



Sherri Masterson photos

Tire Rack Street Survival chief instructors David Jackson (left) and Dave Conover (right) tell day one students what they'll be learning later on the track.

to the right and it was the log truck, so I thought I would go left and the red car would just drive on. As I swerved left, the red car swerved right, and we had collided head on.”

Street Survival chief instructor Dave Conover rounded up a dozen teacher-coaches for the weekend, most of them active SCCA racers or autocrossers. Dave Gaylord, my wife’s instructor, has raced at the 24 Hours of Daytona. I accepted Conover’s invitation to teach, since I had prior track experience with him at Thunderhill Raceway in some Miata performance driving schools.

Day one’s 11 Street Survival stu-

dents, eight of them teenagers, arrived at the track in an array of sedans, coupes, hatchbacks and a couple of SUVs, but the instructors’ eyes all fell on the “Look at me!” orange Lotus Elise when it drove up.

Students start the day with classroom time learning about traction, braking, steering, acceleration and weight transfer — and how they control those elements. They’re drilled on the dangerous distractions of cell phones and texting. They learn how to “look through” objects and spot brake-light reflections to anticipate unseen hazards. They learn Street Survival isn’t a race or competition,

and speeds rarely exceed 50 mph.

Instructor and student then meet at the car. Students check tire pressures, adjust seats and mirrors and make sure everything is safe before they line up for the driving exercises: panic braking, emergency lane change, object avoidance, a tailgating test, slaloms and a figure-8 skidpad.

After an hour or so of driving, it’s back to the classroom to talk about what the students learned before it’s time to hit the exercises again, this time with a little more speed and confidence.

Schmid, my first student of the weekend, was initially timid with her



Frederic Lambert photo

Marc Lambert spins his BMW 318 on the skidpad.