

November-December, 1998
Volume 4, Issue 4



HORIZONS

The Official Newsletter of the SunRiders Miata Club of Tampa Bay

FOR THE LOVE OF IT:

Professional Racing in the Mazda Miata/MX-5

By Kevin Morrison

The Jordan Brothers, Jim and Joe, are the men behind one of the few professional racing teams who campaign the Mazda Miata on the most famous race tracks in America. The Jordans' Protomotive Race Team travels around the country competing in the Speedvision Cup, a series sanctioned by Professional Sports Car Racing (PSCR), formerly known as IMSA. Their two Miatas, both '94 models, compete in the Compact class against other Miatas, Honda Del Sol VTECs and Nissan Sentras. The other classes in the series - Grand Sport, Sport, and Touring, consist of the most sporting of sports cars on the road today, including BMW M3s and 3-series cars, Mazda RX-7s, Toyota Supra Turbos, Acura Integra R-types, Firebirds, Camaros, and Mustangs. All the cars in the series are production cars with limited modifications. Every car in the series runs on the same tire, the Toyo Proxes RA-1. All these classes run at the same time, so it's just about the only place you can see a Miata swapping paint with all of your favorite sports cars, and making a pretty good showing for itself. While obviously out-classed in speed on the long straights, the Miata can hold its own quite well in the turns with its nimble handling and superb brakes.

Jim Jordan first began racing in 1975, in an MGB

in SCCA E production. He soon moved into the IMSA ranks where he raced a Datsun 510, a Mazda RX-3 and a Dodge Charger. After going to work for Mazda in 1986, Jim has raced Mazdas exclusively. It was Protomotive who gave the Miata it's first professional race win in the United States.

Joe Jordan is the National Sales Manager for high performance tires for Toyo Tire USA. He started racing in 1986 in SCCA Improved Touring in Jim's RX-3 and went on to great success in the SCCA ranks in an RX-7, finishing second in his regional class.

Protomotive's other two drivers, Joe Fox and Charles Espenlaub, are both up-and-coming young drivers in the Sports Car ranks. Espenlaub won the "Rising Star" award in 1997, while Fox is in the top three in the drivers' points race for the 1998 season.

So it was with great excitement that Jonathan Skinner, Steve Swiger and I went to Sebring International Raceway in Highlands County, Florida on September 18, to serve as pit crew for the Protomotive team for the fifth race of the season. Protomotive has been in the thick of the points race this year and hoped to continue their success with a strong showing in this race. We arrived at the track early on the day of the race to find the yellow #94 car finishing its morning warm up. The car performed well and only needed a minor check-up and new brake pads for the race. Joe turned our attention to the #93 car, which had been having electrical problems for last couple

see "Speedvision", page 3

NEW MEMBERS!!!

Bronson and Cathy Griggs, Ruskin
Dale and Beth Bachman, New Port
Richey
Maggie Seymour, Tampa
Jim Poehlman, St. Pete
Allen Oster, St. Pete Beach
Dominic Evangelista, St. Pete
Joseph and Susan Gaffney, Lakel and
Cavonta Davis, Bartow
Frank Crook, Seminole
William Walczak, St. Pete Beach
Carol Boshart, Clearwater
Nancy Shilling, St. Pete
Anne Walton, St. Pete
Michael Rothberg, Oldsmar
James Nock, Gulfport
Leonard Newhinney,
Redington Shores
Patricia Connelly, Safety Harbor
Janell Carver, St. Pete
Bruce Ungerlieder, St. Pete
Molly Shaw, St. Pete
Edward St. George, Spring Hill
Richard Polin, Clearwater
Steven Nelson, St. Pete
Doug Mues, New Port Richey
Brad Minard, Treasure Island
Hila Mae Marhsall, Tampa
David Lung, St. Pete
Leonard Hughes, Clearwater
Lawrence Hobbs, Safety Harbor
Cindy Chenowith, Lakel and
John Cella, Tierra Verde
Sharon Azoon, St. Pete Beach
Theresa Aucoin, Tampa
Dorothea Anderson, Largo

As you can see, the club is growing tremendously. We welcome all these new people and their cars into the club.



Sponsors!

A Word for Our Sponsors

The recent growth of the club is due mainly to the generous support of our sponsor dealerships. **Lindell Mazda** and **Lakeland Auto Mall** are paying the first year's membership fee for every person that buys a new Miata from them. This has brought us a lot of new people, most of whom own brand-new 1999 Miatas. We have enjoyed having many of these new members come out to participate in events. Many of them did not even know we existed when they decided to buy a Miata, but are very happy to find a way to enjoy their new car even more. **Mazda Village** is also a long-time supporter of the club, giving discounts on parts to club members and financially supporting the club. If you are one of the 50+ people who are members thanks to the generosity of these dealerships, please help us make it worth their while by going back for service and accessories, and by sending your friends and family to these dealerships when they finally give in and decide they have to have a Miata, too.

We hope to continue to have a great relationship with the area dealerships. They are what allows us to exist, and in return, we are the best "Public Relations" they could ever have. Most Miata owners have been personally responsible for convincing two or three other people to buy Miatas, too. Having an active, healthy club in the area is a great marketing tool for Mazda, and that's a role we are more than happy to play.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Ken Morn". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

"Speedvision", continued from page 1

racers. The Jordans decided to quit fooling around with an electrical problem they couldn't track down and to replace the entire wiring harness in the car. Joe told us to simply "start disconnecting stuff" and we descended on the car and proceeded to track down the end of every wire and unplug every connector, working our way back to the firewall and into the dash of the car. Within an hour or so, we had the old harness out and started to put the new one in, reversing the process. We actually believed that we might be able to get the car running before race time, now only a couple hours away, when we found that the new harness would not mate with the ECU in the car. It turns out that the #93 car was a very early pre-production car, and did not have the same connector on the ECU that later '94 cars have. So we called it quits and started preparing for the race, which was fast approaching.

The facilities at Sebring are modest. The pits consist of a long row of concrete block stalls, each just big enough for a drum of fuel and a couple stacks of tires. We were sharing pits and helping crew for the Massari-Muller BMW team as well, so we determined that the best contribution we could make to the team at that point was to stay out of the way. So we went up to the small seating area on top of the pits where we could watch the pit stops and be close by if needed.

With the recent acquisition of the Sebring Raceway by the motorsports juggernaut of the Panoz family, Sebring is slated for a major facelift and upgrade. Several improvements have already been made to the track, including a reconfiguration of the fabled hairpin turn, a change that many purists find difficult to come to grips with.

Sebring's main thoroughfares are constructed on the old pavement of what used to be an airport (the regional airport is still right next door). The concrete pavement is laid down in giant squares, so the cars make a rhythmic clunking sound as they fly over the joints in the concrete. Making the track even more challenging is the asphalt pavement in the corners,

making the cars uneasy as they make the transition from concrete to asphalt and back to concrete.

But the rich racing history of Sebring shows through. The annual 12 Hours of Sebring race is as famous as the 24 Hours of Daytona and Le Mans races. Each year, nearly 100,000 race fans descend on the raceway, camping in the infield, in tents, cars, and RVs.

So it was with stars in our eyes that we watched the start of the Speedvision Cup. The sound of the cars taking the green flag at wide open throttle is deafening, and as you watch the pack disappear, three abreast, around turn one at the end of the front straight, your heart is in your throat and you just pray that they will all make it through the first turn. This time they did, and the race was on.

Sebring is a really big track, 3.7 miles around, and it takes a Miata about two minutes and 45 seconds to make the trip. From atop the pits, you can see only about twenty-five percent of the track. There are no elevation changes and

"Speedvision", continued page 4

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

MAZDA
PASSION FOR THE ROAD™

the track is lined with concrete barriers and tire walls, making it hard to see unless you can gain some elevation atop the pits, atop your RV, or atop one of the several small viewing hills situated around the track. Our car was in the middle of the pack as it started to spread out as the much faster Grand Sport and Sport class cars left the rest behind. Our chief rivals were one other Miata and two Honda Del Sols. It was with chagrin that we realized that our beloved Miata was no match for the VTEC Del Sol. There's just no substitute for horsepower, especially on a track like Sebring, with its mega-long straights. Nevertheless, we stayed within striking distance. When one of the Del Sols retired with engine trouble, and the other one made a dire mistake in pit strategy, we found our car was in first place in its class.

As is often the case in central Florida, though, the rains came down about half way through the race, and a long period of full-course yellow ensued. A flurry of activity took place in the pits as all the cars came in to switch to rain tires, Toyo RA-1s with full tread depth. The water on the track had nowhere to go and in places was six inches deep making racing too dangerous, so the yellow stayed out. The rain finally stopped, and with about twenty minutes remaining in the 2 hour and 45 minute race, the green flag dropped again and it was a sprint to the end. As the race reached the final two laps, we were getting excited as the announcer declared us the Compact class leaders. Just then, the race-leading RX-7 blew a turbo and started belching huge clouds of thick white smoke. All the cars in the pack had to slow down drastically due to the near-zero visibility, and somewhere in the fray, the Del Sol, driven by class points leader Steve Nowicki, passed our car and went on for the class win.

Second place was good enough for a trip to the podium, though, and silver platters for Espenlaub and Fox, followed closely by bottles of champagne that were vigorously shaken and sprayed on everyone within ten feet. Joe brought us one of the bottles and told us to take a swig as a reward for helping the team,

and we drank with enthusiasm, already drunk with the thrill of just being there.

It was after the race that we enjoyed the real gritty reality of being on a race team, ferrying tires, fuel and tools back to the race trailer using a golf cart and loving every minute of it. I was starting to realize it already, but we learned that the real sport of racing is not glamorous, it's really hard work, and the guys that do it, do it for the love of it.

Protomotive will be back at Sebring next March, and expect to be racing new '99 Miatas by then. We will be there too, doing our best to have a small part in getting the Miata on the podium again.

See pictures on page 6. *This article is a reprint of an upcoming article in the MX-5 Journal, the first international newsletter for the MX-5/Miata. For more information about the Journal, see <http://www.mx5.net>. To subscribe, send \$16 to: MX-5 Journal, 9335 Columbia Road, Loveland, Ohio 45140*

IT'S NOT THE DESTINATION,
ITS THE RIDE

*Submitted by Janet
Johnson*

If you have joined us on one or our Miata outings, you know the thrill of seeing these beautiful cars strung out before you. If you have the opportunity to lead one of our CARavans, you will know the frustration of constantly checking you mirrors and hoping that everyone made it through that last intersection.

In the interest of safety, there are a few things to keep in mind, no matter where you are positioned in the line-up, that will make the drive more fun for everyone. These will take some practice but we all want to arrive at preferable the same destination and enjoy the camaraderie of the drive.

COMMUNICATION in the Caravan is simplified if you have a CB radio. This radio adds to the fun as you "quip" down the highway. This is aside from the fact that it is much easier to call out turns and stops than signaling in some other fashion. If some of the group is without radio, try to keep these individuals between those with radios and use other means of communication.

POSITIONS in the CARavan are usually determined at the start of the drive. The process for determining you place in line may be somewhat serendipitous ("no cars of the same color together, one blue, two reds, the silver in the middle and the white one bringing up the rear,)), but we should try to maintain those positions once underway.

KEY POSITIONS in the CARavan are the lead car and the "tail gunner". The last car in the line up is very important, and the driver will have conferred with the leader and will know out destination, routes, rest stops, etc. Average speed INCREASES through the length of the CARavan and the last car should be one of our better drivers and one who is willing to maintain an average speed somewhat faster than that of the leader. The last place is a position of honor.

FOLLOW THE LEADER is a fun game to play, but when it comes you turn to be out in front please don't slip into a game of "Simon Says.". Try your best to communicate to everyone what you plan to do (not easy at 60mph). Use you turn signals more than you normally might. When you have pulled out to pass and are ready to slip in front of that semi,

See "Ride", page 6

**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 produc-
ing this newsletter**



"Ride, continued from page 5

remember those twelve Miatas following in your wake.

INTERSTATE ROUTES are not usually our first choice for CARavanning. They are a great way to get from point A to point B, but not much fun. Part of the Miata experience is playing in traffic, seeing, and being seen. Back road and small towns suit our style, but are not always possible given our destinations.

MERGING INTO HIGH SPEED HIGHWAYS can be tricky. The thing to remember here is that you need to be traveling at or slightly above the speed of the mainstream traffic while you are on the approach ramp. If your opening does not develop, you can always tap your brakes and scrub some speed off. What you do not want to do is find yourself merging in to the mainstream traffic at a speed slower than the flow. That is not the time to build speed.

FOLLOWING AT A CLOSE DISTANCE makes sense when you know the driver ahead of you. Know that the Miata ahead of you is a very capable car, and you know where we are all heading. If you drop back to a "safe" distance you can bet that some stranger will crowd in to the space. His driver may be drunk, crazy or spending his first day behind the wheel. Close it up, and keep that space ahead of you filled with a Miata. This may not always be possible. Remember, Safety first.

(For this material, we gratefully acknowledge MIATAMAGIC, the newsletter of the SpaceCoast Chapter, Miata Club of America, and MIATA MOMENTS, the newsletter of the Central Florida Chapter of the Miata Club of America.

Sebring Pictures...



Here we are with drivers Espenlaub and Fox, after the podium ceremony.



This is the BMW M3 that won the Speedvision Cup



The Protomotive Miata gets new tires and the drivers switch.

Upcoming Events

Tuesday, November 10, 6:00 PM - Monthly meeting at J Alexander's. Located at 913 N. Dale Mabry Hwy, between Kennedy and I-275, next to Border's bookstore. We start around 6:00 and go until about 8:00. You can show up any time, but earlier is better since the restaurant is usually pretty busy and we can't hold many tables. There's no formal agenda for the meeting, it's just a chance for conversation and good food.

Saturday, November 14 - 8:30 am - Autocross: We are planning our third autocross of the year at the St. Petersburg Junior College Allstate Campus, located at 3200 34th Street South, in St. Pete. Registration will start at 8:30 in the morning. First car out will be at 10:00. Cost will be \$25 per driver and that will include lunch. Spectators can eat with us for \$5. Call Jonathan Skinner at 727-784-5529 for more details. See the article in the previous issue or on the web site about what to expect at the autocross. Beginners will be able to take a basic instruction course taught by an SCCA certified instructor before getting on the track. If you haven't pre-registered by now, you can register the day of the event, starting at 8:30AM.

Sunday, November 22 - 8:00 AM - Another Semi-Famous Sunday Breakfast Run. We're going to find a new route soon, so this may be your last chance to do the Citrus County run for a while. Meet us at the McDonald's at SR54 and US41 in Lutz at 8:00 sharp. We'll drive about 60 miles north to Citrus County where we will have breakfast at The Country Diner. Bring your CB radio, tuned to channel 34.

Saturday, December 12 - Holiday Party- Celebrate the end of another year and the holidays with your Miata friends. Location and times to be announced in the December update, on the web site, and on the event hotline.

Saturday, January 23 - Tech Session. We'll spend a day doing both routine maintenance and radical modifications to our cars. If you are planning on installing something soon, save it for the tech session! No timing belts or other major surgery, please. Location and time to be announced.



HELP! MY RADIO IS LOCKED!

If you ever have to disconnect the battery in your Miata, you may find that your stereo has locked itself and will not respond to any user input. This is a security feature designed to make the Miata stereo undesirable to thieves. A code that you set must be input to the stereo to unlock it. However, many people forget their codes or the code was set by a previous owner. The owner's manual as well as the Workshop Manual both state that three consecutive incorrect attempts at disabling the anti-theft system will render the radio inoperable and that it must be replaced. This is absolutely not true! There is a very simple procedure which will restore your radio to operability. It does not involve removing the radio and requires about 30 seconds to complete.

We had to think a minute before publishing this information. After all, if this were well known, the security feature would be useless. We finally concluded that 1) no stereo thieves are currently club members and reading this, 2) this is a really dumb security feature anyway, since it only does something AFTER your stereo is stolen, and 3) this information has been on the internet for years now. We have seen this "feature" cost people money, time, and frustration because they did not have this information.

Here's the procedure

For most 1990 - 1994 factory radios:

Press the # 1 button

Press Stop/Eject

Press Am/Fm

Press Clock Button

— — — — Will appear.

Enter code 4 9 8 9

Press F/Forward & Reverse at the same time and hold for a couple seconds.

The code should now be removed. Follow the instructions in your manual to set a new code or leave the code un-set.

For most 1995 & later (not '99):

Press "Track/Tune/Rew/FF" Button (side with the symbol V)

Press the "FM 1/2" button

Press the "Auto Memo" button

Press the "Tape" button

This should give you the "- - - -"

Using preset buttons (1-4) Enter the code 5 0 1 1.

Simultaneously press "Track/Tune/Rew/FF" Button (side with the symbol V) and the "Auto Memo" buttons and hold.

The display should read "Good"

This article is adapted from the FAQ file at Miata.net. Visit Miata.net for tons more information about all things Miata.



If you have a '99 Miata, you've probably noticed this big yellow sticker nagging you from the passenger side. Last year, Mazda actually mailed these to a lot of us who own older Miatas with the hope that we would actually go out and stick them in our cars. I am happy to report that my car is just as safe (or unsafe) without that sticker, and those of you who are "stuck" with one can remove it with acetone (be careful!). There is also a "visor sock" available in the aftermarket to cover the unsightly things. Excuse me if I do not bow to the safety gods on this one, I think they are dumb. You probably can't read the writing the graphic above, but it says on the second line that the BACK SEAT is the best place for children to sit. This is your government at work!

Homecoming Night

By Courtenay O'Connell

It's Friday night, cool and clear. Just yards from the River Ridge High School football field, nineteen glamorously coifed young ladies argue over who will get to sit in the Miatas and who will have to sit in the ten Corvettes. A new soap opera? No! A SunRider Miata event! The decision as to who would ride with whom finally came from the coordinator of the event, Ed Braddy, who also teaches science and is the sponsor of Student Council at the River Ridge. On October 23, in New Port Richey, Florida, Kevin Morrison, Jonathan Skinner, Steve Swiger, Janet Johnson, Ed Simon, and Mike Sims all gathered to drive the ladies of the homecoming court to their presentation point on the fifty yard line of the football field. In addition to their red and blue Miatas, Janet Johnson led the procession in her '95 M, Steve Swiger came next in his speeding ticket white '95, Kevin Morrison was next in his race-ready '94R, Jonathan followed in his exceedingly rare, practically one-of-a-kind '95 Laguna Blue & Tan, Ed Simon followed in his "hello, officer" red '95, Michael Sims joined in, behind the wheel of his rocket-ship '99 emerald green. All six sporty Miatas lead the entourage, with the ten Corvettes behind. As the first three contestants left their vehicles, Janet, Steve, and Kevin hurried back to the starting point to pick up the final three ladies.

The River Ridge High School Homecoming Court was chosen by the student body. The winners announced to a screaming crowd of parents, students, and staff. If it had been a contest between the Miatas and the Corvettes, however, we know who would have won. Here's a hint: the only car to overheat and become stranded on the field was a Vette. Enough said! With tops down, and mission accomplished, all headed to Applebees to sate hunger and thirst. And let us not forget the teasing over dinner about who missed the apex on the turn of the field at 5 miles an hour, and whether to pass with a passenger sitting on the trunk or to continue driving a respectable speed in front of impressionable young eyes! (Kevin attempted a pass

in turn three, rounding the visitors' end zone, but had to slow down because the girl on the back complained of being cold!)

On a personal note, thanks to all who participated in this civic event. As the audio-visual media specialist in the high school, and a Miata Mama (Michael Sims is my husband), I am proud to be associated with the SunRiders. Now, where do you hang the plaque you received for your selflessness?



S A H I

There are plenty of aftermarket suppliers who cater to our desire to add yet more items to our Miatas! Check out <http://www.miata.net/marketplace.html> for a more complete list, but the following are five companies I have had personal experience with and can recommend wholeheartedly:

Dealer Alternative

www.dlralt.com
1-800-FLY-MX5S

Performance Buyers Club

www.performancebuyers.com
1-800-359-4093

Roebuck Mazda

www.roebuckmazda.com
1-800-240-2121

Brainstorm Products

www.brainstormproducts.com
1-800-779-3223

The Crazy Red Italian

<http://www.redfire.com/crazyred/cr/pages/>
South-East Division - Gainesville, Florida
Phone [9:00 am - 3:00 pm Eastern] : (352) 331-7652



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

Level and, OH 45140

Sample issues are available for \$3

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