

NATIONAL RACING REPORT

The Midwest Division has not seen the likes of this before, but it probably won't be the last 300-car race at Heartland Park Topeka -- for at least as long as the Runoffs call it home.

The June 10-11 weekend at HPT was truly an occasion. Eight races. Only two grids under 35 cars and one of those was the I.T. Tour race. 53 Spec Miatas entered, 47 of them actually took the green.

Drivers from every one of the other seven SCCA Divisions raced, 114 of them in all (not counting two in the I.T. Tour). A lot of them heavy hitters getting a first look at the new Heartland Park.

With that kind of power in the paddock, points were hard to come by. At least nine different classes had enough entries for some finishers to score zero points. At the same time, they say, what doesn't kill ya makes ya stronger, and MiDiv drivers held their own.

Eleven were class winners. At the other end of the spectrum five MiDiv drivers who went into the race as class leaders collected DNFs.

Eric Prill (Kan) won FP and took over the points lead from **Weber Manning** (MidS), one of the DNFs. **Chuck Mathis** (Sill) and **Chris Albin** (Sill) came in 1-2 in GP while **Chuck Leighton** (OzMt) was DNF. That put Albin atop the points list with Mathis third behind Leighton.

Bill Gray (MidS), GT1 National Champ in 1998, won to pad his points lead. In GT2 **Barry Schonberger** (StL) remained atop the heap despite his DNF. **Peter Zekert** (StL) won GT Lite and extended his lead in the points over third-place finisher **Brad Lewis** (StL).

In the SportsRacers, **Hans Peter** (KC) won for the fourth time this year in CSR and **Chris Funk** got his fifth win in Spec Yellow Racer. Half the SRF field, 8½ of 17 cars, were yellow.

Grant's Army (MidS) was present in force, including **Keith and David** going 1-2 against a big Formula Atlantic field. That put them in a 48-point tie for the class lead. Flip it over and in Formula Continental the top two -- **Bill Allman** (Kan) and **John McMurray** (StL) -- both caught the dreaded DNF. Allman had enough cushion to hold the lead but McMurray dropped to fourth.

More formula winners -- **Cliff Johnson** (KC) outran a good-sized group of Formula Fords to break out of a tie with Memphis winner **David Livingston Jr.** (MidS). Brad Stout (StL) took his fourth victory of the year in quest of his fifth national champ, but next behind him was **Steve Oseth** (Kan), who's won twice earlier this year and was the '03 champion. Formula 500 went to **Jason Knuteson** (Okla).

The top of American Sedan did not change much. Points leader **James Stevens** (StL) was DNF, but second-place **Carey Grant** only scored 1 point. Down in Touring 2, current national champ **Chuck Hemmingson** (DMV) scored his second win of the year, outrunning class leader **Chris Brannon** (OzMt) who won the other four races.

Other than that, Mrs. Lincoln...

After winning Memphis, **Don Tucker** (MidS) kept his EP lead with 4 points from HPT while his closest pursuer, **Kevin Grant** (MidS) scored zero. **Rob Horrell Jr.** (MidS) and **Eric Norris** (Okla), tied at the top of HP, were both DNS at HPT.

Milton Grant (MidS) won Memphis, didn't make the tow to Topeka, but remains the GT3 leader.

Jim Boehm (StL) won DSR at Memphis to take a 4-point lead over **Mark Dalen** (KC). Then at HPT Dalen finished third to Boehm's fifth, closing Boehm's lead to 2 points. **Jack Platt**, second at HPT, helped himself in points over **Scott Bowman** (DMV), who didn't race. **Rob Sherwood** (StL) did and moved into a tie with Bowman.

The top runners in Formula Mazda took a pass on HPT, leaving the points as they were after Memphis with **Ken De Nault** (DMV) at almost double the score of **Sean Ferris Mataya** (StL). **Richard Stephens** (NeOk) tops a list of six drivers within 6 points of Mataya.

Mike McGinley (KC) scored 6 at HPT while **Natha Waldbaum** (Neb) took a DNF. The two had run 1-2 in three earlier races and stay that way in the points. **Steven Burkett** (StL) and **Jack Tippens** (StL) have both won twice in out-of-division races but haven't been able to win yet at home. Still, they're 1-2 atop T3. **Ward Herst** (StL) still has a 30-point lead in SSB. **John Saucier**, with his sixth SSC win at Memphis, maxed out with a perfect 72-point score in class so he has already won his record 23rd MiDiv Championship -- 15 straight in SSC! -- and didn't need his 7 points from HPT.

And then there's Spec Miata. 44 drivers on the MiDiv points list

and the class leader, **Jim Drago** (MidS), scored zero at HPT after racking up the winner's 12 at Memphis. It took **Charlie James** (NeOk) both races to add 12 to his score, but 5 at HPT once again brings him within one point of Drago.

It might be of useful information to report that as big as the entry was at HPT, there was still ample paddock space. And that was without accessing the new overflow paddock, in use as a solo pad with 120 autocross cars on it for a two-day event -- putting both their paddock and course on the pad.

Much of the paddock area remains to be repaved, which is on Ray Irwin's To-Do list for the next month or so. He has left some of the grass portions in the SE quarter that might be primo real estate on a hot day.

All the new garages were filled. The new tech building was in use. It looks big enough to impound a whole race indoors. The scale in there is something too. I put my little electric scooter on it and it weighed it accurately at 40 pounds -- even when I parked it at the extreme edge of the scale pad. The new timing building is not yet complete, but the interior walls are up, the air conditioning is running, and the starters worked from the new start platform extending from the building.

A highlight of Saturday evening was the dedication of the new **Scott Liebler Memorial Pavilion**. Liebler was a Formula Atlantic racer from Kansas Region who died in a Runoffs accident at Road Atlanta. The new pavilion is double the size of the old one, which still stands adjacent to it.

Visiting drivers asked their impressions of Heartland Park were generally pleased, and especially impressed by the amount of work and investment that has been put into the place. It's not Mid-Ohio, but when the Runoffs moved to Mid-Ohio the common comment was that it wasn't Road Atlanta. HPT has its own character and challenges. It is still a work in progress, but every time you go through the gate you can see how much more progress has been made.

--Rocky Entriken

The I.T. Tour Report

It is hard to imagine the concept of "easy points" in an Improved Touring race, but considering the huge entry for the National at Heartland Park having only 14 starters in the I.T. Tour race the same day was a surprise.

It was fun, then to watch the guy 14th on the grid -- Pratt Cole from San Francisco Region. He's a three-time E Production national champion driving Mazda Miatas, but this time he was not among the 114 out-of-division drivers hoping to score National points.

Instead he was on his way to a Miata Cup race -- the pro series using the '06-spec cars not allowed in Spec Miata. Learning there was an IT race, he jumped in as an ITE. He passed four cars before turn 2 and was comfortably third overall in just a few laps.

By then, **Andy Woolverton** (Neb) had checked out on the field for his third ITE win of the year. **John Waldbaum** (Neb) was next under the checker. **Sheila Burkett** got the third-place points since Cole could not take any and those are the top three drivers in ITE.

Peter Lehr (DMV) won the closest class battle, five seconds ahead of **Steve Bachenberg** (KC) in ITA. However none of the top eight drivers competed and so **Tom Scheifler** (StL) remains the class leader over **Pete Knese** (StL). ITA is the Tour's largest class this year with 29 drivers on the points chart -- almost half of them in Miatas and most of those Miatas being SM cars running a second class.

The HPT weekend also had the most interesting IT7 race so far this year, **Scott Peterson** (KC) coming out on top for a second time to claim the class points lead. **Howard Duncan** (Kan), yes *that* one, was second under the checker. **Jim Wyatt** (KC) in third moved up to second in points.

Britt Brown (KC) won ITB over Davis Koffron, a visitor from Arizona Region. **Chris Albin** (Sill) still holds a strong points lead.

No ITS or ITC cars raced at Topeka. **Bill Denton** (MidS) is still the ITS points leader. A win at Memphis put **Jim Bishop** (Miss) into the runner-up group in ITS. **Michael Major** (StL) has the only ITC points.

The Midwest Division I.T. Tour comprises the I.T. races scheduled alongside MiDiv's Nationals. Four races remain -- Hallett and MAM in July, Gateway in August, HPT again in September. Drivers have to start at least three of the races to qualify for Tour awards.

--R.E.