

Lee Robinson's Storyland Weekend – April 26, 2009

What an up and down W/E!!!

It starts off with me thrashing on the BMW, trying to stop a water leak, on Friday night, hoping to get to CMC's event at Storyland. I got it all together and running. Still had a water leak. So I drained the system down. Pulled off the water neck. Cleaned it all up. Put a very thin coating of silicone to both sides of the gasket, and reinstalled it. While tightening it down, I cracked the neck, AW CRAP. Now I'm not going to run the car at CMC.

I call my Buddy Dennis Kane up and tell him what just happened. He says jump in with Matt and me, we will be trailering up the Civic. I agree to join them. Not too excited to be the third driver on the poor little Civic though.

When we all arrive at Storyland, I see that Butch King is there with his Bad Ass Blazer. I talk with him about the Blazer. He said that the Blazer ran hot, and that he bent a left front strut bar on Saturday. Over night he put in a stronger strut rod and did some shroud work. I asked him if I could run his Blazer also, and he agrees to let me, WHOO HOO.

He was an odd numbered car, so I got an even number, so we would not be in the same run group. Wouldn't you know it, they run even's first. That means I go first, Butch gets to watch. My first run was timid with Butch in the passenger seat. When my second run comes up, Butch says "get it to third gear"! OK.

I leave the line, pull second, HAY HOOO. I get into the Slalom and into third, ya were cook'n now. Make the left for up the hill to the top lot, everything is great. Truck is under me and all is good. A long sweep right, and down the hill to the bottom lot. At the bottom of the hill it is a right into the bottom lot. OK, tap the breaks, set the front, turn in and hit the gas. I think to myself that went well. OK, now comes the pinch to slow you up for the finish. It is a small right, very quick left, very quick right, and left for a flying finish. Well when I went to make the first turn to the right, I could not get over enough, and I clipped the inside cone for the left. I thought, that was strange, I think I went to full lock right. Oh well, now it's time for the next right, Again I cannot get over to the right and clip the inside cone on the second left, I think I went to full lock right there also. What is going on here? Oh well, now it is a flying left for the finish. I make that turn like I'm on rails. Butch is working finish. I cross the line and get onto the breaks, the Blazer turns dead Left and I hit a cone in the stop box. Now I know that I have a major problem. I pull out of the box and stop, get out and get Butch and tell him that there is something wrong with the left front. There is a major pull to the left. He looks at the spacing of the front tire in the fender-well. The tire is pushed back, almost touching the rear of the fender opening. He said that the strut rod had bent and to take the Blazer down to the hauler. On my way back to the hauler, I had to turn right and discovered that I only had about half the turning radius to the right, hence the cone killings. (*Video of Lee in the Blazer: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ARC1AiZ4erQ>*)

Major downer. I broke the Blazer!! I go and talk with Butch, he seems to not be too upset about it. We talk it over, and conclude that he would have broken it on his first run.

OK, I guess I'm done for the day, and I go out to work a station. My work group is done and it is time for the evens to do their last runs. I see someone I know from CMC and ask if I can drive his CRX. He says yes, but the seat is not adjustable. I tell him thanks and I will think about it.

A minute later, here comes Howard and Elaine Roundy. Howard had just finished his first runs. He asked me what I was going to drive, now that I broke the Blazer. I shrug my shoulders and said I don't know. He reaches into his pocket, pulls out his keys, and hands them to me, smiles and says have fun. "Are you sure?" He responds, ya. I look to Elaine, "are you sure?", she responds, yes, it's ok.

Holy crap, I get to drive the Lotus!!!!

I get everything squared away with CMC, and I am now entered in the Lotus. My runs in the Blazer are voided, so now my Lotus times will count.

I have driven the Lotus before, but that was three years ago on street tires. It had a big understeer. You had to really use the throttle to get it to turn. Howard now has some super sticky Hoosier A6s. Now it is time for my first run. All goes well, Holy crap this thing is handling great. My time was like 47.5 I thought to myself, I can go lots faster here and there, and do this, and that, for the next run. When I park, Howard's rival, Richard Nye in an MR2 from CMC asks what my time was. I tell him, and his eyes get big. "That was your first run?" He says he is at 46.4.

Time for my second run. I take Den's daughter, Sam with me for the run. The time was 46.2. I think that I can go faster here, and do that there... I park, and Richard asked what the time was. I tell him, he is clearly not happy. I go and look at his times. I see why he is not happy. I am quicker than him and FTD. People are congratulating me on a great run!!

For the third and last run for me. I offer to take Matt's girl friend with me. She has been around with both Matt and his dad, Dennis in their Civic. She knows how fast it was in the Civic. She knows that it is yet even faster in the Lotus. She is hesitant. I tell her that it is like a roller coaster ride. Sam pipes up and says that "if you don't go, I am going again!" So Sara decides to come along. While we are in line, I tell her that we will be going all out for Fastest Time of the Day. She looks at me wide eyed, as to say are you nuts! This is her first AutoX event ever.

Now it is time for my run. I pull to the line, and GO! We are off, I shift to second. The first tight 90 left is here. I am a little too fast, and a small under-steer is felt. The immediate right into the slalom is no problem. We rip down the slalom and into the left for uphill to the top lot. A little left foot break, back on the gas and turn left, up the hill we go, wide open. We are flying. No lift for the left at the top of the hill into the top lot. In the top lot there is that long right. If you get it right, the exit is not a problem. But if you are too far to the right, you will have to lift to get around the last gate. Ok, now I have to break, and turn Right, back on the gas wide open. I get it right, we are out of the last gate, and we are now flying down the hill for the bottom lot. In the middle of the downhill is a big bump. Cars that did not stay to the far left on the downhill were getting air! I stay left and get to the bottom of the hill wide open. Right into the bottom lot and straight through the two half "Chicago boxes". Break for the finish sequences, turn in for the first left and back to full throttle for the following right and left sweep into the stop. Holy crap, are my hands shaking. Sara isn't talking. The time... 45.104.

I park, everyone is talking. Howard finds me. That was FTD. I tell him, ya, but now you get to go and top me.

I help Howard get ready to go out for his runs. He tells me that I have FTD in the bag. (*I could only manage a 46.0, Howard*)

I am again congratulated on having FTD by some CMC folks. I think to myself, ya but, there is still a whole run group to go! Then, Chris, the guy that runs the yellow Saab from CMC says to me that I cannot run the Lotus anymore, he was joking, I think.

Time for awards.... I take the class along with "FTD", which is usually reserved for the go carts. I also get an award for "Fast Fender", given out to the fastest full fendered car and "Fast Factor" for the fastest PAX adjustment time. I get four awards. I only got three runs!

So, I have many thanks to send out....

Thanks to Dennis Kane for offering up his Civic.

Thanks to Butch King for allowing me to run in his awesome Blazer. I feel sooo bad that it broke on me. Butch did not even get to run it himself.

Super thanks to Howard Roundy for offering up his Lotus. Sorry, but I just had to feel what FTD was all about!

You can see a run by Chris with his Yellow Saab Sonnet, notice his telemetry, way cool.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jl7FXX7oRkA>

Lee Robinson