

November-December, 1998

Volume 4, Issue 4



HORIZONS

The Official Newsletter of the SunRiders Miata Club of Tampa Bay

Club Notes...

November's Autocross was a great success.

With a turnout of nearly 30 drivers and perfect weather we couldn't have imagined how the day could have been any better. On Friday the 13th we headed over to the St. Pete Junior College Allstate Campus to set up the course for Saturday's event. In the past setting up had been a real chore due to not enough help and no real plan ahead of time for how the course is supposed to look. This time we had several people show up to help set up and we had learned enough from the last couple events we put on that we were able to set up a good course in only a couple hours. Those of us who helped set up took the opportunity to get a few practice runs before we quit for the night. Running the course is an important step in "tuning" it so that it flows well and there are no sections that are too fast or too slow, or too rough on tires. On Saturday morning the drivers started showing up at around 8:30 and we got everyone registered and a number put on each car. Around 9:30 we did the course walk-through, another important step in which an experienced driver will be able to formulate his or her plan of attack. Mark Mackenzie, former Miata owner, and still a member of the SunRiders and Porsche club, was on hand as our instruc-

tor to give the beginners a tutorial before they dove in and did their best.

Autocrossing takes a lot of skill to do extremely well, but even those of us with little skill can get out there and have a lot of fun. The first hurdle for a beginner is to gain a level of comfort with pushing the car to its limit, and to realize that it's not going to flip over or burst into flames. The fastest time for the day was achieved by Dan Shields, a nationally competitive autocrosser who races a Dodge Neon ACR. The rest of us were a few seconds behind Dan, but we still enjoyed the friendly competition amongst ourselves. Pictures from the event are on page 7.

Christmas Meeting enjoyed by all.

The December monthly meeting doubled as our Christmas party this year and it turned out great! Hosted by Landry's Seafood House on Rocky Point, we had seating for 24 on the patio, overlooking the water. About 22 actually showed up, setting an attendance record for our monthly meeting. After standing around for a while talking and eating appetizers, we sat down and ordered our meals. The food was as good as the conversation and we even got some great ideas for events for next year. The club picked up the tab for everyone's drinks and the appetizers.

Club notes continued on page 3...

Bleeding Brakes without a helper...

I was asked recently how it was possible to bleed the brakes on a Miata without having someone to open and close the bleeder valves while you step on the pedal. Basically it involves a whole lot of walking around the car and topping up the reservoir, alternating with pumping the pedal and checking the bleed tube to make sure it's not sucking air. With a length of 1/4 inch ID clear tubing and a clear bottle with a couple inches of fluid in the bottom to act as a check valve, you can do it in something like this order:

- 1) Attach tubing to bleeder valve, crack valve open, put end of tube in the fluid in the bottom of the bottle
- 2) Pump brake pedal a few times.
- 3) Top up reservoir.
- 4) Go look at tube and see all the nasty brown fluid coming out into the bottle.
- 5) Return to step 2 and repeat until the fluid coming out of the tube is clear, then close the valve and take the tubing off.
- 6) Repeat for other 3 corners of the car.

It's definitely easier with a helper, as it saves all the walking around the car and the helper can close the valve between pumps to ensure no air gets in around the threads on the valve.

The places where this procedure can go wrong are:

- 1) if you use tubing that is too big, it will not seal on the bleeder valve and air will get in
- 2) if you open the valve more than just a tiny bit, air will creep in around the threads. I use a closed-end 10mm wrench (or is it 8mm?) that I put on the valve **before** the tubing and leave it there throughout the operation.

It takes a bit of fiddling to get the valve open just the right amount and get it to stay there.

3) if you accidentally pump the reservoir dry, air will get in and you have to start all over.

I've done this several times and it works fine. The procedure for the clutch line is pretty much the same.

Kevin Morrison

Sponsors!

A Word for Our Sponsors

The Sponsor of the Month for this month is Lindell Mazda in St. Petersburg. Lindell has been buying SunRiders memberships for every person that buys a Miata from them since about last April. Recently they have expanded that policy to include sales of used cars. Sonny Gonzales of Lindell is the club's contact and has been a great friend to the club. Lindell even loaned us a new '99 Miata for the last autocross. Don't forget the support Lindell has given to the club the next time someone asks you where they should go to get their next (or first) Miata.

LINDELL **mazda**



Sunday Breakfast Run Changes its Mission.

Traditionally, the Sunday Breakfast Run has been an all-out top-speed dash through the countryside that left you with white knuckles and shaking knees by time you got to the end. These days, though, with more and more people attending with many different skill levels, and the increased levels of traffic and congestion along the route, as well as us getting a little bored with the same old roads, we decided to find a new route. A couple Sundays ago, Jonathan Skinner, Jim Poehlman, and Kevin Morrison made the ultimate sacrifice and spent a Sunday afternoon cruising around Anna Maria Island and Longboat Key, eating lunch at the Sand Bar Restaurant at Holmes Beach and then sipping tropical drinks at Cha Cha Coconuts at St. Armand's Circle, for the purpose of scoping out a new route for the Run. Well, somebody had to do it. Join us in the coming months for more relaxing drives along the coast on sunny Sunday mornings.

NEW SPONSOR!!

We are proud to announce that **Courtesy Mazda** in Tampa has signed on as a sponsor of the club. We look forward to having a relationship with Courtesy that benefits us both.

Renewal Time Rolls Around...

For about 50% of the club, January means it's time to renew your membership. If you were due for renewal, you received a membership form in the December update. Many renewals have already been received. If your membership is expiring, this will be the last newsletter you receive, so send in those dues so you don't miss anything! The next batch of renewals will come in April, when a number of memberships are coming due. Those of you in that boat will get a form in a mailing from the club. If you didn't get a form, and you think it's time for you to renew, give Kevin Morrison a call at 222-

0509 and we'll verify your membership status. If you joined the club fairly recently, your membership probably expires at the end of 1999.

Web Site is a Smash Hit...

The SunRiders web site is a popular stop for Miata enthusiasts all over the world. It gets well over 1000 visitors every month. The main attraction is Miatas of the Net, a collection of about 150 (and growing) pictures of Miatas submitted by owners all over the world. There's also a guestbook that has been signed by dozens of folks, and pictures from recent club events. The club event schedule is always up to date there, but we realize that not all members have access to the 'net (about half do). Rest assured, the calendar of events that is published in this newsletter and in the update letter every month always has the correct event information. Although we're very proud of the web site, **Horizons** is the premiere feature of the club and we continue to strive to make it better.

WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK OUR
LOCAL DEALERSHIPS WHO ARE
SUPPORTING THE SUNRIDERS.

Mazda Village
Clearwater, 813-791-8171

Lakeland Auto Mall/ Lakeland Mazda
Lakeland, 800-733-3439

LINDELL mazda

St. Petersburg, 813-344-3344

COURTESY MAZDA
Dale Mabry & Hillsborough, Tampa
813-261-2350

Help!! My Boot's Flapping!

Do you have trouble with your boot billowing up as you drive? This problem keeps getting brought up on the Miata e-mail list so it's worth a bit of time to try and straighten out.

First off, your boot should have two straps on it to hold the lower portion in place. Some people have reported that these straps are missing. If Mazda made your boot without straps then you can probably count on it billowing up as you drive. If you do have the straps then there's two things to check.

Using The Right Bracket

The first problem is getting the boot straps around the correct bracket. When you look for a place to loop the strap around, there's a bracket that appears to be shaped just perfect for the task. Now that you've found that one, try looping the strap around the correct bracket below that one! It's the bottom-most rung of the "ladder" that is the right one.

Size Counts

The other problem is the strap length. Quality control on the boot strap doesn't appear to be up to the usual Miata standards. When I loop the second strap around the frame, I have to exert a fair amount of force in stretching it to get the snap in place.

What you want to do is measure the distance from strap loop to strap loop. Take the boot off the car and turn it upside down. Take each strap and snap it in place. Now measure the distance from the end of the loop on one side to the end of the loop on the other side. On my car this distance is almost 43 inches. Another Miata owner who also doesn't have any billowing boot problems also reported a 43 inch distance.

However, one owner who does have a billowing boot measured his at around 46 inches. Those extra inches appear to make a big difference. Tie a knot in the strap or loop it around twice if it's too long.

- Brian Bousman - from the internet

Want to Win?

There's a McKamey Autocross school coming to Fort Myers on January 30 & 31. Below is an excerpt from McKamey's web page.

The McKamey Autocross Schools are a full day of concentrated one-on-one instruction in your car. The instructors are all successful champions who have worked with Jim McKamey to present their knowledge and skills to you.

If you think you are ready to learn what it takes to achieve your next level of driving then the McKamey Autocross School has a day of fun waiting just for you.

Contact the person listed below for information and school reservations.

Pre-registration required.

January 30 & 31 Ft. Myers, FL Contact Darrin Disimo 561-241-9077 extension

18 email: ddisimo@gate.net

Quicksilver Ad here.

CRASH!!!

We have had at least two prior crashes by members reported in Horizons, Janet Johnson's off-road excursion at Deal's Gap '97 and Kevin Morrison's crash into the wall at turn five at Laguna Seca. Dewaine and Molly Norris also experienced one recently, and less than 48 hours after their crash, I was involved in one as well. I was returning home on Interstate 275 in St. Petersburg, Saturday afternoon, August 15th. I got caught in a sudden, ferocious summer rainstorm. I saw a fire engine parked on the side of the road. I went to move over a lane to give it more room, and my car then hydroplaned into a slide, which quickly became a spin into the side of the fire engine.

The fire engine had just responded to another car that had done the same thing that my car was now doing. I tried to miss hitting the engine, but my car was a spinning top, and I was just a passenger. I had no chance to regain control before my car struck the reinforced steel bumper of the fire truck.

KABLAM!!!! My drivers door and right rear corner panel struck the engine with such force that my head went through the glass window of the door, and everything aft of the door on the drivers side was completely crushed. I always wear my belt and it prevented my body from being thrown through either the windshield or the passenger side window. My legs, being unrestrained, flew up and struck the underside of the dash. I had one heck of a Charlie Horse on my right shin, a massive bruise to the left side of my head, a cut to the back of my right hand, one black eye and I managed to get a cut on my left upper back, from the Tenax post right behind the driver's door. I also hit my jaw, and managed to bite my tongue hard enough to draw blood.

Amazingly, there was only a minimal amount of intrusion into the cockpit area. My '92 doesn't have the side door beams that the '94+ has, but the fire engine still managed to stay on it's side of my door! I believe that I survived this high speed impact with an essentially immovable object for two reasons: One, the impact occurred near the reinforced area behind the seats, a naturally very rigid part of the car, and two, the Racing Beat style bar II installed behind my seat. This clearly is NOT a roll bar, but it did perform one very important function, it provided a significant amount of side impact protection. The car was twisted from the impact, but the bar remained in position and helped to PREVENT the car from collapsing around me. I believe if I had been in a four passenger car, with just a bit of sheetmetal in the area between the front and rear seats, and had experienced this same accident, the car would have folded in on me, trapping, possibly crushing me. As it was, the amazing strength of the Miata chassis took the impact and radiated the force away from the cockpit, probably sparing my life. The paramedics insisted on having me transported to the hospital, where I was x-rayed, checked over and released about two hours later. I bought Hakuna in December of '94. She was always a good and true friend to me. Always reliable, always a lot of fun. In almost four years together, she never let me down. At the risk of sounding anthropomorphic, Hakuna laid down her life for me, and I don't know what higher honor anyone can bestow upon another.

Jonathan Skinner

SUNRIDERS MIATA CLUB OF TAMPA BAY

CO-PRESIDENT /
WEBMASTER / NEWSLETTER
EDITOR:
KEVIN MORRISON
(KEVIN@SUNRIDERS.COM)

CO-PRESIDENT /
DIRECTOR OF MOTORSPORTS:
JONATHAN SKINNER
(JONATHAN@SUNRIDERS.COM)

CO-PRESIDENT /
DATABASE DEVELOPMENT /
EVENTS PLANNING: STEVE
SWIGER
(STEVE@SUNRIDERS.COM)

(AS YOU CAN TELL, WE CAN'T
DECIDE WHO'S PRESIDENT)

P.O. BOX 26071
TAMPA, FL 33623-6071

EVENT LINE: 813-225-4240

Stuff the Lawyers make us say: All opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the SunRiders Miata Club, Miata Club of America, Mazda Motors, or the Board of Directors of any of these organizations. Technical advice given is based on the writers' experience with their particular cars. Unless otherwise stated, these procedures are not "Factory Approved". SunRiders assumes no responsibility for the use or misuse of any information presented herein. Use any information at your own risk. Some assembly required, batteries not included. Keep away from small children and point away from face when lighting.

WE'D LIKE TO THANK
QUICKSILVER
PRINTING
FOR THEIR SERVICES
AND HELP IN PRODUCING
THIS NEWSLETTER



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Tuesday, January 12, 7:00 PM- Monthly meeting at Landry's Seafood House, located at Rocky Point, at 7616 Courtney Campbell Causeway (SR 60). There will be no formal agenda, just a chance to meet new members, brainstorm ideas for events and activities, and enjoy some good food and conversation. New or prospective members are encouraged to attend.

Saturday, January 16, 1999 10:00 AM- Tech Session. Let us help you alter your car irreversibly, installing all kinds of aftermarket goodies that will forever transport you to the world of.....THE CAR NUT!!! The tech session will be held at the home of Steve Swiger, at 4615 North Boulevard, between Hillsborough and MLK in Tampa. This will be a good time to make sure your car is in tip top condition before the Autocross! For directions call Steve at 813-239-9224 or Kevin at 813-222-0509. Steve will be out of town the day of the event, but is letting us use his driveway and garage!

Saturday, January 23 9:00 AM - Autocross. We are planning our first autocross of the year at the St. Petersburg Junior College Allstate Campus. Registration will be limited to 50 cars. Preregistration is preferred, but not required. A registration form can be downloaded from the web site. Cost will be \$25 and that will include a lunch. Spectators can eat lunch with us for \$5. Call Jonathan Skinner at 727-784-5529 or Kevin Morrison at 813-222-0509 for more details.

Saturday and Sunday, January 30-31 - The Rolex 24 Hours of Daytona. Several club members are planning to attend this premiere sports car racing event. The Rolex 24 starts at 1:00PM on Saturday and continues all day and through the night. This is your chance to stay up all night, eat until you're sick, and go deaf from the sound of the cars as they speed around the track. A full-weekend ticket is \$70 and that includes infield parking, paddock, grandstand, infield and garage access, and also includes qualifying on Thursday and the Motorola Cup on Friday. If we get a group to go, we'll set up a Miata-coral in the infield. If you plan to go, call Kevin Morrison at 813-222-0509 and we'll try to get everyone to meet up at the race.

Sunday, February 8, 1999 - Sunday Run! Meet us at Courtesy Mazda in Tampa at 9:30, the SPJC Allstate Center at 10:15, or at Thornton Mazda at 10:45. We'll drive down to St. Armand's Circle via Anna Maria Island and Longboat Key for lunch.

Saturday, February 20, 1999 1:30PM - Ybor Brewery Tour. Meet us at the brewery in Tampa's Ybor City at 1:30 for a tour of the operation. Admission is \$2, but samples are provided! More details in the February Update.





Clockwise, from top left: The line up for tech inspection; Kevin waiting in line; The Lindell Miata with Caroline Spencer at the wheel; Caroline on 3 wheels in her Neon; The BMW M-Roadster came out to play; Anne Venables gets instruction from Mark Mackenzie; Paul Shaffer pushes his R around the last turn. Photos by Jim Poehlman



SUBSCRIBE TO THE MX-5 JOURNAL,
THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL MIATA JOURNAL,
WRITTEN BY AND FOR ENTHUSIASTS.

6 ISSUES PER YEAR, \$16

SEND A CHECK TO:

MX-5 JOURNAL C/O RIC ALLAN

9335 COLUMBIA ROAD

LOVELAND, OH 45140

M/C AND VISA ALSO ACCEPTED

SEE US ON THE WEB AT WWW.MX5.NET

Visit the club's web page at <http://www.sunriders.com>

Features at the site include "Miatas of the Net"; "There and Back Again" - a trip across the country in a Miata; Photos from SunRiders Events; the Calendar of Events, and links to other Miata-related web sites.

Call the Event Hotline at 813-225-4240 for the latest event information.



P.O. Box 26071

Tampa, FL 33623-6071