

Nationals Sonoma Wreck

Posted by 944Racer72 - 11 Nov 2014 20:07

I'm editing this post in the hopes of making this thread constructive. My competitor, Javier, did contact me today and we discussed the incident. From my point of view, I was cleanly alongside and he came over and forced us off track.

I won't speak for Javier's position on what/why it happened.

If this had happened somewhere else, we might have had words but it probably wouldn't have been a big deal. Due to the location, both cars are destroyed and we're lucky we essentially walked away.

Here's the video from my car:

Full speed

Slo mo

Re: Nationals Sonoma Wreck

Posted by tcomeau - 12 Nov 2014 00:19

I understand your frustration with waiting for a response, Steve. It was an absolutely horrific crash that we don't have all the details on yet.

As acting Series Director, I was allowed to inspect both cars and their safety gear. I'm happy to report that among all tech parties and myself, not one broken weld/tube was found in either cage.

Even where the rear of Lewis's chassis was caved in around them, the backstays and their base plates were totally intact. The rest of his cage was perfect. His seat back brace failed to stay in place because it was mounted with only U bolts. They rotated around the cage bar 90 degrees. Gotta weld seat back braces to the cage.

Cantu-Lucero's cage was perfect except the front legs above both doors were crushed downward about 1-1.5 inches. He had a diagonal sunroof bar which helped because it looked like the car took several impacts directly to the roof. IMO, that diagonal bar should have been oriented the other way to give more room for the drivers helmet. On the initial impact the left front wheel/tire came back into the pedal box hard. The footwell and pedals were pushed back about 8-10 inches? Clutch and brake pedals were splayed to the left and right. Gotta get those extra footwell bars installed on my car.

Both drivers seats, side brackets, and slider rails remained intact though the floor under Cantu-Lucero's seat buckled up. One seat was mounted with 8mm 8.8 hardness bolts. The other with normal 6mm bolts. But they held.

Cantu-Lucero's seat was an older type and not a modern wrap around that has a halo and dished shoulder area. His steering column and steering wheel were moved 3-4 inches outboard.

Bravo to the builders of both cages for strong, 360 degree welds.

Check your safety gear in its entirety, Gents!

Re: Nationals Sonoma Wreck

Posted by 944Racer72 - 12 Nov 2014 10:05

My cage is 1 3/4" which is larger than necessary. I saw that my seat back brace was bent (aluminum flat type) but I didn't think the D rings rotated (they are further restrained with brackets underneath). I will look again. I do agree that welding to the cross bar is a good idea and will consider that in the future.

My pedal box is caved in left and right (more from the left where the tire intruded) and I did not have footwell bars. I would be concerned that bars in that area may have further compromised foot room since there is no way to tie them side to side.

My seat is an Ultrashield VS Halo 20 degree and held up great. I believe it is mounted with Qty 6 8.8 bolts. The floor under it is not reinforced but there is a 1/8" steel plate bolted and welded to the chassis under the "butt" part of the seat and seat is bolted to that. The front is held by fabricated side brackets.

I'll put up some pictures when I have a chance.

Re: Nationals Sonoma Wreck

Posted by 944Racer72 - 12 Nov 2014 10:11

Removed to make this thread constructive rather than destructive.

Re: Nationals Sonoma Wreck

Posted by 944Racer72 - 12 Nov 2014 14:11

Since I made this public, I'll follow up and publicly state that Javier did call me today. I won't state his viewpoint as I'll leave that to him.

Re: Nationals Sonoma Wreck

Posted by Dos Toros 944 - 12 Nov 2014 17:38

While I can only comment on the aftermath and processing that has taken place with Javier after this wreck, we do have to apologize for the delayed response to calls from the other driver involved. Javier was instructed by his mom not to answer (she is an attorney) concerned that there may be an incomplete investigation.

In all discussions since this wreck, Javier has told me he never saw the green car come alongside him. A couple of us were relaying position to Javier through our comms and he had only stock mirrors in his car. Both Saturday and Sunday this had been a very close competition among three cars battling for position in 3rd, 4th, and 5th place in class.

On top of spending a few hours in the ER in Santa Rosa, we still had the tasks of loading the trailer and making the drive back to Washington. We did not arrive until mid-Monday morning. Javier spent the day Monday resting from the trip and the after effects of the wreck. We are fortunate that he was basically not injured, especially given the impact that he endured. On Tuesday he returned to work and spent time with his mother and girlfriend. I was not aware that there had been an effort to reach Javier until late yesterday.

We have been over several versions of the videos of the events that led to the wreck. Javier has felt all extremes of emotions in response to this, including feeling that he let us all down with what happened. There was certainly no intent to cause this wreck on his part, he was working to maintain his position and run a clean, competitive race. At no point in any discussion with anyone after the wreck was there any indication otherwise, including a brief conversation with the other driver involved right after he was dropped off from the ambulance. He told me he did not think Javier ever saw him. There is no indication from Javier or anyone else to contradict this.

We were having an outstanding experience at our first NASA National event until the wreck. Before and after the wreck we were treated with respect and encouraged to hear how exciting it was to watch the competition between the three drivers. Javier has never experienced an incident of this type in the five years he has been training and racing. He spun a Skip Barber car once when he had a driver make wheel to wheel contact in a tight curve at Road America. In all of his NASA events to date he had never had more than incidental contact with any other cars on the track.

Javier will consult with his racing coach and will soon make his own response in the forum. We did not realize that this was part of the process and apologize for that. We intend to find another car and get back on the track next season, and hope that we can move past this experience, contribute to the learning process of track and driver safety, and be positive competitors going forward.

Most of all, like everyone else, we are glad that both drivers built their cars well enough to walk away to race again.

Marty Mogk

Javier's "dad" and co-owner of his team
