

## **Willow Springs Race Report May 22-23, 2010**

A late spring blast of cold air and blustery winds swept across the high desert and dominated the race weekend at Willow Springs. Temperatures dropped into the 30's as racers arrived on Friday evening, and the group faced sustained winds of 30 mph and gusts well into the 50 mph range as they set up their pit areas. Challenge Series racers Rick Anderson, Mike Beeler, Ron Stebles, Tim Konkol, Tom Coon, TC McNett and Karen Salvaggio found shelter for their rigs between the very few buildings at Willow and hunkered down for the night. The morning brought sunshine, but truly brisk weather, forcing racers to don all their race gear for the 8:00 AM warm-up session.

This would be the first trip to the legendary Willow Springs Raceway for Ron Stebles, Tom Coon and Tim Konkol. Each set out in the first session to learn the twisting, over-the hill Omega (Turns 3, 4 and 5), and dug deep to keep their foot planted in the throttle (while your survival brain is telling you to lift) through the sweeping and downright attention-getting Turns 8-9.

Rick Anderson would set fast time in the warm-up, posting a 1:38.373, followed by TC, Karen, Mike, Tim, Ron and Tom. The winds eased a bit by the 10:30 AM qualifying session. The Challenge Series racers would run in Race Group A with the Camaro-Mustang Challenge (CMC), Spec Miata, and 944 Spec racers for the weekend, which would provide lots of on-track action. TC would prove he was still on a march to sweeping the Series by backing-up his impressive CA Speedway performance by setting a new track record in the qualifying session. His smokin' fast 1:35.839 would shatter the previous track record held by Robert Walter by close to 3/4 of a second, and leave the rest of the Challenge Series racers to vie for the remaining positions. Karen would post the next best time with a 1:36.252, followed by Rick (1:37.382), Mike (1:38.838), Tim (1:42.129), Ron (1:47.257), and Tom (1:48.521).

The Challenge Series racers would take the third green flag, behind the Spec Miatas and CMC racers. At the green flag it would be TC and Karen drag racing all the way down the front straight, nose to nose, side by side, into and through Turn 1, still battling it out all the way to Turn 2 when Karen would pull into the lead. Rick Anderson would slip into third place, with Mike, Tim, Ron and Tom all battling it out. Karen would hold the lead for several laps until TC got a great run on the front straight and pull ahead into Turn 1. In the meantime, Mike Beeler would be pushing hard in a great battle with Rick and just ahead of Tim and Ron, when a little too much throttle in Turn 1 sent him into a spectacular 720 spin. Mike recovered quickly, and now redoubled his effort to reel in Tom, Ron and Tim and get back in the race. Tim, not wanting Mike to be alone in his track adventures, decided he too would attempt a spectacular entry into a turn, only to find that Willow often has other ideas about how much speed one can carry into a turn...No harm, no foul though, and he quickly got back up to speed.

Within a lap the group would catch the CMC cars, and soon enough the spec racers were embedded in the Spec Miatas as each racer fought hard for position. Late in the race, Tom Coon had an unexpectedly rude encounter with the lead Miatas. Tom had worked hard to build his skills throughout the day, and found himself directly in front

of the three lead Miatas as the group entered Turn 2. Tom knew they were coming and tracked wide to allow two cars to pass so as to not interfere with their class battle...Unfortunately, two wide wasn't good enough, and one of the spec Miatas decided to punt Tom not once, or twice, but three times as they swept through Turn 2. Needless to say, Tom was less than pleased with the sportsmanship shown him. When the checkered flag fell, it was TC for the win, followed by Karen, Rick, Mike, Tim, Ron and Tom.

All cars reported to impound following the race, where all cars were weighed, and tech officials pulled hoods to check fuel pressure and timing per the dyno sheets. Unfortunately, both the #33 and #10 registered fuel pressure that varied more than allowable, and both were disqualified.

The winds continued throughout the day, and by nightfall, the group was ready to get away from the track and enjoy each other's company at the local watering hole. Andy was tapped to "drive the bus" over to the Golden Cantina, where all enjoyed a wind-free, warm setting with good food shared among racing friends...Of course, the on track adventures of the day were discussed, with Mike and Tim securing the spin and win shooters award for the day....We had 16 people for dinner, and everyone had a great time...Hey Andy, "Move that bus!"

### **Sunday Race**

Racers were up at the crack of dawn and ready for another assault on the high speed Willow Springs track for their 8:00 AM warm-up. Qualifying would find the group in an inverted grid, taking the green flag with the CMC cars. Tom Coon would pace the cars to the green. It was a clean start, with Karen, TC and Rick rocketing to the front. Mike, Tim, Ron and Tom would fly cleanly through Turns 1 and 2, and by Turn 3, it was Karen in the lead, followed by TC, Rick, Mike Tim, Ron and Tom....The group would race in that order for 3 laps, until a Honda crashed in Turn 3 and high-centered himself in the impact zone, which resulted in an abbreviated session. Karen would take the win, set fast time in the session, and earn pole for the afternoon race.

In the main race, it would be Karen on the pole, with TC outside pole, followed by Rick, MIke, Tim, Ron and Tom. The Spec Miatas would take the first green just ahead of the Challenge Series racers in what became a harried and chaotic start sequence.....The green fell for the Miatas, and as they drag raced down the front straight to Turn 1, the CMC and Challenge Series pack would be pacing to their green flag....Before the Challenge cars could get a green, the Spec Miatas had a spectacular pile-up in Turn 1, with cars spinning into the dirt and scattering like quail....The Challenge Series drivers could see the carnage just ahead, and a yellow flag was waving at start-finish....Everyone stayed in a tight pack, and continued pacing down the front straight, when suddenly the starter waved the green flag for the racers.....Yikes!!! The group was going to speed into a pile-up at the end of the front straight....Well, TC and Rick were ready on the throttle, and got a tremendous jump on the pack....TC was in the lead by Turn 1, with Rick close behind, followed by Karen, Mike, Tim, Ron and Tom.....Everyone raced through a pile of dirt and rocks that had been scattered on the track in Turn 1, being pelted with rocks and debris, and avoiding the car and safety trucks just off the racing surface. Karen got a good run on Rick into Turn 3, made the pass, and settled in to chase TC up the hill; with Rick motoring close behind....Tim and Ron would dual the entire race, having the best race of the season. They swapped positions several times, and gave each other a classic run for the money.....Great racing!!!

Karen would dog TC for the entire race, and the finish would find TC taking the checker, with Karen crossing just 8/10ths of a second behind....Rick would take third, followed by Mike, Tim, Ron and Tom.....The Challenge Series racers started 24th and farther back on grid, and would finish 3rd and 4th overall in the race group, passing nearly everything on track....In the heat of battle, and while chasing TC, Karen would set the fast time in the race, and set a new track record, posting a wicked fast 1:35.795

The Challenge Series racers put on a great show, racing clean and fast all weekend. Given the speed disparity of the cars on track, the on track carnage, and the large amount of traffic, everyone should be very, very proud of their accomplishments! Awesome driving!!!

#8 Tim Konkol Video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHhwqjVxmg>

Next up: Infineon Raceway, June 26-27, 2010