

TOP AWARD WINNERS • BIRTH OF A CENTER STEERING BOXSTER • NEW MEETS OLD AT THE STREETS • TIME ATTACK AT BIG WILLOW

# VELOCITY

MAGAZINE



2014 DRIVER OF THE YEAR NATHAN JOHNSON

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2014 Driver of the Year Nathan Johnson  
Photography by Alex Bermudez

**BELOW**

Porsche 911R — A Wolf in Sheep Clothing  
Photography Courtesy Porsche Cars North America



*911R*



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# Center perfection<sup>1</sup>

TEXT BY VELOCITY STAFF | PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALEXANDER BERMUDEZ



As the Owner of Speed Gallery and an avid racer who had built more than 100 Porsche racecars from the ground up over the last 15 years, Dan Aspesi had been pondering what would be the most ideal Porsche racecar he could build, all while working within general constraints that the build and maintenance of the car be relatively economical.

Having built a number of Spec Boxsters along with a handful of GT-classed Boxsters, and appreciating some of the inherent characteristics of the car, Dan decided he would start with the 986 chassis as his base platform. “Boxster chassis are lighter in weight than Carreras, are readily available and affordable, have a low center of gravity, and are of course mid-engined, which makes them quite ideal.” he explained, much like the majority of the supercars and prototype racecars that are manufactured today. Not especially fond of the 986 roofline, Dan preferred the aero and lines of the roof on the more modern 987 Cayman S that appeared in 2006, along with the aero and proven downforce offered by the 997 GT3’s front end, and decided he would add both of these elements to his ideal list.

But then Dan took a much greater leap. “Wanting to make things even more ideal, I came up with the idea of making it a center-seat drive, similar to what Porsche first did with the 718 RSK.” Back in 1958-59, Porsche built six center-seat drive 718 RSKs in order to fit Formula Two’s rules, which led to a 1960 Championship for Porsche in F2. Unlike prototype purpose-built racecars, sports cars as racecars have an inherent design flaw: upward of 10% of the weight of the car is off center and placed over the left hand side of the car. Between the driver, seat, harness, pedal assembly, steering assembly, and gauge cluster, around 300 lbs of the total weight located left-of-center immediately results in an unbalanced racecar. To try and counter this inherent design flaw in every racecar’s setup, mechanics mount the fire extinguisher, radio, cool-suit box, and so on at the right side of the car. But this never ends up making everything equal, and mechanics must then work to corner-balance the car by tweaking the suspension to compensate for the imbalance.

In theory, Dan’s center-seat concept results in an immediate advantage, with the car having a significantly more neutral balance. Taking the benefits of the Boxster’s lightweight and mid-engined chassis, the

aero of the Cayman roofline, and the downforce of a 997 GT3 Cup, and combining them with the resulting benefits of placing the 300lbs over the center-line of the car, Dan had created his ultimate conceptual ideal, and then went to work turning his vision into reality.

After a few weeks of searching, Dan found a perfect 986 Boxster S donor car. He then recruited Tony Ugas of Precision Porsche Conversion in Torrance to fabricate a one-piece, lightweight, and easily removable Cayman roof. While that was under way, it was time to obtain the drivetrain. In keeping with the “fairly economical” part of the concept, he found a 2003 Boxster S 3.2 liter donor engine with only 11K original factory miles on it, along with a six-speed Boxster S gearbox, and started gathering the suspension components that would include Bilstein PSS9 struts with custom valving and custom spring rates.

Meanwhile, Nathan Johnson, fresh off winning back to back 2013 and 2014 POC Championships in Boxster Spec, and being named POC’s 2014 Driver of the Year, had been considering moving into a faster class, and had been talking to Dan about the POC’s GT classes. “I’d had some historical seat time on track in a 996 Carrera, and having spent multiple years in the BSR, I was pretty comfortable with the mid-engined platform, and had gleaned the Boxster’s potential as a GT racecar. Dan’s center seat concept also made a lot of sense on paper, and he was just really getting going on the project, so the timing was perfect, and I decided the center seat was the way I wanted to go. He’d already found a great donor 3.2L motor, which I thought would be perfect for POC’s GT4 class. I sold my BSR, and off we went.”

Dan then completely stripped the donor car down to just the chassis without a single nut or bolt left on it, and cut out the center tunnel, which involved relocating the radiator lines under the car.



After getting the flooring welded up and the seat mounting in place, he began to wonder just what exactly he had gotten himself into. So Dan recruited his brother, Lance Aspesi of Dutchstone Global Services, to start figuring out how to engineer the center drive component. Lance agreed to take on the project and try and help bring Dan's vision and concept to reality.

After fitting the custom carbon Cayman roof, doors, rockers, 997 GT3 front bumper and fenders, and 996 Cup rear wing pieces fabricated by Precision Porsche, Dan delivered the car to Lance so he could begin his engineering work. Dan insisted on having power steering and had installed the electric steering pump, and wanted to retain and utilize as many factory components as possible. The idea was to simplify the serviceability on the car, despite the relative complexity of the center seat conversion. Lance's primary obstacle was using the

factory steering rack, and a lot of hours were spent engineering a solution and getting the steering system to work. He then designed and fabricated the systems necessary to maintain the location of the brake system, clutch, steering column and pedals along the centerline. As a perfectionist, Lance took his time to make sure everything was done properly. After completing the operating systems, custom wiring harness and panels, and after a couple of months of Nathan anxiously badgering Lance for the final product, he picked up the car just in time to head directly to Buttonwillow Raceway for a POC race weekend (read: no time for testing!).

"The car was incredibly neutral out of the gate, and it was clear we had a great car to work with here. Coming off of the first weekend, we realized we needed to stiffen the car considerably, and then had some high speed understeer to dial out of her."

Fast forward to the first event of 2016 in February, following just a handful of weekends in the car last year, Nathan broke the WSIR POC GT4 track record with a time of 1:25.438. And the car has more to give. "I'm still working to squeeze those last 10ths out of her. It's exciting to have this blank slate to work with in GT. There is still a lot of development to be done on this car; she could really benefit from custom gearing as I still haven't gotten into 6th gear, and an LSD might also help. But the car as a whole is just fantastic as is."

Nathan is looking forward, too, saying, "Someday we'll put a four liter in her, go wide body, and see what she can really do!" ●

*Nathan extends his thanks to Dan and the Speed Gallery crew, Lance at Dutchstone for engineering the center drive format, as well as Always Evolving and ReplayXD cameras for their support.*



## PORSCHE OWNERS CLUB, INC.

### STATEMENT OF REVENUES, EXPENDITURES, AND CASH BALANCE FOR THE 12 MONTHS ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2015

REVENUE		EXPENSES		CASH BALANCE			
Registration Fees	352,229	Administrative Fees	36,540	Office Expense & Supplies	2,589	Beginning Balance	51,284
Advertising	3,895	Advertising	694	Photography	725	Ending Balance	63,441
Banquet	12,975	Ambulance Services	15,004	Postage	1,665		
Membership Dues	47,816	Awards	12,050	Postage & Mailing	2,403	Change in Cash Balance	12,157
License Fees	14,555	Bank Charges	98	Printing	10,732		
Track Partners	9,000	Banquet Food	9,542	Professional Fees	8,939		
Sponsorship Fees	16,375	Banquet Supplies	38	Promotions	2,856		
Merchandise Sales	160	Catering	9,636	Purchases - Merchandise	613		
Tech Fees	200	Corner Workers	42,038	Refreshments	5,455		
Misc Income	488	Credit Card Service Charges	237	Registration Fees	23,500		
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>457,692</b>	Equipment Rentals	192	Rental - Equipment	1,010		
		Fire Services	5,300	Rental - Miscellaneous	500		
		Food Allowance	660	Rental - Track	157,708		
		Insurance	26,275	Repairs & Maintenance	3,459		
		License & Permits	71	Security	1,760		
		Lodging	13,142	Software	5		
		Magazine Production	11,670	Storage	962		
		Marketing	1,140	Taxes - Other	494		
		Meetings	3,295	Telephone	4,281		
		Merchant Fees	21,230	Timing Services	9,368		
		Mileage	6,324	Towing	9,933		
		Miscellaneous Expenses	1,737	Track Supplies	256		
		Miscellaneous Services	1,343	Website	638		
				<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>468,105</b>		
				<b>Net Income</b>	<b>-10,413</b>		

SUBMITTED BY JOHN GORDON, POC TREASURER

# Center perfection<sup>2</sup>

TEXT, PHOTOGRAPHY, AND ILLUSTRATION BY ALAIN JAMAR

The simple act of relocating the driver's seat and controls to the center of the car transforms a Type 718 RSK prototype into a Formula single seat racer. In 1958, French driver Jean Behra climbed from a third place finish at Le Mans to the Reims Formula 2 Grand Prix event just weeks later. The center seat advantage was on display at Reims as Behra claimed an incredible 21 second win over the leading F2 entries from Ferrari, Cooper and Lotus.

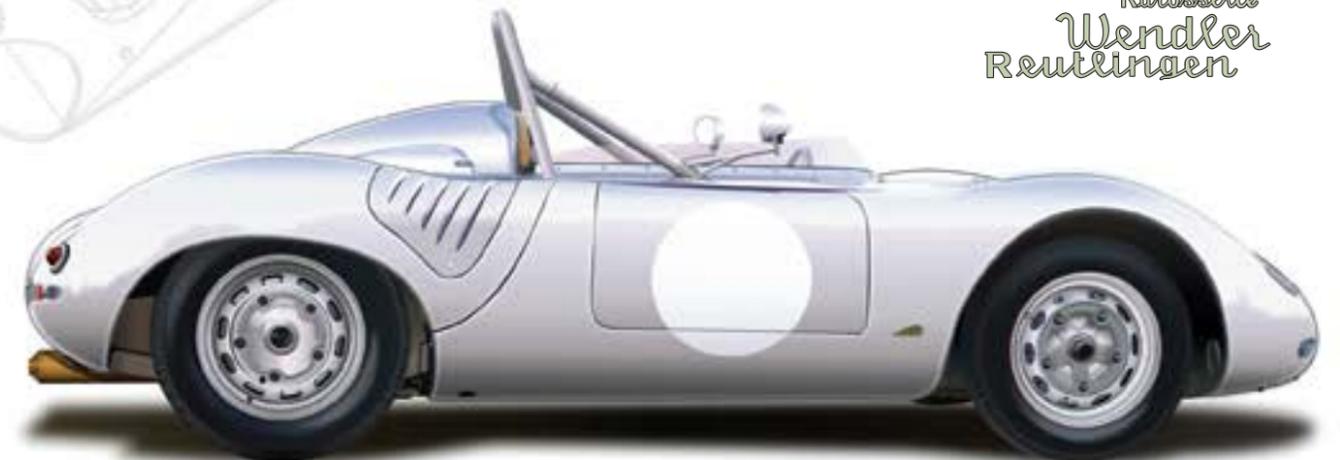


The new design meant the RSK could easily convert to single seater specs, due in great part to the central location of the steering box.

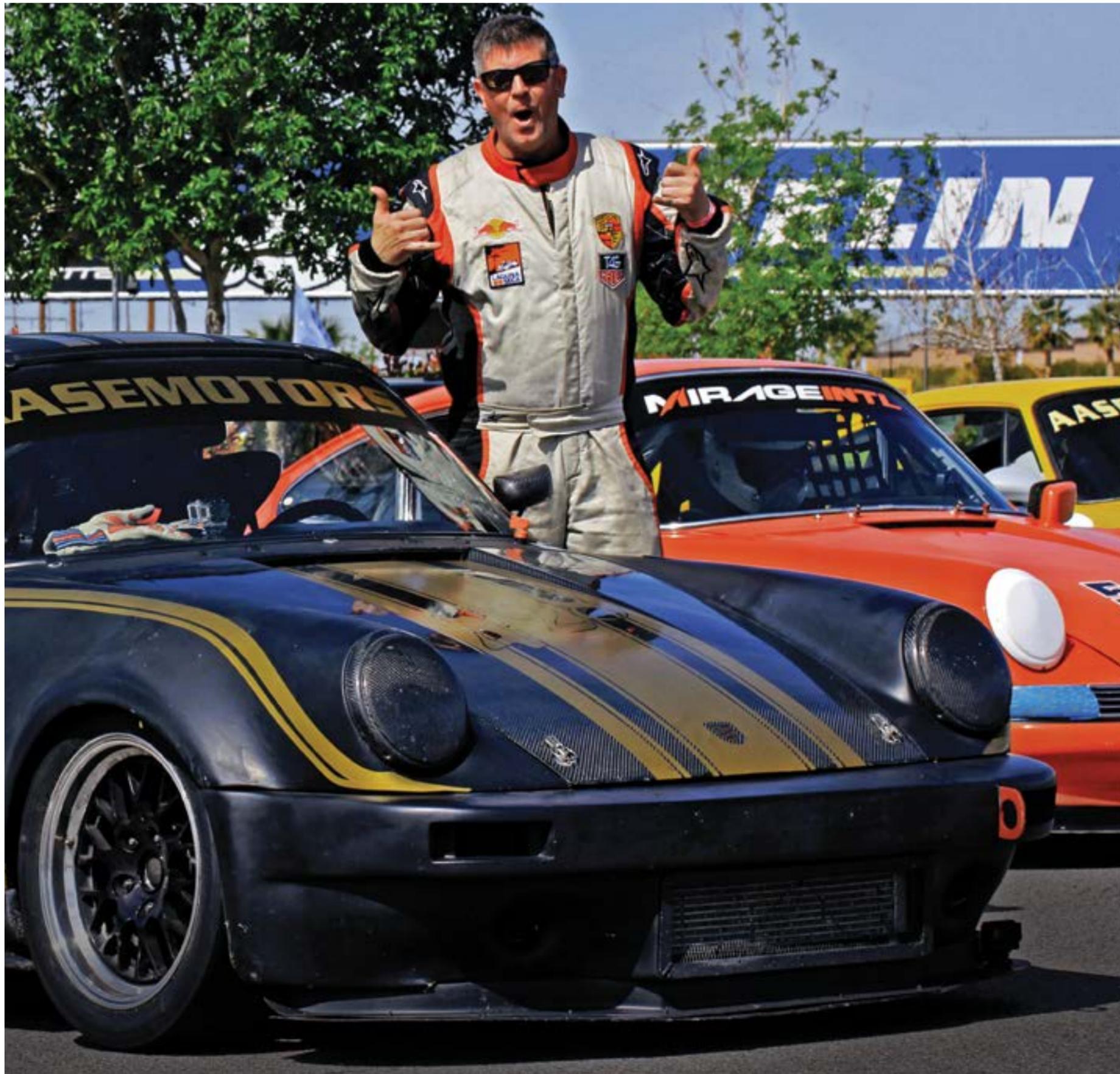
In 1959, Porsche built four RSKs for clients, and one for the factory team that could be easily converted to single seater specs, using mounting points designed to simplify moving the steering wheel, seat and pedals from the left side of the car to the center. ●

The 1959 Porsche 718/2 RSK Spyder was designed for use both as a sports car and a single seater. Based on the 550 series, it became Porsche's first purpose built race car. Designed with center steering so it could serve both purposes, it was initially developed for the 1957 racing season, and displayed a new body design with lower and smoother lines than any of its forerunners.

Although the debut season lacked much to celebrate, Porsche still continued to invest time improving the RSK. Substantial changes were made, both in the front suspension, and in the rear of the car, where Porsche opted to eliminate the conventional swing-axle design. The changes were effective, as the new Porsches were undeniably the fastest cars in their class. 1959 saw the car - with even more tweaks - achieve an overall win at the Targa Florio and a podium finish at the Sebring 12 Hours.



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# 2015 Racing Season Review

Most improved equals most struggle

TEXT BY BRETT GAVIGLIO

*A spotty 2014 showing that saw this mid-packer cut that season short with a spiral fracture in a freak surfing accident, changed into a confident 2015 front row qualifier going on to a Spec Carrera Class Championship. I struggled, getting an excellently prepared AASE air cooled Carrera up to speed. The platform was there to win with: Jeff Erikson, Steve Thiel, and Allen Faragallah of Aase Motors made sure of that with a reliable 911. All I had to do was put gas in #428 and clean the crud off the windshield. Things just sort of started falling into place with nothing to think about except driving faster. It wasn't an accident, it was just more seat time.*

*When Alex Bermudez called this January asking, "Did you hear you won 2015 Most Improved Driver?" it was news to me. It was a surprise to me that people noticed and recognized my struggle to improve, and the hard earned knowledge I gained in my effort to improve as a driver may help others. In this, I would like to humbly recognize the various individuals who were able to show how preparation, mindset, goals, attitude, risk management, time management and even meditation all played a part in a successful racing season. It was a lot of fun, but let's hit the high points and some of the lows, too.*

**LESSON ONE** Winning is a decision. I spent time evaluating and planning out this second season of cup racing. I asked myself for the first time, "What would it take to win a Championship?" Since we could drop six races, a podium would be required in 17 races, and eight to ten of those races needed to contend for top honors. I took a long look at the results of Mike Monsalve, the 2014 Spec Carrera champion. I noticed Mike showed up and raced all the time. That all made sense. I just decided to show up and kick butt as often as possible. I did miss three races at the beginning of the season due to a pressing February snowboarding trip. I took January and February to change the look of the #428 to black and gold to make this run feel and look different. I bought a second set of 17 inch wheels so I could have practice tires and race tires. Then I listened to Mike Takaki and pre-ordered three sets of Kumho's fastest tire, the v710; later there

would be a shortage of this V710 rubber. I had not tried out any of them, but heard the V710 were both faster than the Toyo we used in 2014 as a spec tire. My wife, Winnona, saw the 12 tires piled at our front door in January and commented, "Oh, you bought presents for your toy car!" I also purchased one more set of tires, Yokohama slicks, and built 18 inch wheels to accommodate the best fit for GT4 and try something new. My first GT4 in RED March 14 was at Spring Mountain, and I basically accomplished my GT4 goal for the year on the first race. In doing so, I skipped yet another SCR race, adding to my own mental pressure to win in SCR going forward. By Sunday morning, I got to race in my first of 19 SCR starts for the season. And doing this on my first set of V710 Kumho's ever I raced very hard against Jim Steedman (also on V710 rubber), chasing Steedman's green and white Carrera down and waiting for just one mistake. Jim helped out and made the same error two times in the same corner in both Sunday races, spinning like a top to the dirt and across the track in a fast third gear corner. I got lucky, and was there to capitalize on it with a pair of wins. My PDS student, Randy Perkins, pitted for me the whole weekend through all the changes from GT4 tires to practice tires to race tires. Learning the pace of the GT4 field in Red group on Saturday, then adapting to that pace in the SCR races Sunday made a huge difference in my performance. So did having those V710 tires. My pace on them was within 0.5 second of my pace on slicks. Changing it up really worked.

**LESSON TWO** You can never be sensitive enough, so everything you feel matters. I won a couple races, but the car still didn't feel right. So I began testing alone at Willow Springs in April on some open test and tune days. I was obsessed and never stopped thinking of the car setup. I sensed #428 was locking up the left front wheel in hard braking, and experiencing lane change swerving under braking. It had serious instability mid-corner in turn two at Big Willow. I described these problems to Dwain Dement at Vision Motorsports who went to work trying to figure out what might cause such an imbalance. Moe worked to adjust camber, brake bias, revalve one shock, and replace a bent brake line causing uneven fluid pressure between

Brett Gaviglio enjoying a weekend at Spring Mountain Motorsports Ranch. Photo by Gabriel Alan Photography.

## SCR CLASS

1984 TO 1989  
PORSCHE CARRERA

Spec Carrera is a spec class. That means we all have the same 30 year old air cooled cars and we all have the same amount of rubber on the ground pushed by the same size and horsepower motors finishing at the same weight. We have the same suspensions though you can tune the ride height, camber/caster/toe to your liking. We also have big RSR rear style wings, adjustable sway bars, brake bias and front splitters. With so much locked down, you still have a math problem on your hands, and you can only detect and process one change at a time. Going faster is a very long process of getting more and more seat time to attempt to find out what is wrong with the car and what is wrong with you. Then adjust and repeat. It's a science.

### ENGINE

Stock 3.2 liter flat 6  
Compression: 5:19

### POWER

235 horsepower  
205 ft lb torque

### WEIGHT

2450 lbs with driver

### WHEELS

Front: 17" x 8"  
Rear: 17" x 9"

### TIRES

DOT Hoosier R7  
Front: 245  
Rear: 275

### BRAKES

Stock Carrera brakes  
No ABS  
No Traction Control  
No PASM, Stability control is your butt.  
Limited Slip Differential  
Adjustable front and rear sway bars

### DOWNFORCE

Front: RSR bumper with fixed splitter  
Rear: 3.8 RSR  
Adjustable wing

the front calipers. Listen to Moe and Dwain. Further, I asked Jeff Erikson how my brake bias adjuster worked, and I started dialing that in to bring the desired threshold feel under braking. These adjustments yielded a much better and more stable car under braking, allowing me to push deeper into braking zones. In the case of turn nine at Willow, spurred on by Blair Boyce, I chose not to not brake at all. Even though the car got better I was still worried I might wreck it and render it useless. To relieve my mental block about going off, I also used the April down time and made a spare bumper and splitter setup in my garage with some old parts, fiberglass and resin. Winnona really didn't like the smell of the resin and fiberglass; off to the family therapist to learn more about communication, sensitivity and balance. But the backups did help me get faster knowing I'm free to crash at least once per weekend.

error of his own, and turned his splitter into a plow and left it there at the bottom of Phil Hill. I saw Jim, still 10 seconds ahead mid race as I was closing in at a good rate, maybe 1.5 to 2 seconds a lap. Final lap, down to the wire, I passed Jim on the last turn coming onto the straight to win by about one second. The following day, I offered him my spare bumper, but it wasn't a fit. I went out the next race and won SCR class just racing the GT5 guys, but decided not to push it since they were not in my class I drove around ahead of bumperless Jim but was off my peak pace and felt bored. My mentor Blair Boyce yelled at me a bit about not doing my best, and I took that advice to heart. If you aren't driving a race car on the edge, why are you there?

**LESSON FOUR** Learn to dance. I have the classic engineer dance moves, which means I move like a

track with huge consequences. If you crash it will be into a wall, and a spare bumper won't save your bacon—you'll need a spare car! Treat this place with respect and use smooth lines...that, and go to lunch with guys that know the place. Over lunch with the AASE crew, Kip Waterhouse tells me he uses first gear in turn three. Our cars both have a tall first gear and the corner is perfect for it...that is, if you can learn to heel/toe a 915 trans down to first out of fifth. Thanks Dwain, Moe and Jeff for sorting the brakes out. Thank you, Kip for the tip, and thanks, Winnona for getting me better dancing feet! #428 made it on pole after a day of badly seated Hoosier tires when Bryan from Trackfast fixed another discount tire shop's bad mounting work. The first race saw me get eighth from pole due to a footwork error in front of Kip, and spin

than being an all around great guy who gives back to the sport he loves, Long taught me a few things. He was able to clearly communicate exactly what was expected of me in the endurance race. Knowing what was expected made the race much easier. When things didn't go as planned and parts started falling off our car, Long was the experienced endurance racer and knew just how to handle the situation. His drive and determination in the car and in the pits were infectious. Be like Patrick... attitude plus drive and persistence = success.

**LESSON SIX** Find people better than you and follow them around the track for as long as you can, then work your ass off to beat them.

Chuckawalla—October was very hot. I bought a

he watched my speed increase. Magical. Those other SCR guys all missed a hell of an event. Who cares about whether the guys in class showed. Just being here at Chuckawalla was the real value. Racing is its own reward, especially when you race with guys like Vandecar and Hoffman.

Back at Buttonwillow in October—this time counter clockwise—with a slightly better turnout, but no Jim Steedman (the SCR class leader still hadn't fixed the splitter). I go out and take Blair Boyce's advice from the July race: drive like you want to lap the field every lap. Now, Buttonwillow running counterclockwise is scary fast and full of places to manage precision with smoothness, and I absolutely love it. The surface has so much nuance. Curbs you can drive on, curbs you cannot drive on. Places to



The SCR Group ready for battle at the AutoClub Speedway. Photo by Caliphotography.

**LESSON THREE** So I did just that! In the July heat of a central valley dustbowl, I learned that you can always go faster, then you crash. Then go back and find out why, watching video from all angles to figure out where I went wrong. My video told me same thing my wife tells me: I'm an impatient SOB. At most tracks, I had at least one off per weekend, sometimes multiple offs each day, and most every time early apex or early throttle on oversteer was the culprit. At Buttonwillow running clockwise—a mess of dust, offs, crashes and 13/13s—it was not the finest hour for anyone. There were only a few of us in SCR to brave the heat, so everybody who made it to start saw a podium. I got to race with Jim Steedman again, who was leading the class by far during summer. Jim was a half lap ahead of me as I spun twice trying too hard and being impatient. Then Jim made a mental

robot. If you move like a robot on the dance floor you probably drive like one too. Improvisation, intuition, timing, smoothness and balance are all things that can be programmed into a robot, I mean engineer. I noticed that Winnona was taking quite a liking to salsa dancing. Possibly it was the large volume of sweaty non-car talking men who could actually dance, but in the interest of balance I figured I'd better start showing up before she got a Latin boyfriend. What I learned on the dance floor was amazing, and applied so well to the fluid movements of cup racing. The dance out on the track is real! The better I got at dancing, the better I got at racing as the robot started getting a bit smoother. Hard to explain, but it worked.

I hate Autoclub Speedway. It is a flat, non-technical

due to bad heel toe work. The robot was certainly still alive and well in #428. Races 13 and 14 were won from second place starts both times with the closest and best racing I've had with Kip Waterhouse, John Heldman and Mike Takaki. All this made a nightmare track into one of my favorites by listening to those who know better. Preparing, dancing, and keeping it simple on focus. Still, no help From Trackfast would have meant no wins. Thank you Bryan Shackelford! I bought those guys a lot of beer. Note to self: bring them more!

**LESSON FIVE** Meet your heros, and race with them if you can. Blair Boyce and I got the opportunity of a lifetime in May, racing the Tribute to Le Mans sharing a car with Patrick Long. Other

truck camper truck camper to have a place to stay at the track (or as Winnona calls it, my promise ring to my toy race car). The majority of SCR competitors were a no show, so it was just me and two others, and one of those cars had no third gear, so my purchase of a set of Hoosier R7s in the wake of the Kumho shortage was sort of a waste. I ended up racing against GT5 competitor Jerry Hoffman and GT5's Steve Vandecar. The nighttime desert fell silent once the track went cold, steaks went on the barbeque, and the beer flowed like wine. Steve Vandecar gave me a full track talk on all the ways I was screwing up after following my slow pace for several laps earlier in the day. The next day Steve and his big Yokohama tires could get by. I saw Steve's huge grin in the rear view mirror as

slide the car out and catch it, places to jump the car and wait for a timely landing, and places not to brake where you think you should...and some places that just challenge your will to survive. In short—Buttonwillow is a butt kicker. A second place Saturday after a blocking black flag and subsequent angry win in the afternoon placed me in the lead for the SCR championship for the first time that season. Kip Waterhouse woke up Sunday with a plan. He put his son Drew in to qualify in SCR. Now, Drew Waterhouse is as crazy as he is sadistic when it comes to racing. He decided that simply beating me wouldn't be good enough, so he waited for me to discover his car on the pole in timing. I stopped by to congratulate Kip and ask which side of the start he would prefer. Drew said,

"I'll be driving Kip's car." Our eyes locked, and Drew said, "I'm going to teach you a lesson, Brett. I'll pick the side I want just before the start to keep you guessing. I'll drive away from you and see how long you can hang with me. Then, I'll pull over and point you by, and after that I'll see if you can stay ahead. Then I'll pass you and waive goodbye." Hearing this, I just smiled at Drew and smugly said, "Whatever, good luck." Racers are good planners. Drew did everything as planned. Of course, I appreciated the lesson. And I appreciated driving with someone who had decided to beat me and did. It was a humbling that I needed, as if to say, who cares if you are leading a class, big deal. There are tons of better drivers out there. Keep getting better. It was the perfect message at the perfect time.

Steve Alarcon is a masterful wheelman. Last three races of the year. Everyone has run out of tires. Kip is racing on his ACS and Buttonwillow tires. Alarcon has a fresh set of Kumhos. I have a fresh set of Kumhos, the last set saved for the big end of season showdown. For some reason the V710 is at least one second if not 1.5 seconds faster at Willow's big track. Whatever it is, Alarcon and I are having a dick measuring contest in qualifying and racing, and so far he's winning all the races and I'm winning at qualifying. Unfortunately, no one awards points for qualifying. Mathematically, I don't need to race to win a championship. Jim is the only one who could challenge that and he's not there. Kip could get there, but he didn't buy tires. Alarcon is out for blood and honor. So, there we are laying down 28 flats in qual while competition is doing high 29 on older rubber or different tires. Alarcon and I nipping at each others heels for a tenth. Once the race starts I fall for all the tricks: Alarcon loves to brake with his left foot, just enough that his lights go on and I brake as well going into turn two. Note: you are full pop in fourth gear there, so slowing down feels right, and when you see brake lights a couple feet ahead just before turn in at two, your mind says brake! You're gonna hit him! Next thing you know Alarcon's left foot comes off while his right foot has been firmly planted on the throttle, and he drives away up the hill. When you are fighting for tenths, you don't need to fall for this gag too many times to lose a race. I lost three that way. What I really need is a spotter...someone to tell me to quit being a knob and stop falling for this voodoo.

And those few lessons were good enough for some hardware in my family room. I can't wait to learn more. I did learn more than just these six lessons, but if I told the whole story, it would be too much like a Tarantino movie. ●



Pre-race planking to center driver and pit crew at Autoclub Speedway. Pit Crew Mary Gaviglio and Mya Onishi. Photo by Winnona Gaviglio. Jim Steedman at speed. Photo by Caliphography. Brett chased by POC veteran Kip Waterhouse. Photo by Caliphography

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# New Meets Old

## Performance Driving and Time Attack Series Season Opener

TEXT BY SANDI ISAAC

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CALIPHOTOGRAPHY

Change was in the air for the POC as we began the 2016 Performance Driving and Time Attack Series at Streets of Willow on January 16th and 17th. The club had a new President, Ron Palmer. We had new board members, Mike Skinner and Dave Bruder. We would be using a new corner worker team on the track. And there'd be a new group of volunteers at the morning sign desk for registration.

But then, some things hadn't changed. First and foremost, the Streets of Willow track has remained the cornerstone of our PDS events since the series began. It's the ideal place for both beginner and advanced drivers to hone their technical driving skills. We'd be running clockwise and counter-clockwise over the weekend, so it was like getting two tracks for the price of one. Personnel-wise, we still had Don Matz in charge of the Performance Driving Series series. There was Brad Keegan working as the Time Attack Chairman. Dwain Dement was still our head driving instructor. We had the expertise of Vali



Motorsports taking care of tech inspections. And our good friends at Vision Motorsports and Pro Motorsports would be providing a fabulous lunch both Saturday and Sunday.

**The Streets of Willow track has remained the cornerstone of our PDS events since the series began.**



So the question among inquiring minds headed to Rosamond was...Would this combination of old and new be an efficient, dynamic power source behind the event firing on all cylinders? Or would it all crash and burn before the track went hot at 9 a.m?

But beyond all those factors, would Mother Nature cooperate? I mean, this was January in Rosamond where normally sub-freezing overnight temperatures lay down a slick coat of ice on the cars and the track. Clearly, Big Mama N. approved our first competition



weekend because she delivered *no* freezing temps, *no* clouds and... wait for it... *no wind!* The sun was out and the air temperature was in 60s.

So, as the track went hot in perfect conditions, our drivers in Porsches and non-Porsches (Datsun, Lotus, BMW, Dodge Viper, and... wait for it one more time... A Cadillac station wagon!) were ready to chase down some POC track records. And leave it to Dwain Dement to go after the biggie. Numero uno. The fastest recorded lap ever run by a Porsche Owners Club driver at Streets of Willow. He fell just .4 seconds short of taking that record while nursing a broken transmission. He recorded a fast Time of Day at 1:18.525! Any faster and the FAA would have required Dwain to have a flight attendant and an emergency life vest under the seat in his car.

**AS USUAL, THE MOST COMPETITIVE CLASS OVER THE WEEKEND WAS BOXSTER SPEC (BSR) GROUP WITH BILL VOGEL AT THE TOP OF THE TIME SHEET BOTH SATURDAY AND SUNDAY IN TIME ATTACK.**

Meanwhile in PDS, the group of newcomers to the race track handled their in-car instruction like champs. Fast safe laps were recorded during every session. The coveted PDS trophies were distributed for the top drivers in each class. Some PDS drivers received their final instructor sign off to advance to the Time Attack level for the upcoming event at the Willow Springs Big Track three weeks later.

The POC will bring the Performance Driving Series and Time Attack back to Streets of Willow during the first weekend in June. While we can't predict what will be new then, we do look forward to the same "old" high level of fun and safety that we enjoyed as our season began for 2016. ●

# The Road to Rookie

2015 Porsche Owners Club Rookie of the Year  
Mike Skinner

TEXT BY VELOCITY STAFF | PHOTOGRAPH BY DIRK KIKSTA





Mike's second season started out pretty rough. Maybe learning Willow Springs International Raceway with light snow, sand storms and being in the racers clinic all at the same time wasn't the best idea.

Mike Skinner. Photograph by Caliphotography

*He didn't know at the time it would turn out to be of any importance, but almost two decades after a chance professional meeting in 1996 with a go-getter named Craig Trask, Mike Skinner was on a race track and turning times good enough to be Rookie of the Year in one of southern California's premier club racing organizations.*

As Mike tells it, he and Craig a few others went out and bought mid-eighties Porsches, and had a lot of fun running them around southern California. The '86 Carrera that Mike owned at the time gave him a sense of calm and exhilaration at the same time, and when he was tearing down the 23 in Thousand Oaks, he had to wonder what had ever distracted him from the dreams of racing he had as a youngster. For you see, racing is in his blood: Mike's dad was an accomplished builder of dragsters, owner, and driver in 1970s Texas. After a time, the '86 was gone, but not the dream.

Years later, Mike's friend Marco Gerace invited him and his wife to a party, and encouraged him to bring along his recently acquired 996 GT3. He turned up for the party not really expecting to know many people, but there was Craig—and he was still talking about Porsches.

Mike's first introduction to the Porsche Owners Club was riding passenger with Craig in his green 911 (now owned by fellow racer Chris Thompson) at the Streets of Willow. He remembers thinking "Wow! I have no idea how to do this—but I'll bet I could learn!"

In his first season with the club, Mike focused on Performance Driving Series (PDS), which developed basic track skills, and driving his street legal GT3, managed to achieve several podiums. But as the end of his first season loomed, he decided to de-tune his 996 and enjoy it solely as a prized street-only machine.

The timing was serendipitous. Kevin Favell needed to sell his Boxster, which he and India ran in Time Attack. And he needed to sell it fast. The whole transaction was initiated and finished in about 48 hours. And so was born Mike's GT5. He found a permanent home with Hergesheimer Motorsports, who worked tirelessly to support and help develop Mike's racing program. If he had to choose one person to tell him the truth and show him what to do in a race car, he would look no further than Eric Oviatt. Just about everything Mike knows about what to do in racecar came from Eric.

Mike's second season started out pretty rough. Maybe learning Willow Springs International Raceway with light snow, sand storms and being in the racers clinic all at the same time wasn't the best idea. Or maybe it was. 2014 was a year of learning, reflection, hard work, listening, and being willing to accept constructive criticism and take action. By the time the POC Awards Banquet for 2014 rolled around, Mike had achieved Most Improved Driver.

The third season for Mike was about continued driver development, with some car development along the way. 2015 saw a season of skill development and improvement, especially in qualifying, starts, traffic management, and adapting to changing car and track conditions. ●

*As this issue of Velocity goes to press, Mike is learning in an upgraded platform. Stay tuned to see what comes for the remainder of 2016 and the 2017 season!*