



VELOCITY

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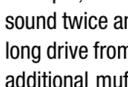
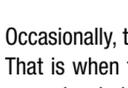
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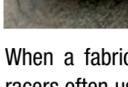
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If a cylinder fires at Laguna Seca does it make a sound?

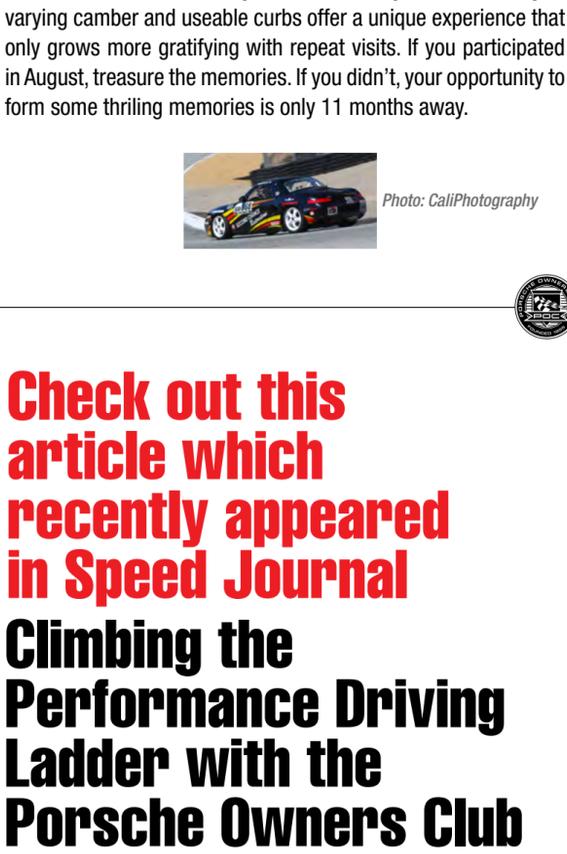
Story and Photos: Joe Wiederholt

Anyone who has been to Laguna Seca knows that it is a special track. It has a rich racing history for both two and four wheeled racers; something that you won't find at Buttonwillow or Chuckwalla. It also has the most iconic corner of any track, anywhere, the Corkscrew. Laguna Seca sits next to a scenic community (Monterey) and sits within the wine country, again, things that you won't find at Willow Springs, Buttonwillow, or Chuckwalla. Finally, Laguna Seca offers a cool climate that provides a refreshing break from the summer heat that most POC members experience each summer. If it weren't for social inertia, I just might consider moving to the area.

Unfortunately, Monterey County offers one more unique characteristic. Even though Laguna Seca has been part of the community for 60 years, it has an uneasy sonic relationship with its neighbors. Over time, homes have slowly encroached on the track. As the homes got closer, the noise complaints increased. To keep the peace, the county rigorously enforces decibel levels for all but 30 days of the year. The majority of the "unlimited" sound days are consumed by major racing series like IMSA and World Superbike. That means that club racers, like the POC, must meet onerous sound limitations to experience the history, community and climate offered by Laguna Seca.

However, while sound limits present a nuisance, they also offer a chance for creativity rarely seen in a racing series governed by strict rules. It is important to note that Laguna Seca sound levels are usually measured by a fixed location sound booth. This sound booth is located to drivers right, going up the hill from turn 5 to turn 6. Consequently, many exhaust solutions exit to drivers left, "throwing" the exhaust away from the sound booth and lowering the measured sound level. I walked around the paddock during the weekend and observed, and photographed, the wide variety of solutions applied to meet the 92-decibel limit. The fabricating skill applied is impressive, although some solutions do have a Rube Goldberg or Frankenstein look to them. I challenge you to find a better-looking collection of baffles, mufflers, and exhaust pipe configurations anywhere.

Occasionally, the exhaust solution doesn't quite make the grade. That is when the spirit of the POC really comes to the fore. For example, during our recent August visit, John Momeyer failed sound twice and was at risk of missing the entire weekend after a long drive from Arizona. Luckily, Scott Craig lent a hand with some additional muffling and John got to compete in all three Boxster Spec races.



When a fabricated solution won't quite meet the sound limit, racers often use their ingenuity to pass the sound test. A little lift prior to the sound booth or a short shift to fourth gear will often do the job. Swinging to drivers left after turn 5 doesn't hurt either. Finally, running in a pack cloaks each car in glorious anonymity, preventing the sound monitor from knowing which car produced the sound level. These techniques are particularly effective for street cars, where exhaust modifications for a single event may not make sense.

All this talk about exhaust systems and sound measurements may make it sound like driving at Laguna Seca is more trouble than it is worth. My personal experience says that nothing could be farther from the truth. Laguna's exhilarating elevation changes, varying camber and useable curbs offer a unique experience that only grows more gratifying with repeat visits. If you participated in August, treasure the memories. If you didn't, your opportunity to form some thrilling memories is only 11 months away.



Photo: CaliPhotography



Check out this article which recently appeared in Speed Journal

Climbing the Performance Driving Ladder with the Porsche Owners Club at Laguna Seca



Laguna Seca 2017...



Photos: Frank Spasaro



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Check Us Out!

Be sure to check out the new POC website for our 2017 schedule of events and to stay current on PDS, Time Attack and Cup Racing standings.

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