

Directors Report – March 2008

It's been an extremely busy start to my first year as Area 12 Director – we had the SE Division awards banquet on Jekyll Island, the National Convention in San Antonio and we have just completed our sixth National in the SE Division and it's still only late March. I haven't seen any final figures for the attendance at these races but all that I attended seemed to be at or above normal considering the jittery state of the economy and gas prices etc. Maybe the double event at Homestead should have drawn more but the distance to travel down there and no test day didn't help. Certainly, we are keeping an eye on entries this year, in particular, to see if we can increase participation in our National program.

The Convention has been covered elsewhere pretty well and I didn't get to many of the seminars because of BOD meetings with the various program boards and committees – I'm still learning what they all do. I will say that the mood of optimism at San Antonio was higher than I expected in light of the economy. Next year I promise we will have something for Drivers and Crew – an area that was discounted by our previous CEO. I can't see the convention as a “workers only” educational event when competitors are our “product”. We need more interaction between the two groups and we need some of the competitors to cross over to the dark side and help run events, maybe even become stewards. Next year, the Convention will be at the Southpoint Resort in Las Vegas, I'm told it's family friendly, pretty self contained and about 20 minutes from the Strip.

On the National Racing program, the BOD will be examining the results from our “Task Force” that was set up to examine National Racing and the Runoffs and come up with a plan for the next few years to give some continuity (our new Chairman is a police commander in real life). This is a joint staff, BOD and CRB committee that has already met face to face and will bring us their ideas in May at Topeka – even if they recommend no changes at least there will be a direction that has been lacking of late. The May meeting should also give us a better idea of where future Runoffs will be held – I think I'm not alone in the ‘anywhere but HPT’ club. With our Club office based in Topeka it's a little hard to overcome some of the Runoffs issues but the numbers don't lie – we can't lose 20% of competitors and workers each year. I don't know how successful we'll be to get some of last year's issues fixed for October once we decide to go elsewhere. We have some of the classic tracks interested in hosting us and there are still a couple of exceptional opportunities out there.

On the financial front, the Club has had a good year in 2007 with an operating profit of close to \$400,000, SCCA Pro was in the black and managed to repay some of its loans as well, Enterprises paid back about double what was required of them, built up inventory and are obviously making money. The big concern is membership numbers as we hover around the 50,000 mark, we have arrested the decline and new memberships are balancing those that we lose. We obviously had a boost under our old CEO with the memberships that were given away with new Subaru cars but few of these renewed and are now out of the system so we have a pretty good feel for the current trend.

The SCCA Foundation continues to make good strides under Larry Dent with donations and the organization of the ‘Street Survival’ program seems to be gaining ground. This a program aimed at teen drivers if you are not aware of it. There looks like will be in excess of 20 of these events nationwide this year and is a great opportunity to help the local community and maybe save some lives. The Foundation is producing a Brochure and DVD to help get these going and is actively seeking (and getting) some donations and sponsorship.

On the Club Racing side of things it was all pretty quiet until the Formula Continental class rose up ‘en masse’ to protest the introduction of the new Elan Intake Manifold for the Zetec engines that they thought was not going through the rules process correctly (it wasn't) and we voted not to accept it at San Antonio by a unanimous decision (I'm told that a 13-0 vote on anything is unusual). We had more letters (not form letters) on this subject than any other in

SCCA history – over 140 individuals made their feelings known. I think I spent almost two weeks on the phone trying to find some middle ground with the parties involved, finally getting an agreement at the last minute. It's probably still not all resolved but membership input works! Don't sit back and let someone else do it and moan and bitch on a forum or at the track, let us know how you feel. There just isn't enough time to scan every forum out there, however constructive.

There was an erroneous press release that was printed in Sports Car relating to the classes that would be invited to the Runoffs in 2008. Only those classes that were in the top 24, plus GT3 for one year, will be going. Unfortunately, when the decision was made to add GT3, a suggestion that we allow some of the non Runoffs qualified classes to run within other class groups was included. This was not correct and has caused some confusion even though it was quickly corrected. While we wait for the task force results I will say that we need a National Championship race for each of our National classes and we need to get rid of this top 24 class idea, where competitor has to compete with his fellow competitors to keep his class in the top 24. To me it's a way of avoiding making the hard decisions we need to make on class consolidation if that's what we think is necessary for the program.

The next contentious issue coming up that affects all road racers will be the new fuel rules recommendations from the CRB. We are in a difficult position here as leaded race fuel is phased out and yet unleaded fuels are not ready for every application. Some see it as simply as "I can run street unleaded and save money" yet unleaded street fuel contains many additives that we have traditionally felt were performance enhancers (especially in high altitude areas such as Denver). How can we police the people that will 'tip the can' on additives or run rocket fuel without perhaps stipulating track fuel only – that brings its own set of issues as we found at the Runoffs at HPT and Mid Ohio. The spec engine Formula classes are probably the most affected by this – think about it, we have had virtually no input except from FV guys that remember the last Rocket Fuel go around in the late 90's.

Solo, by comparison, is its usual quiet self except for the minimum participation numbers waiver for A Mod, the SEB has recommended it but I have seen only a couple of E mails to the BOD. Site acquisition seems to come up at every meeting we have with the Solo people – there have been discussions on maybe buying property at the regional level.

Solo has, however, had an eventful and successful first quarter with the roll out of new technology and software for the Tire Rack National Tour and ProSolo. It was a great success and resulted in a great improvement in generating timely and accurate results. I'm not sure about bar codes for drivers though – does a permanent number now mean a tattoo! The first National Tour event in Cecil Georgia was the biggest in memory, in spite of weather on Friday, with 278 entries. The San Diego National Tour event (264 Entries) and the LA Pro Solo (202 Entries) were right up there as well. With Club Racing entries down slightly, its good to see the Solo program doing well.

On that note, a tip of the hat to Heyward Wagner and his guys in the South East with three divisional events organized as part of the new Tire Rack Divisional Championships program. With the RallyCross National Championship to be held in Nashville in October and 20+ events scheduled it looks like our area is going to be full of SCCA activities this year.

Our next Board meeting is in the beginning of May in Topeka so any input on issues needs to be in soon. Incidentally, we meet face to face four times a year and have a conference call once a month.

Philip Creighton
Area 12 Director.