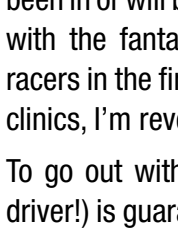
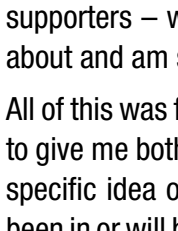
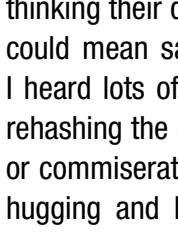
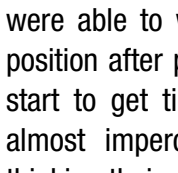
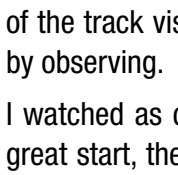
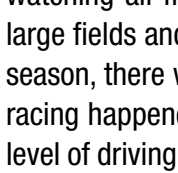
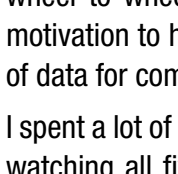




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I can't WAIT to go racing!

Erin Vogel

It starts with, "what is this camber you speak of?" and "just come to the racetrack for one weekend" and "but, I have no interest in racing."

At some point it evolves into "are those dual-adjustable shocks?" and "I'll buy it" and "should I start with a half cage or just go for the full shebang while we've got it apart?"

Then before you know it you're standing at the pit wall at Willow Springs with the arms of your driving suit tied around your waist thinking, "man, I can't WAIT to be out there racing with those guys!!" Cue the 2017 POC Season Opener, and at 60-degrees and mostly sunny it was the perfect weekend to be at the racetrack.

With almost 25 cars in the BSR and BSX classes throughout the race and time attack groups, it was also a great weekend to be a Boxster driver. The competition was fierce, whether it was wheel to wheel or on the timing sheets, and there's no better motivation to hone your skills and your car than having that kind of data for comparison.

I spent a lot of time at the pit wall over the course of the weekend watching all five of the races play out. Perhaps because of the large fields and the fact that this was the first event of the racing season, there were a lot of tight packs and a lot of really exciting racing happened in both race groups. It was great fun to see the level of driving skill and race craft taking place, and with so much of the track visible from the pit wall there was a lot to learn just by observing.

I watched as cars had spins or offs, or maybe just didn't get a great start, then through the right mix of precision and patience were able to work their way back through traffic to make up position after position and end up finishing strong. I saw others start to get tired or flustered and begin to fall back through almost imperceptible inattentions, by losing focus or overthinking their driving, in a tight pack where even a small mistake could mean sacrificing a number of positions. And afterwards, I heard lots of great conversations at impound between racers rehashing the events of their own personal races, congratulating or commiserating, smiling with old friends or making new ones, hugging and high-fiving with their family members and loyal supporters – which is maybe the part of racing I knew the least about and am starting to appreciate the most at the POC.

All of this was fantastic fun to watch, but it also helped immensely to give me both a broader understanding of race craft and a more specific idea of the solutions to any number of scenarios I have been in or will be up against in my own driving and racing. Coupled with the fantastic opportunity to go out and practice with the racers in the first session of each day while I'm between my racer clinics, I'm reveling in all the osmosis I get to take advantage of.

To go out with a pack of cars just like mine (not counting the driver!) is guaranteed to provide at least a few "a-ha!" and maybe even a few "oh shift!" moments. It gives me more to focus on outside of myself and my car, which are often my only companions in time attack, where speed and consistency is valued above all. Practicing with the racers allows me to see new approaches to old problems, highlight and reinforce those areas I'm improving upon, while also pointing out mistakes and affording me a safe space to readjust my programming in those scenarios for which I hadn't considered every variable. It's the valuable opportunity to recognize and practice the adaptability I'll need for racing, but without the pressure of the chase, and my hope is that it's all putting me yet another step closer to being a competent and competitive racer once my own chance to chase the checkered flag arrives.

Man, I can't WAIT to go racing!

See you at the track.

My (Abbreviated) Weekend at WSIR

Steve Thorsen



- New brake pads front and rear – check
- Brake fluid replaced – check
- Brakes and clutch bleed – check
- Brakes bedded in – check
- R&R Oil and Filter - check
- Expired window net replaced – check
- Expired fire bottle recharged – check
- New rubber on all four corners – check

Ready for the 2017 season

Just after lunch on Friday, I arrived at WSIR under gray and cloudy skies. The paddock behind the snack bar was filling up fast as teams took advantage of the Test and Tune day hosted by Willow Springs; I could hear the familiar sound of Porsches making their way around the track. Then the heavens opened and it began to pour down rain. Most of the drivers came right in, but a few hardcore souls stayed out and continued lapping around the track despite the deluge. I decided to take the remainder of the day to prep rather than practice: unhook the trailer from the truck, check-in to the hotel, grocery shop for the weekend, and fetch 'go-go juice' for the race car.

Saturday morning I woke up to a steady rain. The forecast predicted a nice weekend – we'd see about that. I met my buddy in the hotel lobby and we were off to WSIR for another stellar weekend at the track!

When we arrived at 6:00 AM there was already a line at the gate, as it appeared that somebody overslept. Finally, we got into the paddock and began to unload the trailer, setup the EZ Ups®, and uncork the car from the trailer, when "Drivers meeting in five minutes!" came over the loud speaker. We headed to the Driver's Meeting, where my buddy and I sat in the back to watch as familiar faces filled the room.

After the Driver's meeting I had to take the car through Tech Inspection, being one of the few non-Porsches that belong to and attend the POC. Tech went off without a hitch and I headed to registration. Glad to see that the line had diminished, I was quick to register and get my class sticker and wristband. Then my buddy set tire temps and checked lug nuts while I suited up. This past 'No shave November' kinda spilled over into 2017, and since I'm still rocking the facial hair I had to wear a balaclava for the first time.

Ten minutes before my session I started to get belted into the car and headed off to grid. I arrived to see one car hanging back and another in the fast lane, so I turned up into the lane behind the faster car. With time to spare, I pulled off the car and relaxed. After a bit, the starter shouted out the "Five minutes!" call; I fired up the car, held five fingers out the window, and cinched up the belts. As I looked over at the slow lane to see a black 911, I thought, "he's benign looking, but I've seen him before and know he's fast!" I calculated that he'd catch me somewhere around lap 3 or 4.

"One minute!" called the starter. Here we go! Second out in the Time Attack 1 group, I wave to each of the corner workers on the first lap while I heat up the tires and brakes. As I approach Start/Finish I see the green flag wave, and in the back of my mind I hear Daryl Waltrip screaming "Boogity Boogity Boogity!!! Let's Go Racin' Boys and Girls!!!!" I'm such a yutz. . .

The car felt good, and as the tires got up to temp I could really feel them sticking – man I love new tires! I held second position until the third lap; coming into the Omega I could see the black 911 reeling me in, just as I predicted. A short shift into turn seven, and I moved off line to point him by. I tucked in behind him and did my best to see where he was faster, but it only lasted through turns 8 and 9. Somehow he found another zip code down the straightaway – see ya!

After the excitement ebbed, I settled in for the remainder of the session. The car felt good, and I felt good, as I noticed some slower cars ahead. I picked my way around 2 or 3 cars and then had a wide open track in front of me, so it was time to see if I could lay down a fast lap or two. Flying into turn three, I downshifted from fourth to third, thinking, "hmmm, that felt kinda notchy." I didn't dwell on it as I headed up the hill through the Omega and got setup to make the descent into turns five and six. Full throttle, I flew around turn eight, setting up for some light braking in the short chute before turn nine, looking for my landmarks out on the horizon for the turn-in. All felt good, so it was rinse and repeat.

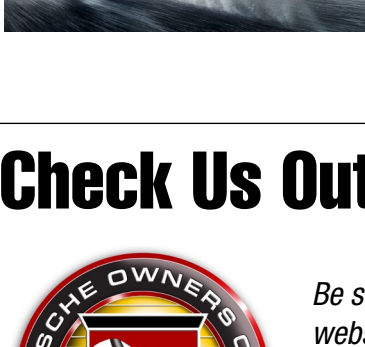
...Or not. As I downshifted again into turn three I couldn't find third gear, or any gear for that matter. All I could do was move off line and coast up the hill, stopping by the corner worker at the top of turn three. Poop! This was a first for me.

I checked my surroundings to make sure I was well out of the way, so that I and my fellow drivers were safe. All clear. As other cars began to pass me I signaled to the corner worker that I needed a tow. The corner worker approached the window to ask if I was alright. I told him that my pride was a bit bent, but I was okay, then asked if I fouled the track with any fluids. He reported back that all appeared to be dry. Phew, at least I wouldn't be 'that guy'.

Eventually I got towed back into the paddock and dropped off just next to my trailer. My buddy's face had that "what did you do?" look, and as soon as I un-bolted myself from the car I told him I lost the transmission and/or clutch. We pushed the car under the EZ Up and began to see if there was any chance we might fix the car and salvage the weekend. Upon further analysis, we ascertained it was either the throw-out bearing and/or the clutch pack. Not a simple job to replace either on a BMW, with the work performed at the track by two senior citizens. I decided to call it a day, and as I pushed the car into the trailer and got ready to head home a few friends poked their heads in to see what happened. I told them my diagnosis, and was glad for their empathy.

As I write this, the car remains in the trailer. Hopefully I'll have it out and on the lift for teardown and inspection in short order. To my fellow POC members: Have fun at Buttonwillow! I hope to be back on the track and see you all at Festival of Speed in April!

Coming Up!



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And, don't miss the Official POC Facebook Page with photos, videos and comments from our members.