

**Miata's at Road America
Saturday, May 21, 2016**

By Don Gervais

National Auto Sport Association Great Lakes Region
HYPER DRIVE



On Saturday May 21, 2016 Keith Schwartz and I participated in the H.P.D.E. 101 portion of the National Auto Sport Association Hyper Drive event. I heard about this event through a **Facebook** message received from a friend (Marlon Sumlan) who runs the Mazda Owners Corral at Road America and is a N.A.S.A. instructor. I signed up right away and asked Keith if he would like to come along. The intent was to see if this was the sort of event we could get more club members interested in trying.

The original plan was to be at the track at 7:00 AM go to a drivers meeting, attend a classroom session, do a few parade laps at noon and get a ride in a race car. Things did not quite work out that way. A last minute e-mail from Marlon said that Road America no longer did noon parade laps and if we were ok with it he would up-grade us to H.P.D.E. 101. I made a quick call to Keith and told him, "Dude put your hard top on, you're going to need it." This was our new schedule:

7:00 AM Have cars go through tech.

7:45 AM Attend drivers meeting and get introduced to our instructors.

9:00AM Do some warm up laps behind a pace car with your instructor in the car with you. Not too big a deal except by lap 2 the pace car was running at 95 mph, the instructors were already pointing out the line, braking points, if the brakes were even going to be used, and explained that when they say turn in you turn the wheel and mash the gas. This turned out to be a pre-view of what was in store for us.

9:45 AM Let your heart rate and B.P. return to normal. Go to the new classroom building for an hour of instruction on how to read the corners and

what all the flags mean. After class we were free to wander around, talk to other drivers, watch cars on the track and grab some lunch.

1:45 PM Be in the outgoing pit grid and be ready to drive, all strapped in, helmet on and radio communication in helmet.



This driving session was at SPEED if you were comfortable doing so or as my instructor said. "Let's see what this puppy's got." We were taught how to sling shot a car through corners and like most people I was braking way too early and on some of the turns the brakes were not used at all. It was truly amazing the speed a Miata with sticky tires can carry through corners. I found out later that both of us were well north of triple digits on more than one occasion and in my case having 10 p.s.i. of boost I ran out of rpm's a few times. At one point my instructor was encouraging me to keep increasing my speed and I told him. "We are out of rpm's and gears, perhaps if you get out and push we could go faster." When we finally pitted and got back to our paddock area we looked at each other and I said, "Did we just do that?"



I had just finished a bottle of water when my instructor walked up to me and said, "Hey Don, you want to go play hard now? Let's get you fitted for a harness in my racecar. Fast? We were hitting 145 coming to the braking marker for turn 5. Then there is the area from the Kink and Canada corner. Hummm... this is what it looks like doing a strafing run in an F15. Oh yea, that's right I am in a 5.0 Mustang racecar. Then there was my ride in a Z28 Camaro racecar. This is like the car that ran the Nuberring in Germany in 7.0000 minutes flat. The driver told me that this car is a different kind of animal and then set out to prove it.

The people could not have been more friendly or helpful. My thanks to Marlon and Lauri Sumlan for asking us to join them.

So, in conclusion, if you would like to learn how to drive your Miata at speed and trust me, these little cars we drive a lot quicker and faster than most of us realize. Come join us next May at the national park of speed.

Zoom Zoom