

2014 Western States Championship

Written by A. U. B. I. E.

Sunday, 16 November 2014 19:25

November 7-9: A mid-pack view of the NASA Western State Championship 944 Spec race weekend.

Anytime you get to compete in a championship event your heart rate rises in anticipation, double the excitement if your first time is at a home track. Daybreak over the San Rafael bridge, Sonoma Raceway revealed her blind crests for the inaugural NASA Western State Championships. Had to start early and sunlight's first rays radiated brightly off a setting moon as everyone prepped for the first session of the day. Drivers from California, Washington, Nevada, Arizona, and as far away as Illinois would be joining NorCal's local racer contingent.



Thursday's pre-race testing brought an inauspicious start to the weekend: Jim Richmond's car coming off a tow truck, front left wheel shrugged into the wheelwell. Before Richmond was out of his driver's suit, Jim Hicks, Ron Dale and others were rolling up their sleeves to get dirty and keep the 512 car on track for Friday's sessions. Driving Concepts Racing School instructor, Carl Mc Ginn had a saying, paraphrased: *"Your driving is your reputation."* 944 Spec has a reputation: We come together for each other. The early diagnosis was a broken spindle and the group got Richmond's wheels turning before sunset. Dan Piña's reputation was growing, traveling all the way from Chicago with a second place from the Eastern Championship event, but he was swapping computers. His crew was working hard to get things right.

Our race director Tim Comeau summed it up proudly: *"It shouldn't be about the car, it should be*

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about how you drive it."

Comeau wanted

legal, compliant cars, zero contact reports and for everyone to have fun.

There are a couple other reputations NorCal 944 Spec carries: Every field has multiple drivers named Jim, every other car on grid is Porsche Guards Red, and a driver who's reputation precedes him, Charlie Buzzetti opened the weekend right by hosting the Buzzetti barbecue for any hungry driver in our class. Say it with me everyone: *"Fish Tacos!"*

The roll call Z to A is as follows:

Auburn Schmidt

Jim Richmond (Jim #1)

Dan Piña

Katherine Pelland (Red #1)

Austin Newmark

Ken Myers

Steven Lewis

Jason Jane (Red #2)

Jim Hicks (Jim #2, Red #3)

James Foxx (Jim #3, Red #4)

Alberto Fonseca (Red #5)

Pete Dimuzio (Red #6)

Ronald Dale

Javier Cantu-Lucero

Charles Buzzetti (Red #7)

Thomas Atteberry.

Friday Qualifying:

All of our sessions were shared with the Spec Miata run group, each race would have split starts half a lap apart to minimize lapping traffic. There were 17 Miatas and 16 944s. We'd get apples-to-apples results between the two classes all weekend.

In qualifying, everyone tells themselves to give room, set a time and get back to the pits. Then you get out there and there's someone in your way and you want to get around them and you're about to dive-bomb—it's the racer in all of us. Take a deep breath and bring out the cool, smooth, quick driver who can step down from the loud pedal to open up some track to roam. The session was more exciting than it should have been, Newmark's car was spitting parts, Foxx's car was misting oil at whomever was quick enough to stay near his bumper, and Hicks sheered a balljoint at 80MPH right in front of Schmidt. Hicks kept his car in control and drove it out of the racing line. After the session Lewis and Richmond pitched in to get him ready, our

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qualifying race was only an hour later.

Friday Qualifying Race:

The field bunched up for what was a really tight start, less than half a car length between rows because nobody wanted to give an inch. The green flag stirred our grid into a chaotic stew of acceleration, cars bubbling out looking for space. Inside to outside Fonseca, Atteberry and Schmidt went three wide around turn 1 with Hicks on Fonseca's bumper.

The front row entered turn 2 (one of those blind crests) with Foxx sending up a big puff of tire smoke in an attempt to stay door-to-door with Buzzetti. This allowed Lewis to stake a claim on second place. We streamed uphill otherwise holding position. Schmidt took an aggressive look inside Atteberry into 2 but Atteberry turned in feeling boxed by Dale in front, Fonseca outside and Richmond off his rear quarterpanel. Schmidt took his car off-track to the inside, avoiding contact. Hicks, Richmond, Dimuzio and Jane gained a spot for the excursion. Schmidt recovered enough to draw overlap on Jane over 3a (another blind crest), then finished the overtake inside 4, two corners of side-by-side already causing the back of the pack to fall three seconds adrift.

Turn 4 came up, a slow sharp right-hander. Myers and Newmark side-by-side. Fonseca dropped four wheels off on the outside but pulled his car back on track without issue, Dale and Atteberry cruising by. Hicks dropped a couple wheels off in the same place. Fonseca, Atteberry and Dale went three wide around 5, a fast sweeping right-hander. We streamed off the Carousel, turn 6, a parabolic downhill left, the lead pack still together, a bit of a gap, then Dale at the head of mid-pack.



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Myers had gotten in front of Newmark and Cantu-Lucero took a look at the bright yellow racer. Richmond and Hicks spent the entire first half of the lap side-by-side and into 7, a double apex right. Hicks finally claimed sole-possession of the position under breaks in the middle of 11, a hairpin right. We finished the first lap Buzzetti, Lewis, Foxx right at Lewis' rear quarter panel, Piña, Myers with Newmark salivating all over his rear bumper, Cantu-Lucero, Dale, Atteberry, Fonseca, Hicks, Richmond, Dimuzio, Schmidt, Jane and Pelland.

By turn 4 of lap 2 Hicks made it up the inside of Fonseca and Schmidt had made up the gap to the back of Dimuzio. Lap 3 Richmond went wide in 4 and Dimuzio moved through the inside and passed. Hicks snarfed at Atteberry's tail into 7 looking for a way around. From the front, Foxx chased Buzzetti, Piña had gotten around Lewis, Myers was still holding off Newmark, small gap to Cantu-Lucero who was followed by Dale, and Hicks had gotten by Atteberry. Five laps in and something in Newmark's car gave up on the front straight and he pulled out. A Miata had stopped in 7, both events bringing forth local yellows.

Richmond was wide again into 4, and after 8 laps finally relented to Schmidt. On the final lap Buzzetti made the classic former Champion error of running out of gas, being pipped by Foxx and Lewis before he nursed his car across the finish line. Piña held fourth, Hicks worked all the way up to fifth followed by Myers, Cantu-Lucero, Dale, Atteberry, Dimuzio, Fonseca, Schmidt, Richmond, then Pelland running by Jane in the closing laps, and Newmark with mechanical troubles.

Jim Richmond's Video of the start of Fridays qualifying race.

{youtube}j8UQiUtg7BE{/youtube}

Saturday Qualifying Race:

Racer reputation is built corner by corner, and earned by the respect of your fellow driver. Atteberry and Hicks on Richmond: *"Jim's got a reputation down in SoCal Region: He makes sneaky good starts and he drives a wide car."* He'd teach this lesson to new students as the weekend progressed. After yesterday's performance Cantu-Lucero was gaining a reputation as a sideways driver. Buzzetti was quick as always. Foxx had run with the locals a lot and Lewis represented the local NorCal region well, rounding out the top three.

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At the top of the page, there is a navigation bar with links to 'Home', 'About', 'Contact', 'Privacy', 'Terms', and 'Sitemap'. Below this, there is a large section titled '2014 Western States Championship' which contains a list of race results. The list includes columns for 'Rank', 'Driver', 'Team', and 'Time'. The first few entries are: 1. Ryan Blaney (No. 14 Ford), 2. Kevin Harvick (No. 14 Chevrolet), 3. Jimmie Johnson (No. 48 Chevrolet), 4. Denny Hamlin (No. 11 Toyota), 5. Kyle Busch (No. 15 Toyota), 6. Matt Kenseth (No. 14 Ford), 7. Clint Bowyer (No. 14 Ford), 8. Tony Stewart (No. 14 Ford), 9. Jeff Gordon (No. 14 Ford), 10. Dale Earnhardt Jr. (No. 14 Ford). The list continues with more drivers and their respective teams and times.

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Multiple choice questions about the 2014 Western States Championship. The questions are: 1. What is the name of the race? 2. What is the date of the race? 3. What is the location of the race? 4. What is the name of the driver of the red car? 5. What is the name of the driver of the yellow car? 6. What is the name of the person holding the umbrella? 7. What is the name of the track? 8. What is the name of the gravel pit? 9. What is the name of the grassy area? 10. What is the name of the person who wrote the article?

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██████████ (ProDQ, yellow)

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[http://www.azusa.com/forums/2014-western-states-championship-141159](#)

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--Ken NorCal 944-Spec Series Director