



REmarks

Chicago Region RE, Rick Bentson

February 1, 2016

It's nearly February and racing has begun! The Rolex 24 Hours of Daytona is underway, a far more reliable indicator than any groundhog that spring is not far off. You could argue that with the temperature being nearly 50° this weekend spring is already here, but we all know better than that.

February might bring cold and snow, but it also brings several Chicago Region happenings on the old event calendar:

Coming up first, and quickly, is our annual **Checkered Flag Banquet**, held again at Lake Forest Sports Cars next Saturday evening, February 6th. If you haven't already registered, get to it now. By the time you read this online registration will have already closed, but you can still get a seat by calling Peg or Claire Ball at 847-660-3460. Hurry, we have to give the caterer a final head count soon.

Next up on the schedule is the **February Members Gathering** on Wednesday, February 17th at K1 Speed in Addison, IL. Shake off the winter blues with some bench racing, talk about your plans for the upcoming season and help us celebrate the accomplishments and efforts of fellow Chicago Region members.

We'll be presenting the 2015 Solo season trophies and awards, awarding SCCA Anniversary pins to those reaching 5-year milestones, and recognizing those who have helped the region by serving on an organizing committee or otherwise contributed to the region's success in 2015.

Come on out and help us congratulate our champions and thank those who work to make our events possible.

Following the Members Gathering is the **Race & Performance Expo** on February 20-21 at the Schaumburg Convention Center. Chicago Region once again will have a booth at the Race & Performance Expo and we need your help. Volunteers are needed to spend a little time in the booth and talk to people about the SCCA and the opportunities we offer to get involved with motorsports.

You have a passion for what you do with the SCCA, whether Solo, PDX, Club Racing or helping organize and staff those events. It's what we do; it's what we look forward to all winter long. We need you to spend a little time sharing that passion with others, those who in all likelihood aren't familiar with the SCCA and how easy it is to get involved with motorsports.

Spend a little time in the Chicago Region booth and have plenty of time to wander the show floor and see the exhibits, all for free. Chicago Region is picking up the show entry fee for those who lend a hand. Information about the show can be found here:

<http://www.raceperformanceexpo.com/show-info.html>

Show hours are Saturday, Feb. 20 from 9:00AM-5:00pm, and Sunday, Feb. 21 from 9:00AM-4:00PM. Help out for as little or as long as you like; whatever fits your schedule.

**To sign up, contact Claire Ball at:
847-469-8589
PDMassociates@comcast.net**

SCCA National Convention. The annual SCCA National Convention was held Jan. 21-23 and for the first time in 3 years returned to Las Vegas, having been held in Charlotte the prior two years. This year the format also returned to an emphasis on training for region leaders, sharing of ideas and best practices, and discussion of new programs. There is no doubt that over the past several years the SCCA has been slow to respond to changes in the motorsport landscape and has been playing catch-up. When HPDE track-day events became popular, allowing people to drive their street cars on full-size racetracks in a non-competitive environment, SCCA responded with the PDX program, and built on the track-day phenomenon with the launch in 2015 of the Track Night in America program. While SCCA National was a late-comer to track days, Chicago Region was at the forefront with PDX and now has one of the most successful, mature programs in the country. Several elements of our PDX program were incorporated into the Track Night in America program, such as the half-day, weeknight events with which Chicago Region has been so successful.

On the Club Racing side, there has been a great deal of discussion concerning Regional racing, both within CenDiv and at the National level. Participation numbers have been declining, while other organizations and formats that didn't exist years ago have emerged. In our area NASA, Midwest Council, Marque clubs, Chumpcar and LeMons all compete for the racer's attention, time, and budget. In response the SCCA has created a new race format, the Bracket Enduro series. Loosely patterned on Chumpcar and LeMons, a Bracket Enduro is a longer-duration (2 to 6 hour), multi-driver race open to closed-wheel cars with performance ability capped at about a GT4 car. Teams choose which of 4 or so "brackets" to compete in. Each bracket corresponds to a certain lap time. Each lap run at a time faster than the bracket time adds that time to a "bank", plus a small penalty percentage. Each lap slower than the bracket time or extra time used on a pit stop, or an unplanned pit stop, subtracts time from the bank. Discussions are being held within CenDiv and we may well see a Bracket Enduro at one of the CenDiv Divisional race weekends in 2016. One thing is clear, if we don't try new things with Regional racing, in a few years there won't be any Regional racing in CenDiv, as entry counts drop, forcing ever-increasing entry fees and accelerating the downward spiral. It's up to the National Office and Region leaders to find ways to re-invigorate our local racing programs.

This month's featured board member – is **Steve Laske**. Steve was appointed to the board to fill a vacancy in mid-5015 and was elected to his current 3-year term in October. As Steve tells his story:

“It all began in the late fifties. My father was crewing for Johnny Norris' Champ car and on occasion for the Talarico Bothers stock car driven by Fred Lorenzen. In July of 1958 my father and I were at a stock car race at Soldier Field and I had a chance to sit in a Champ car, a bit screaming Offenhauser front-engine roadster. It made a huge impression on a 6-year old; I was hooked! Time went on. Listening to the Indy 500 with my father, always on the radio, and watching stock car races when they were on television. It was fun but I needed more! Always turning left seemed boring. In 1974 I bought my Corvette and a friend invited me to come along to Road America to see what was to become the last “real” Can-Am race. Lightning struck again – I was really hooked now!

I joined the Chicago Region in 1978 and competed in the Solo Series for about 10 years, winning 4 Regional Championships and one in the Lake Michigan Autocross Series. I served on the Solo Committee and was Solo Chairman for two years. I also began working at the road races, first in the paddock, then in the race chairman's program and also in the safety car program. In 1985 I was elected to serve on the Region's Board of Directors and did so through 1992. During that time I served a Regional Executive (RE) twice, first in 1987 and again in 1991. After my time on the Board I continued in the race chairman and safety car programs for the next several years.

As my responsibilities at work grew and promotions came within the management ranks at United Airlines I needed to step back from my involvement in the club. The airline industry was quickly changing, and then our world stopped for a few days. In 2004 an opportunity presented itself to me I couldn't pass up. Another promotion, this time to United Airlines World Headquarters and a position within the Safety Division that allowed me to travel all over the world. Unfortunately this pulled me even further from the sport and the club. After 43 years with United I decided it was time to move on. I had gone as far as I could in the company, seen the world and was ready for retirement. Retirement you say, HA! I've never been busier, and in 2015 I was asked to come back onto the Region's Board of Directors. With my 37 years as a member of Chicago Region I bring a viewpoint from the past. With my 22 years of management experience at United and the fast-paced, ever-changing industry I am able to identify areas for change and think outside the box as our club and sport change. I look forward to the challenges we face, building your future while not forgetting where we came from.”

I'm looking forward to seeing you all this February at the Checkered Flag banquet, Members Gathering and Race & Performance Expo.

See you at the races!

Rick Bentson
Regional Executive