



Elkhart Lake, WI - October 15th & 16th, 2011, NASA Midwest, Inc.

The last race of the NASA Great Lakes year was a crossover event with the Midwest region held October 8 and 9, at the famous Road America race course in Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin. The weather was absolutely perfect with colors bathing the track in orange, red and yellow hues, with bright fall sunshine all day long on Friday's practice and Saturday's races. While only 13 Spec Miata racers made the trek to Wisconsin, they were well rewarded with perfect weather for the event!

Saturday saw the last points racing of the season. After a quick warmup session, the #175 of Justin Hille, the #85 of Team Arbs, the #23 car of Matt Paderta, the #62 of Zachary Silver, and the #55 of Chris Williams were all showing times that would set the front of the pack. Team Myrehn did not take the warm up session as they had spent the entire day Friday and early morning Saturday repairing damage from the carousel attacking their #93 car in Friday morning practice. Their heroic repair effort included upper and lower arms in the front and rear driver's side, shock replacement, and removal of the dreaded bent upper control arm pin. Quite the impressive mechanical job by Bruce and Ryan!

After the dust had settled on qualifying for the first of two races on Saturday, Justin Hille sat on pole with a 2:47.006 while Team Arbs took second at 2:48.283. The #23 car of Matt Paderta was right behind Hille in third and Silver rounded the first two rows in fourth. The luck of Road America struck Williams as his #55 car steadfastly refused to start and both driver and car watched from the sidelines during qualifying.... As a side note, these things have circuit breakers for the fuel pump....who knew!

The start of the first race came under perfect conditions...sunny and mid 70s, Hille, Matt Paderta, and Team Arbs (with BJ Anderson driving), were immediately battling for the lead. After just four laps, the carousel bit again, this time taking out the #23 car of Matt Paderta in contact with the outside wall. The Paderta's luck with Road America would continue as Ben Paderta in the #46 car went out four laps later with apparent engine problems.

In the end, Team Arbs prevailed by just one second over Hille, in a classic battle that included a pass in the kink on the last lap. They were followed by Silver in third, and Williams in fourth. Ryan Groth in the #52 car brought home fifth, followed by #519 of Ken Brinkman in the six spot, the #56 of Jonathon Davis in seventh, and the #911 of George Clos Jr. in eighth. The battle damaged, but running Team Myrehn car, with Bruce Myrehn at the wheel took home ninth, with the #19 car of Anthony Storino rounding out the top ten. Bo Lemastus in the #42 (looking very similar to Jim Drago's #2, currently for sale on the Spec Miata board) retired early and finished 11th, while the Paderta brother's brought home the hard luck trophies, getting knocked out with car issues and finishing 12th and 13th. Justin Hille registered fast lap at 2:48.263, while Williams picked up the hard charger award working through the pack from 13th to finish in fourth place.

The second race grid was set by fast lap from the first race. Hille sat on pole again, while three cars would not return from the first race. Lemastus, Paderta, and Paderta were absent for the final points race of the year. Team Arbs placed second on the grid, Williams nabbed third, Silver



fourth, Groth fifth, Brinkman sixth, Davis seventh, Clos Jr. eighth, Storino ninth, and Team Myrehn with Ryan driving in the tenth grid spot. As the group readied to grid, Williams was absent, again delayed by starting problems. The #55 car was able to make it to grid but not in time to be placed at the complete end of the lightning

group. Hille and Team Arbs were off like a shot again, this time distancing themselves from the third running Silver very quickly. Clos Jr. had a heart pumping first lap when in the brake zone of turn five the appropriately numbered 911 swung from one side to other, black smoke pouring from the tires. Clos Jr. in a move reminiscent of the miracle of Danny Sullivan, pulled the car out of the violent spin, facing dead straight, and barely missing the turn in! Storino was able to pull out a nice save, after avoiding issues with the 911 and heading into the weeds at track out of turn five....quite an adventurous start for Tony and George. The rest of the race was extremely orderly, with everyone finishing in their qualifying positions, with the exception of Williams who worked his way back from the rear of the race group, this time finishing just 2 seconds behind the third place car of Silver. Team Arbs, finishing second, posted the fast lap of the race at 1:47.397, while Williams again garnered hard charger after starting tenth behind the Honda challenge and PT cars. Road America finally gave up its hold on bad luck and NO Spec Miatas were damaged in the running of the second race.

A great race day and some very tight racing throughout the field, if you didn't show up to this one, you should have! Although the gators have enough bite to rattle out your fillings, the track is a classic exercise in late, hard threshold braking, and hair raisingly fast turns! Shifting into fifth during what appear to be brake markers at the kink is also an experience! If you didn't make it this year, put it on your calendar next year!

The season points championship was decided on Saturday, with Justin Hille beating out Chris Williams for the Great Lakes Regional Championship. Hille had it all but mathematically completed by the first race. Dan Fargo with Team Tedlar picked up third place and Team Myrehn had their best showing to date finishing fourth in Great Lakes points. Congratulations to Justin Hille who not only received the Regional Championship but Driver of the Year (for all of Great Lakes NASA)! A well deserved award after finishing the year with six victories in 13 starts in the Great Lakes region.

Thanks to everyone who made this season a very successful one for Spec Miata. Our region was well attended, and showed very well at Nationals. I have been talking with the National Director of Spec Miata and the other regional directors, and I will have information on the rule set for next year very shortly. Get ready for the 2012 season, it should be a fun one! Anyone up for possible road trips to Road Atlanta to keep the cobwebs at bay over the winter?

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