



## REmarks

Chicago Region RE, Rick Bentson

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As I sit here at the beginning of the New Year I feel as though I'm being torn in 2 directions - look back at 2014 or look forward to what 2015 will bring? The truth is that the ending of one year and the beginning of another provides the ideal opportunity to do both, and no matter which direction I look I can't help but feel good about where the Chicago Region has been and where we are going.

2014 was a good year for Chicago Region. Our Solo program had a very successful season in terms of the number of entries and ferocity of competition in several classes. 2014 was a watershed year for National Solo rules as a major overhaul of the Stock classes took effect, essentially eliminating R-rated untreaded race tires from Stock classes and requiring tires to have a minimum 140 treadwear rating (in 2015 the wear rating increases to 200). As a result, the regional Street Tire class, Chicago Region's largest class, was eliminated. In spite of the drastic changes entry counts were up, competition was intense and complaints were few (once the season got started anyway).

Our PDX Track Day program had its best year ever in 2014. The PDX program is a great way for enthusiasts to get their street car on a real race track and "open her up" under the guidance of an experienced Instructor. Entries reached the point that at one event participants were waitlisted as interest outpaced our ability to provide enough Instructors to accommodate the number of novice drivers (if you have Solo, Track Day or Club Racing experience and wish to become a PDX Instructor, we'd love to have you share your knowledge and experience with our PDX entrants – they really appreciate the coaching and guidance). I firmly believe our PDX program is one of the best in the country in terms of organization, operation of events and customer satisfaction.

The Club Racing season was successful as well, while also going through a period of change, as people are still coming to grips with the new Majors program and how it impacts former National and Regional racers alike. The racing was great, the weather for the most part cooperated (and when it didn't it made for some awesome races in the rain under changing conditions. Great stuff to be a part of if you were anywhere other than the driver's seat). Granted, entries were off at the June Sprints, owing to several factors, including the National Runoffs leaving Road America after a 5-year run, a Regional race at the 2014 Runoffs track the week before the Sprints, and continued confusion over the Majors program. The June Sprints aside we were especially pleased by the entries at our other races, especially late in the season, or I should say, early in the 2015 season as our last 2 race weekends counted toward 2015 season points.

For me personally 2014 was one of the best of my life. It started early, with a promotion to Director of Operations at my place of employment (shameless plug – if you need accessories or select performance parts for your daily driver, look us up at [www.autoaccessoriesgarage.com](http://www.autoaccessoriesgarage.com) and as an SCCA member I'll get you the best deal available). Once the season got underway I was fully involved in all our programs, running Solo as a participant (and finishing the season 2<sup>nd</sup> in class), volunteering for PDX events and getting some track time as well at both Blackhawk Farms and both Autobahn Country Club courses, and continuing to volunteer in F&C at Club Races as a Corner Worker. The F&C experience I've gained over the past few years also presented the opportunity to work my first IndyCar road course event, appropriately at the first IndyCar race on the road course at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. I gotta say, if you get the chance, work an IndyCar race. The cars and drivers are unbelievable, much more impressive up close than as seen on TV. The TUDOR Sportscar series event at Road America was a great experience as well, as was the Hawk vintage race at RA and the Vintage race at Indy (800 entries, how can a motorhead not get turned on)? 2014 was exhausting, but in a very, very good way.

Which leads us to 2015 and looking forward to what the New Year will bring. Personally, the usual resolutions; lose 20 pounds, exercise more and “be a better person”. You should know that while I write this I’m sitting in the recliner watching football and munching on snacks, so you can imagine how that’s going to work out. Other than that, I can’t imagine a better year than to repeat the events of last year, continue to hang out with all you characters that make up the CenDiv racing community, be it Club Racing, Solo or PDX. I love it all.

For the region, I expect the Solo and PDX programs to continue to flourish. It’s too early yet to announce schedules as we don’t yet know what dates the venues will have available.

As for Club Racing, the schedule is complete and posted on the region website. The marquee 2015 event will be the 60<sup>th</sup> running of the June Sprints. It’s hard to imagine the Sprints have been held EVERY YEAR since the first in 1956. The Sprints is the longest-running amateur road race in the country, and as far as I know the only U.S. motorsports events of any kind that have a longer history are the 12-hours of Sebring and the Indy 500. We are going all out to celebrate the occasion. If at all possible you should plan to attend. Whether as a participant, volunteer or spectator, you won’t be disappointed. I guarantee it! Watch for announcements.

Our annual Checkered Flag banquet is coming up on Saturday, Feb. 7 and again it will be held at Rick Mancuso’s Lake Forest Motorcars. Join us for an evening of beautiful cars, great food and drink, benchracing and recognizing our champions. Registration is open now at <http://msreg.com/2014CheckeredFlag>

The Solo awards banquet is set for Sunday, March 1 at Pinstripes in Oakbrook (<http://pinstripes.com/oakbrook/>). Registration will be open shortly.

It’s only about 10 weeks til the on-track season gets underway. I can hardly wait. Til then, think warm thoughts!

Rick Bentson  
Regional Executive