

SCCA Race Weekend January 30 & 31, 1993

Taking advantage of Hawaii's fabulous year round climate, SCCA Hawaii Region wasted no time in kicking off its 1993 season with a Driver's School on January 30 followed by a Regional Race on January 31. Coinciding with Superbowl Sunday made staffing more difficult than usual but M.G. Lewis, the very capable Regional Executive and Chief Steward, aided by his dedicated staff, did a commendable job in making sure that things ran smoothly.

Saturday's school added eight more drivers to the growing pool of Hawaii Region's licensed drivers. Successfully completing their school requirements were Mike Oakland, Billy Whitford, Todd Hunter, Michael Fox, Joyce Hsieh (Hawaii Region's first licensed female driver), Mark Weaver, Lee Jensen, and Scott Schulte. Also participating for the sake of practice time only in a rented school Spec Racer was Craig McLaughlin, a mainland licensed driver vacationing in Hawaii. What a great way for racers to vacation in Hawaii!

On Sunday, the serious fun began with the morning practice and qualifying. The nine car open wheel field was the largest yet for Hawaii's fledgling race program. The action was fast and furious as the afternoon's races began. Jumping into the lead on lap three was Tom Bryant in the #21 Formula Mirage while polesitter Mike Oakland held onto a solid 2nd in the other Mirage. Behind them, Bob Sato lead the pack of Formula Fords to a strong 3rd overall with Steven Lee not far behind in his Merlin Formula Ford. Somewhat further back, the school Fords of Tom Ito, Joyce Hsieh, Tom Burke, and Stephen Hirasuna battled for position. Ito, Joyce, and Burke completed the 18 lap event in 6th, 7th, and 8th overall respectively.

The next group to race were the five Spec Racers with a D Sports Racer and a Datsun 510 included to accommodate a second driver. This turned out to be one of those races you just had to see to believe as the Spec Racers driven by Lee Jensen and our mainland guest Craig McLaughlin waged an intense battle from flag to flag. After numerous lead swaps, Craig emerged the victor on the last lap after driving side by side with Jensen the entire back half of the track. A daring maneuver on the last turn allowed him to nose ahead to take the checker. A disappointed but much admired Lee Jensen took 2nd in this nail-biter while further back, Moses Miranda drove his rented Spec Racer to a solid 3rd in one of his best races. Finishing 4th and 5th were Gary Tamura and Mark Weaver in his first race. Owen Farrior arrived 6th overall driving Bill Gibson's GT-3 Datsun while Paul Schwartz nursed his smoking D Sports Racer home to finish 7th overall.

The 3rd and last Regional Race group to get underway consisted of Hawaii's contingent of converted street cars. The attrition took its toll in this 18 lap race with John Shrum tearing apart a wheel on his TR-6 midway through the race and forcing him to abandon the car at the exit of turn one. Bill Hill also was forced to call it a day prematurely as he returned his Mazda Rx-7 to the paddock area with mechanical problems. Chief Instructor Jack Roos showed everyone the correct way to drive a race as he once again executed a flawless drive in his Porsche 944S leading from flag to flag with Art Sonen giving chase as he

struggled in vain to overcome the formidable Porsche's horsepower advantage and stay with Jack. Finishing a distant 3rd was Bill Gibson in his immaculate GT-3 Datsun 510 who drove a good, steady race but was simply outgunned by the bigger-engined Porsche and 240Z.

With the conclusion of the "official" Regional Races, two 5 lap sprint races were ran for those wishing and still able to participate. The first race was held for the open wheel cars, and all nine Formula cars returned to take their place on the pre-grid. Predictably, the two Mirages jumped into the lead at the fall of the green flag, but relentless in his pursuit of the faster Mirages, Bob Sato pushed his modified Formula Ford to the limit resulting in a first lap spin in turn one. Then on the same lap the lead Mirage driven by Mike Oaklaud lost its grip due to cold tires which caused it to spin and bounce off the guardrail. The race continued with that section of the track under yellow. Oakland's crash and Sato's spin allowed Tom Bryant to cruise to an easy victory in the other Mirage. Meanwhile, Sato charged his way back through the Ford pack but ran out of time before he could complete the task to finish 4th overall. Todd Hunter was 2nd overall and the 1st of the "Club" class Fords to finish while Steven Lee captured 3rd overall. Rounding out the finishers were Tom Ito, Joyce Hsieh, Tom Burke and Steve Hirasuna in their rented Club Ford class cars finishing 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th respectively.

The long weekend's final event was the second 5 lap sprint race open to Spec and Sports Racers, and converted street cars. Of the converted street cars, only Art Sonen and Bill Gibson in their Datsuns lined up to challenge the fiberglass-bodied sports racers. It pitted the superior horsepower of the 240Z against the agility of the more nimble Spec Racers. The horsepower advantage enabled Sonen to jump immediately into the lead as the green flag fell, but by the time they exited the first corner, the Spec Racers driven by Craig McLaughlin and Lee Jensen had slipped inside of him to retake the lead. Sonen gave chase and overtook Jensen as the Spec Racer fell victim to the 240Z's superior power on the long main straightaway. Again, the horsepower of the Z-car enabled Sonen to catch up to and repass Craig on the last lap to take the checkered flag for the win. Finishing behind Craig McLaughlin were the Spec Racers of Lee Jensen in 3rd spot and Gary Tamura in 4th. Mark Weaver took 5th and Moses Miranda finished 6th after an early lap spin sent him to the back of the pack. Finally, coming in 7th overall was Bill Gibson in his Datsun 510 which seemed to be on the short side of the horsepower vs. handling equation.

After the conclusion of the days events, the racers and workers gathered at Hawaii International Racing School's building for refreshments and award ceremonies. There was unanimous praise and compliments heaped on the workers, drivers, officials, and crew as the jubilant gathering celebrated a safe, successful, and exciting weekend of racing activities. This was very uplifting and encouraging for all of those who worked so hard to bring Hawaii Region's fledgling racing program to fruition over the past two years and a harbinger of more to come.