

Kaiser clinches East Coast Championship – Karen comes East to do battle – Tom joins the party – All for record setting temperatures and HOT racing at VIR – in the VIR Sweaty Summer Slam!

Seven Challenge Series cars made the trek to VIR with Karen & Andy Salvaggio taking the honors for coming all the way from the West Coast . It was a treat to have Karen join us. Tom Lavell joined the fun for his first race in a Challenge Series car, after racing Porsche 944s. By the end of the weekend his smile went almost ear to ear – I'll tell you why. And, Wayne made major reductions in lap times and his smile almost matched Tom's. Jim had the "fuel" delivery gremlin show up again & that kept him out of the second race – but it sure didn't keep him from going fast in Saturday's race. Carl learned a "significant" lesson (during the Saturday race) because he forgot to torque the left front lug nuts after replacing a cracked rotor – talk about unwanted vibration. That cost him two places by checkered flag time. John got over the braking "gremlins" that he addressed at BeaveRun and had the "electrical bug" show up – you know, replace just about everything – distributor, coil, wires, etc. etc until the poor performance stopped. Karen and Andy did a bunch of modifications with springs and setup to get used to the track – and Karen adapted to going fast very quickly. Tom had a "starter problem" on the restart of Saturday's race that kept him from starting (the second time) - more to come on that, Paul didn't seem to have any problems and just "flew" around the track winning both races .

Chris Cobetto, the NASA Mid-Atlantic Director was nice enough to change the starting line-up and let us start as a separate group just like Brian arranged at BeaveRun – that turned into a cluster We ended up for some "3-wide" excitement in the first corner as we all rushed to get there first. Karen dove right into the middle of the gang. Saturday's qualifying saw Paul at a blistering 2:12.744, John in 2nd with a 2:15.161, Jim at 2:15.234 (he had turned a 2:13.7 in earlier practice when it was cooler – maybe only 88 instead of 102 degrees). Karen had a 2:17.272, Carl at 2:17.439, Wayne at 2:25.488, and Tom at 2:31 and change. After the first lap, the race was black flagged because they had screwed up the grid positions and we all had to line up and do it again. By the time we went to restart, Tom's starter had disappeared – so to speak. So, now there were only 6 of us. The first corner was 3 wide again with Karen, John and Carl fighting for space. Paul and Jim ran off, but Paul's 2+ seconds a lap speed differential, and faster car drafting technique allowed him to pull away. John got ahead of Karen, and Carl continued to press and eventually after a super draft on the back straight was able to get buy. Then the dreaded "loose nuts" syndrome set in and Karen caught up and passed Carl. Carl pulled into the pits just as the checkered flag dropped and he was relegated to the "back of the pack". It was a great race – considering all the "issues" and everyone tried to find some cool place to hide – IT WAS AWEFULLY HOT! We all missed the awards dinner and headed for A/C wherever we could find it.

Sunday dawned with temps about 88 degrees and the forecast "record breaking" temperatures around 102 degrees. Qualifying saw Paul in front in the 2:13's, Jim and John next in the 2:14's, Karen and Carl next in the 2:16's and Wayne at 2:20.456 (4 seconds better than Saturday) and Tom at 2:24.647 (7 seconds better – can you see the big smiles)? Jim had fuel pickup or delivery problems during qualifying and worked diligently to fix it. He thought he had, but the car wouldn't start to go to grid, so again it was down to 6 cars. The start saw the usual rush to the first corner and Karen managed to get in front

of John with Carl, Wayne, and Tom following. By turn 5, just before the esses, Carl managed to get by John in pursuit of Karen. It took a couple of laps, but a BMW at Oak Tree provided the draft to get by Karen. She was later clipped by a Porsche and spun off track and Wayne almost caught up. A major accident in the esses, with a Corvette into the tire wall and Armco, brought out the double yellow flags and a couple of laps of follow-the-leader through the debris. The race was eventually black flagged and the results were set with Paul 1st, Carl 2nd, John 3rd, Karen 4th, Wayne 5th, and Tom 6th.

Since this was the 10th Anniversary of the Challenge Series, the points were double counted. Since we decided to take the top 8 finishes, and Paul had won them all, he earned the coveted East Coast Championship. Now it is up to the rest of the gang to fight for 2nd and 3rd place.

By Carl Thompson