

Lapping It Up



A good start and some drama for ACM's own Big Chris on the One Lap Of America.

Words: Chris Smith Photography: Chris Smith, Brent White, Bryan Humphries



We left South Bend and headed to Pittsburgh International Race Complex, or 'Pitt Race' as the locals call it. A North and South track for smaller events had been divided, and then the combination of the two made a 2.78-mile lap, an animal with much elevation and twists, but the blind crests were the kicker, at least for me anyway. It's the same old story when you're doing the One Lap, you need to finish the event to place, let alone be in first, so it's a little unnerving driving someone else's car around a track like this. We managed to get a garage at the track in the morning, so we would be dry if the heavens opened, and it was forecast even though the sky was clear. I made the statutory scooter trip around the track after we parked up, and bumped into Mike Renner, the main face at BMW's North American Driving School. He was super helpful in giving some

guidance, especially in the areas where "You won't drive your way out of that one Chris, pay attention".

The first session went out, Vipers, GTRs and even a McLaren. The sound was great and it really hit home that we were about to embark on seven days of craziness. Out of nowhere the clouds came and the heavens opened over one side of the course; this was bad and a nightmare ensued. Catesby, a friend and veteran race driver, had exited one of the straights (dry) and entered a downward section where maximum braking was required, but alas, a small river of water had started running down the entire section of road he was on. The GTR left the road and hit the tyre wall; the car was done, but luckily Catesby was fine. That's the thing, isn't it? When a dick drives a car and crashes, you expect it, but this guy can drive, and the conditions

(Below) Brent, and a "Power Bar" for breakfast?

caught him out - we were all shocked and took heed of the situation. I put the car out thinking about the rest of the pack, will someone behind me catch me? Will I keep it on the track? And just how good were the Swedish →



boys I had brought with me? But the fact remained, I just wanted to finish today unscathed.

I got the car around in a respectable fashion. The UK has its fair share of inclement weather, and it seems to agree with my driving style, so we came first in the morning session and the same in the afternoon, a great start for us! The Swedes were only a couple of seconds off the pace though - maybe it wasn't a great idea to have invited them...!

We finished up, and headed out to Palmer Motorsports Park, a swift 557-mile leg after the day's racing. We fuelled up and handed out walkie-talkies to some of the pack we ran with. Food wasn't an option as Brent had ordered \$150 worth of pizzas at lunch and had them Uber'd to the track - the Mustang was turned into a large picnic bench, and it was feeding time at the 'Fuelers Zoo'.

The weather was just shite from the off, even through the next morning and into the racing, I didn't complain, I was doing my rain dance. Palmer is in Massachusetts and is the weirdest track for me to date - picture the scenario of some work



colleagues in a rock quarry getting hammered on scotch and playing with dynamite. Basically this race track was made by blowing up the side of a mountain and someone thought, "Hey, let's pave it with tarmac and race this **cker". No run offs anywhere, concrete barriers on

(Above) GT3 RS and 918... It's not all muscle cars on this gig. (Below) Andy Hollis trying to swap his McLaren for the Mustang. (Bottom left) Brent, Churchill Souksavong and me at Kentucky enjoying a beer.

both sides of you, and if you broke through them, a few hundred feet between you and the ground... you get the picture.

The Swedes beat us in the morning and the afternoon session, with one second between us on the latter - it looks like other European

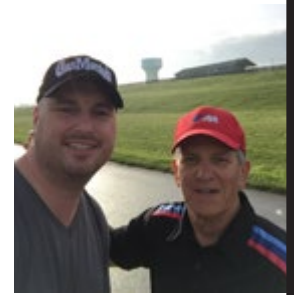


drivers were versed in driving in wet weather conditions. I was not that talkative that afternoon... pissed off is another way of putting it, although I did congratulate them, albeit with a red face.

It rained some more and we left for Summit Point Motorsports Park in West Virginia. Some of the cars went through New York; we took the wide angle and sidestepped it with an extra 50-odd miles avoiding

the city traffic. I spent three hours that night, whilst Brent was driving, on YouTube watching drivers take their rides around Summit Point - I didn't want to take any chances the next day, I needed to grab the points back from our newfound friends. We pulled up at our hotel around 11.30pm, a case of Bud Light was purchased just before by Brent, and we promised ourselves a liquid reward before turning in for the →





night. The case disappeared in an hour and a half. Oops.

We emerged the next morning at the track feeling tip top (honest). I ran the scooter around a couple of times and was ready for the first session after an astute purchase of a Burrito. I ran the car from the off like the Taliban were chasing me, forgetting it wasn't mine. It paid off, and again in the afternoon session - we had two firsts in class and a smile to boot! The homework had a paid off and we were both smiling again. A small transit leg to NCM was on the cards that afternoon, but Bowling Green Kentucky was 603 miles from

where we were. We headed out with the media crew and the Swedes, two Brenspeer built cars and two Roushes mixed with some gear heads, what could go wrong? We ran the roads from West Virginia through Virginia itself and have to say it was one of the best roads (and journeys) that will live with me until the lights go out. Sweeping roads and scenery on dual carriageways coupled with some 'spirited' driving made for a great memory.

We got within 12 miles of our hotel, and a semi 'threw out' a sheared-off tyre from another, we ran straight into, and over it. The noises from

(Top right) Mike Renner giving me some pointers at Pitt Race.
(Above left) Team Brenspeer, Swedish Mafia, Speed Concepts & Chad/Justin with the supercharged M3... A minor detour in Scranton Pennsylvania to a Steak House.
(Above right) Todd Treffer's 911 Monster with... A roof box
(Below) Our garage for the day at NCM.

under the car and the poltergeist punching through the floor and raising my feet in the air were not good. How much damage had been done? It was raining with nowhere to pull over in heavy traffic, so we checked the lights on the dash making sure temperature and oil pressure were maintained, and we had been lucky. We checked the car at the hotel, the front bumper had taken the brunt of the impact but luckily everything was fine. An ad hoc beer took place that night, with most competitors to be found outside the main lobby talking about the day's antics. I headed in around midnight thinking about the morning, and the fact that I had spun off this very track the previous year, I didn't want a repeat.

We got up with a slight hangover, not what I needed but hey ho, NCM awaited and the weather looked great for the first time. With a garage booked at the track we were sitting pretty, we ran into the track feeling fresh and ready to take the Swedes on, but then remembered Tracey Ramsey, the class winner from last year was hot on our heels in his modified Nissan 370Z... but that wouldn't be a problem, right?

Follow us next month for the final instalment of the 2016 Brock Yates One Lap of America! **ACM**

