

Directors Report June 2008

Well it's been a difficult month for us on the BOD, mostly self-inflicted I'm afraid. We started out by moving the Runoffs venue for 2009 to Road America. The Club actually had a number of tracks including Heartland Park interested in hosting the event. Some others, including Indianapolis motor Speedway removed themselves because of Budget or schedule conflicts. At the end of the evaluation process we had Road America, Road Atlanta, Mid Ohio, Heartland Park and VIR still up for consideration and we picked Road America for the 2009/10/11 Runoffs. The decision was based on many factors including the historical nature of the tracks and the Club Members appreciation of them as racetracks that they would want to race at, finances, local support, enthusiasm of the track ownership, local infrastructure and hotels, etc. So far we have received a large number of complements on the move and a touch of sadness about moving from Heartland Park where the city and track owner certainly tried very hard and wanted us back. At present the 2009 Runoffs are tentatively scheduled for the 3rd week in September and the final details are being worked out now. In a departure from previous years the event will start Tuesday for official sessions - we had a lot of input about the long week at the Runoffs, I don't think this will help but we can try it out and see what happens.

The folks at Topeka are making a huge effort to make this year's event a big success with a 'festival of Speed' and a bunch of activities planned throughout the event. The Club Office and BOD will be announcing some incentives to encourage Entrants this year as the economic climate worsens - I am not sure what form they will take but every little thing will help us go out of Heartland Park on a high note.

After the decision to move the Runoffs we had a good look at the document that the National Racing Task Force (appointed by RJ Gordy - Chairman of the BOD) brought us. Things started fine as we implemented many of the procedural things that they had suggested to enhance the program and these can be found in Fastrack. There are some that affect the number of races that can be counted in your division, seven instead of six and three races maximum for out of division. You will have to have four finishes to be eligible for the Runoffs instead of three finishes and four starts. There were even suggestions that the BOD and CRB serve the food (or cook it) at one of the Runoffs parties - not sure whether that is a good thing.

Then we got down to the tricky stuff and some big decisions. We had a suggestion to do away with the difference between Regionals and Nationals and just have events with some sort of points structure. We nixed that idea as the regional program seems to be working well and the combination would probably really upset a lot of regions and their racing programs. Next came IT as a National class and that was voted down for a number of reasons including the fact that this was always stated to be a Regional Only class and we felt we would do a lot of harm to the regional program just to bolster National numbers. There were a lot of concerns about increasing the cost of IT cars and the fact that we already are accused of too many classes, as it is - more of that in a minute. We are going to make it easier for the IT guys to run in the Production Classes and still be legal to go back to IT with minimal changes.

Then it began to get sticky. The Task Force wanted to consolidate classes at various levels - even those that were not in danger of losing National status. Eric Prill

published a summary of their philosophy on a new feature of the SCCA Forum called the "the rumor mill". As you can guess from my tone I was dead set against the idea of healthy classes getting merged but these things have a habit of developing momentum. By the end of the meeting we had voted in a suggestion, for the CRB, that we consolidate (merge) a number of classes, everything from CSR/DSR to HP into FP. I was pretty sure it would get shot full of holes as soon as it hit the press and I was right. I asked myself a number of times why I voted for a motion that was just about impossible to achieve but I think that the original proposal that the task force made was far more destructive in nature, being based around 18 classes, and it might have passed.

Fast forward a couple of weeks to our regular Conference Call June 5th, after the BOD was inundated with letters against the proposal and it was rescinded completely. Did it make us look like we lost our collective minds, probably? We seem to have a disconnect between the Board and the membership that competes, whether in Road Racing, Solo or Rally. We hear this constant drumbeat about too many classes but little about the investment that our racers have in their racecars. Every time we do something like an ill advised rules change or merge a class it drives someone away.

So what did we achieve? I think that the members voiced their opinion that they didn't want forced mergers. They seem to accept that if you don't make the numbers then consolidation is an alternative to regional only status. I think we have established a system that will work for the future with the 2.5 per class/per race requirement for Runoffs eligibility and a maximum number of 24 Runoffs races (maybe less). Note the subtle change - races not classes. We also intend to honour the 5 year timeline for the incubator classes FB, DP, BP and ST although only FB looks like it has a chance of success.

Thanks to everybody for their input - even those that called me every name under the sun on these issues. I think we will have a better BOD because of it.

Phil Creighton
Area 12 director