

## West Coast Challenge Series Season Opener: Infineon Raceway

The FFR West Coast Challenge Series season opening race was held at the historic and beautiful Infineon Raceway on February 27-28. With rain-threatened skies, and a flurry of last minute preparations still underway, seven spec racers arrived Friday evening, and after a night of driving rain, were ready to take to the track on Saturday morning. Race Group B included American Iron, Camaro-Mustang Challenge, and Factory Five spec races, and all drivers hit the track at 8:05 AM for a warm-up in a steady rain. It was apparent right from the first lap that the "off-season" had resulted in a bit of pent up energy among the racers, as a number of competitors in other classes ended up racking their cars in the warm-up session (FFR drivers came through with no off's and did a good job of avoiding the carnage on track)....As Forum member AC Mikee had predicted, it was a very busy morning for the trackside tow/rescue workers/vehicles.

Challenge Series drivers Rick Anderson, Rich Norgrove, Jeff Awender, Tom Coon, Tim Konkol, Sern Clementson (first race!) and Karen Salvaggio were ready for the first competition session of the season. Still needing his final checkride, Sern would be running in Group 4 for the day, and would have 2006 West Coast Challenge Series Champion and Nor Cal instructor driver Donnie Edwards helping with the checkride later in the day. The rain had subsided by mid-afternoon, however the track was still wet during qualifying, and adding to the fun was the fact that the course had been set up to run in the "long" configuration, which meant Turn 7 was elongated with a greater than 90 degree trackout before heading into the esses and down the hill.

### Saturday Qualifying Results:

Karen Salvaggio	2:00.435
Rich Norgrove	2:01.049
Rick Anderson	2:01.353
Tim Konkol	2:06.180
Jeff Awender	2:11.291
Tom Coon	2:39.151

While waiting for their 3:45 PM green flag, spec racers were very pleased to have a number of local forum members, along with several members of the Nor Cal Shelby Club make the trip out to be with them at the track. It was very cool to have so many supporters and friends at the track this weekend!



When the green flag fell, it quickly became evident that all racers had arrived with top notch equipment, and that each had their eye on the checkered flag and that coveted first victory of the season. Karen, Rick, and Rich accelerated up the hill and battled for the top three spots throughout the first several laps.



Tim, Jeff and Tom diced their way through the race, and all set their personal-best times in the race. By mid-race, Karen had pulled into a comfortable lead and as the laps ticked off, had settled into a comfortable pace, until, with just a few laps remaining, relentless competitors Rick Anderson and Rich Norgrove appeared once again in her mirror. Meanwhile, racer Tom Coon was having a battle of his own deep in the pack, having drag raced in a mixed pack of spec racers, American Iron and Camaro-Mustang Challenge series racers. As the group approached Turn 7, a sudden slowing of the pack resulted in several racers taking evasive action to avoid a car that had fallen off the pace. Unfortunately, Tom Coon was caught in the middle of the melay, and after having to quickly lock up of the brakes to avoid disaster, his car sustained a pretty solid "brush" with the wall. A bent rim and the wheel well rubbing resulted in some scrapes and loss of paint, but otherwise he survived unscathed....Fortunate for

sure.....Toward the end of the race, Rick slowly closed the gap on Karen, but when the checkered flag fell, it was Karen taking the win by a narrow .122 second margin over Rick Anderson. VERY close racing!

### Saturday Race Results

1 <sup>st</sup>	Karen Salvaggio	1:59.269
2nd	Rick Anderson	1:59.147
3rd	Rich Norgrove	1:59.282
4th	Tim Konkol	2:02.262
5th	Jeff Awender	2:05.556
6th	Tom Coon	2:19.293

Saturday evening would find the racers at the FFR BBQ, which was generously provided by the amazing Anderson Family.....What would racing in the "Wine Country" be without cracking open a few bottles of local vino, munching on some cheese and crackers, and then following it up with some awesome BBQ chicken with all the trimmings. Racers shared "war stories" from the day, and enjoyed each other's company. The group was very pleased to welcome special guest Bill Pierce, and the evening wrapped up with Jeff Awender bringing out his own personal popcorn-making machine, and firing up the iSIM

racing set up.....As the evening wore on and the cold Bay Area air filtered into the encampment, racers headed into the trailers, and enjoyed some simulated racing action (along with liquid festivities) well into the night.....Needless to say, a good time was had by all!!!!



**Rich Norgrove making some "precision" adjustments**

Sunday Qualifying race would be based on Saturday's finishing results, however, to add greater challenge (and a degree of fun), the field would be inverted. This placed Tom Coon on the pole, with Jeff Awender on outside pole and a field of racers nipping at their heels when the flag fell. All racers battled their way up the hill, and at the exit of Turn 2, it was Jeff Awender in the lead, with Karen, Rick, Rich, Tim and Tom all nose to tail in close succession behind....Karen chased Jeff down and made the pass for the lead a few turns later. All racers drove clean, great lines, and close battles were witnessed throughout the field.

**Sunday Qualifying Race Results**

1st	Karen Salvaggio	1:56.798
2nd	Rick Anderson	1:56.141
3rd	Rich Norgrove	1:56.279
4th	Jeff Awender	1:56.839
5th	Tim Konkol	1:58.508
6th	Tom Coon	2:12.870



**Tim Konkol returns to West Coast racing**



Sunday Race found Rick Anderson with the pole position with his 1:56:141 laptme from the morning qualifier. Racers Tim Konkol, Jeff Awender, and Tom Coon had again set personal best times in the previous session, and it was obvious that this group was on a mission to "learn" the track and improve their performance in every session. Sern Clementson joined the Series racers for Sunday's race, having successfully completed his checkout session with

Donny Edwards earlier in the day. At the green, the spec racers drag raced up the hill to Turn 2, with pole sitter and series veteran Rick Anderson pulling into the lead at the top of the hill. Karen Salvaggio and Rich Norgrove drove the fire out of their cars, keeping pressure on their fellow competitors, and looking for even the smallest of opportunities to pass. Tim and Jeff battled for position throughout the race, Tom Coon set his fastest lap to date, and Sern Clementson completed his first race, proving that he too will be a contender in the future....After battling nose to tail for the entire race, Rick Anderson made the smallest of bobbles in Turn 4 on the white flag lap, and with Karen just inches behind him, took advantage, pulled alongside, and the two drag raced into and all the way through the Carousel....As the two raced up the hill, Karen moved to the inside and secured the lead....At the checkered, it was Karen for the win, with Rick a narrow .236 seconds back.....

### **Sunday Race Results**

1st	Karen Salvaggio	1:55.882
2nd	Rick Anderson	1:55.926
3rd	Rich Norgrove	1:55.457
4th	Jeff Awender	1:58.138
5th	Tim Konkol	1:58.934
6th	Sern Clementson	2:04.725 (1st Race!!)
7th	Tom Coon	2:11.509

The season opener was awesome, and with the results now in the books, racers have their sites set on the next event, which takes place at California Speedway, March 13-14, 2010. The group did itself proud this weekend, and all drivers competed with integrity and great skill. In spite of the rain and busy on track conditions, all racers took their race cars home ready to do battle at the next event! With a great mix of veteran racers and talented new drivers, this season promises to be highly competitive!

**Our awesome Nor Cal Safety Crew!!!! These folks know how to have some fun!!!!**

