



Photos by Patrick Timmins

Out and About

Casual Racing takes a pair of RX-8s to the track

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Contributing Writer

THE LAST TIME WE CHECKED IN with Casual Racing, Alex Juhasz and Brian Reilly were burning the midnight oil trying to get their cars ready for their first SCCA Touring-2 race at New Hampshire International Speedway in Loudon, NH. In the end, the cars were completed in time to take them to NHIS on May 1 to practice and qualify. After a few practice laps, Juhasz commented that the No. 7 NYFIX Inc. car performed surprisingly well and was easy to drive at race speed. Reilly had a little more difficulty getting the No. 8 Acoustic Blueprint car dialed in for his driving style. Throughout the course of the day they compared notes on settings, tire temperatures and lap times. For their inaugural race, their qualifying times looked very promising.

On race day, a Chevy Camaro sat on the pole and a Honda S2000 rounded out the first row of the starting grid. The two Mazdas of Casual Racing filled the second row, with Juhasz sitting in third and Reilly fourth. When the green flag waved, the cars rushed toward the steep banked turn of the NASCAR oval. During the start, Reilly's car pulled past his teammate and into third place. The field remained tightly grouped as they approached turn No. 3, a sharp 180 turn. As Reilly was nearing the apex of the turn, a Miata driven by Jim Ocutto, tagged him. Ocutto was trying to make an aggressive, late braking move to the inside of the turn. Even though the collision damaged the exhaust and suspension, Reilly didn't miss a beat and continued on. Afterwards, he commented that it felt like he was driving a paint mixer.

Four laps into the race; Juhasz was stopped cold by a mechanical failure. The clutch disc disintegrated as he was down shifting into turn No. 5, which then left Reilly flying solo. Reilly kept his car running at top speed for the remainder of the race and crossed the finish line in a well-deserved third place, marking the first podium finish for an RX-8 in SCCA Touring-2.

After the race, Juhasz took the setback in stride. He said that the race still gave him a chance to get a feel for the car and get the suspension dialed in. Reilly however, was a little more animated when he returned to the pits with a list of improvement suggestions. A few would require an amendment to the



SCCA rules, such as Mazdaspeed springs, Mazdaspeed rear sway bar, Mazdaspeed front/rear stress bars, and a custom blade type front sway bar from SpeedSource. This amendment went into effect on July 1, just in time for the race in Watkins Glen, NY on July 11.

During the month of May, the team took the opportunity to learn from the experience at NHIS and apply that knowledge to their cars. The No. 07 NYFIX Inc. clutch was replaced, and suspension settings were tweaked for Lime Rock Park. Reilly repaired the damage from the encounter with the Miata and also chose to ditch the Carbotech brake pads in favor of his tried and true Hawk Blue racing brake pads.

On June 4, Casual Racing headed to Lime Rock Park in Lakeville, CT to practice and qualify. This time the drivers felt more comfortable and were excited about racing on their home track. The cars looked good on the track and were well sorted which helped Juhasz and Reilly qualify in third and fifth, respectively.

On race day, it was obvious that this was going to be a friendly fight. Throughout the race they battled each other for position and even came in contact several times. As they were carving through the Esses neither driver wanted to give up the line. Ultimately this struggle resulted in Reilly being bumped off of the course. To his credit, he was able to get back on course and close the gap to within 12 seconds. When the checkered flag waved, Juhasz was in fourth, followed by Reilly in fifth. (It should be noted that Juhasz's fastest lap was only 0.817 seconds slower than the fastest lap from the winner of the race.)



“This race was an excellent outing”, Juhasz said. “The car performed excellent. I was very happy with the handling and the brakes. The car was very predictable and felt very neutral in all areas of the track. This race showed me what the car is capable of doing, now I just need to push it harder.”

Now that the cars are officially broken in, I’m sure that we’ll see Casual Racing pushing it harder in upcoming races. **RX**

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Pocono International, Pennsylvania**
August 20: Practice/Qualify
August 21: Race
August 22: Race
- **Mid-Ohio National Championships**
September 20-23: Practice/Qualify
September 24-25: Race



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