoon, first with an instructor, and then on your own as you prove ready. There are other cars on the track but there is no passing and we all try to give each other space so we can start to work on specific corners and get used to your vehicle in this environment. No stress, no times, no competition, just a safe place to play and learn.

Once you have finished the day safely, you will usually be signed off as ready to step up to Club Trials, if your need for speed continues.

"Club Trials events provide a constructive learning environment that stresses proper driving techniques, while at the same time offering a timed, competitive event."

You can start to take part, even as a temporary SCCA member, and improve your skills through patient application of the techniques you have learned and by talking with fellow enthusiasts who have relevant experience

they are eager to share. Still being able to use your car in good working order, with an approved helmet, etc., you now have an approved passing zone, so the faster cars can work on their best times without putting anyone at risk. These passes are done by a "point-by" so both the faster and slower driver confirm the maneuver. You are racing the clock, not each other. Actually you are racing yourself, looking to keep improving.

There are classes that divide the cars according to performance levels, and I have found, personally, that it all feels pretty fairly sorted out. There is acknowledgement at the end of the day and recognition of who's fastest in which class, so there is competition, but a safe one, respecting each other on the track.

OK, so maybe like me you've really got the bug now. You start improving the car and taking the preparation more towards a track car, and really want to give your buddies a run for the clock! You are now ready for Track Trials

"Track Trials events are based on competition on small to medium-