



ONE LAP 2012

BMW DRIVERS TAKE FOUR CLASS WINS
IN MARATHON ONE LAP
OF AMERICA.

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ROSSINI AND BILL GUY

Neil Simon, Woody Hair

Rafael Garces, Robin Sparrow

Enrique Ramirez, Peter Cariera

Dan and Ben Schaut—at High Plains Raceway
in Colorado—had the highest finishing
BMW in their 2008 M3.

David Andrews, Keith Enstrom, Curt Andrews

Rene von
Richthofen (r),
Keith Ennis

Don Harris, Roy Maranhao

Mike Schnell Renner, Steve Maguire, Thomas Lappin

Mike Musto, Matt Farah

Lea Croteau, Mike Roberts

You never want to feel the LSD working—ever. That line might mean one thing to Timothy Leary or Hunter S. Thompson, but it means something entirely different to competitors in the 2012 edition of Brock Yates' One Lap of America. For them, LSD is not a hallucinogenic, but a limited-slip differential.

But One Lap itself may be hallucinogenic. An endurance event like no other, it demands everything from both car and driver. With a time-trial event each day, separated by 500-to-600-mile highway transits, a typical daily schedule looks like this:

6:00 a.m.: Wake up.
7:00 a.m.: Arrive at track. Unpack car.
7:10 :00 a.m.: Walk track.
9:00 a.m.: Race Session 1.
Noon: Lunch.
1:00 p.m.: Race Session 2.
4:30 p.m.: Racing concludes. Drive transit: 500 or 600 miles.
Midnight–2:30 a.m.: Arrive at hotel.
Repeat for eight days.

For the 2012 running of One Lap, BMW was well represented, with twelve registered BMW teams spanning seven different classes.

The marque was well rewarded, too, with four class wins—and four teams placed in the top twenty of 75 competing entries.

One Lap of America is a different sort of motorsport, and it draws racers for many different reasons. It's an endurance event spanning 3,300 miles in eight days, at nine race tracks, in eight different states. One Lap requires diverse skills, from skid pad, road course, oval track, and autocross to the straight-line drag strip. But if you talk to the drivers, you get the sense the competition is not always a first priority. Eight-time Lap Dog Neil Simon,

driving his 1 Series M coupe, says he was here “for the people, for the cars—and the camaraderie is extraordinary. You get to run tracks that you would not normally get to run. It is just a special event.”

David Chow gets straight to a more competitive point: “I want to be in the top ten, and first in class,” he said during the event. But it is the sense of camaraderie, with a common interest in cars, that keeps the drivers coming back year after year.

Still, there is that compelling competitive drive so common in BMW CCA members—

and One Lap contenders. Simon may have first understated his team's expectations; his co-driver, ten-time Lap Dog Woody Hair, was clear: “Our goal was to beat our close friends Robin Sparrow and Rafael Garces [in a 2011 M3], and to prove the 1 M equal to or better than their V8-engine M3.” While competing in different classes, Sparrow and Garces did finish fifteenth overall, to Simon and Hair's 21st overall.

For Peter Cariera, running a 2007 335i with Enrique Ramirez, the team goal was to place at least third in the Mid-Priced Sedan class. “But to pull it off—finishing first in class—was

pretty amazing,” he said. As a first-timer, Cariera says he was amazed at the level of competitiveness of the cars; initially, he felt a little out-classed. “I did not know how I would fare at something like this that has something more than just a road track, but also ovals, autocross, and drag racing. And new to me was going to tracks you've never gone on before, with no chance to run a few laps.”

David Andrews, along with Curt Andrews and Keith Enstrom, had high expectations when they entered the event in a 1995 M3—with over 163,000 miles on the clock. They



David Chow and Nathan Sumner—
at High Plains Raceway,
Colorado—finished twelfth
overall in their 2011 M3.



Lea Croteau and Mike Roberts—at High Plains Raceway—
finished first in the Retro Class in their 2010 Mini Cooper JCW.



Peter Cariera and Enrique Ramirez try drag-racing a 2007 335i at Brainerd International Raceway.



Don Harris and Roy Maranhao's 1998 M3 takes on the autocross at Hastings Motorsport Park.

wanted, said Andrews, "to continue to have fun and finish as high as we can. We would like to be in the top twenty; with a car that is seventeen years old and low on power, we thought that would be quite an accomplishment." They made it 26th overall—and second in the SSGT1 Small Bore class.

The father-and-son team of Dan and Ben Schaut ran their 2008 M3. "Running with eight Vipers, we should be running for ninth," said Dan, as the team sat thirteenth at Brainerd,

Minnesota. "I feel really good about that; top twenty in this field would be unbelievable. But it's definitely more about fun—we have been doing this long enough that you have to like what you're doing." They finished first in the Luxury Sedan class and eleventh overall—the highest-placing BMW in One Lap 2012.

Rene von Richthofen, in his 2010 M3, said, "It has nothing to do with cars, it is the people I see every year—some can become friends for life. It gives you a week away from everything—

family, business—to do something that interests you, which is cars."

Don Harris, along with Roy Maranhao of the Emergency BBQ Racing Team, confessed, "I had nothing better to do this week. Every once in a while, all the stress of everyday life adds up, so one week out of the year, I sit back, look out the window, and watch the country roll by—the most relaxing week of the year. Nothing to do but watch the scenery and enjoy the ride." For Harris, who only does a few track days during the year, One Lap is the big event for the year: "the most fun you can have in a week—but I expect we are not going to get the overall win."

Serious contenders—or just those intent of finishing One Lap—do not enter an event like this without some well-planned preparations or special modifications. But there are still those who prefer to just drive a BMW out of the showroom and maybe bring a couple of cans of carnauba wax and window cleaner. Take the brand-new pre-production BMW M5 driven by Steve Maguire, Thomas Lappin, and the BMW Performance Center's Mike Renner, for example: Although it has 560 horsepower, Renner says the M5 "responds much more like a smaller car, more like a sports car than a sedan—they've done a phenomenal job with it."

The odometer reading at the start of One Lap—1,200 miles—attests to a lack of prior testing, but, as Maguire notes, "Right off the showroom floor, this car has been phenomenal." As far as day-to-day adjustments and changes, he admits that they did occasionally polish the car.

Simon did about as much with his 1M, although he did add new springs and shocks, and adjusted the camber. "Nothing radical," he says, "and no maintenance during the event, other than cleaning the windows and torquing the wheels."

First-timer Matt Farah and co-driver Mike Musto echo the *laissez-faire* theme of One Lap repairs. The pair drove a stock X5 M: "Fully stock, on OEM tires, with full leather interior," says Farah. "It was the heaviest car by 600 pounds, and our transits were fantastic. I even

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ran my laps with the seat massager on!”

But Lea Croteau, who ran with Mike Roberts in his 2010 Mini Cooper S, took a different approach. “After competing with the Mini last year,” he says, “I had accepted that perhaps the Chevy HHRs would retain the top

of the leader board in Retro Class, but I pleaded with Mike to make some modifications to the car this year. With the warranty on his daily driver still in full effect, he was definitely not up for making any big changes, so we opted for a tire change, and got the lightest autocross

tires you can get—Yokohamas. I have to say that we made the right choice; we finished first in Retro Class this year with a smart tire—and a better technique. With this car’s limited-slip differential, you have to drive properly and not ask for power immediately; roll onto the throt-

Runnin’ ’Round The Racers In A Mini Roadster

Our method of transport for the 2012 Brock Yates’ One Lap of America was a 2012 Mini Cooper S Roadster. Some may remember that we toured the country last year in a 2011 Mini Cooper S John Cooper Works convertible; these two drop-top versions sound similar, but are very different indeed, the roadster being the convertible version of the new Mini line that includes the Mini Coupe.

As the official photographers for One Lap, my co-driver, Bill Guy, and I were a bit skeptical that the car could accommodate two photographers, with all of our gear and clothes for a week, but with a bit of creative packing, we were able to load two six-foot photographers, cameras, lenses, light stands, tripods, laptops, iPads, and rain gear, and even pack enough to keep us in some semblance of clean clothes for a week.

According to the printed specs, the roadster has a cargo space of 8.5 cubic feet, compared to last year’s convertible Mini with 23.3. It seems that the cargo numbers might be a bit off for our roadster, as we were indeed able to cram all of our equipment in the car. It is amazing where you can store stuff when you need to: side pockets, under the seats, and in that very spacious area we were told about: the space behind the seats. The roadster is a two-seater in the classic tradition of two-seaters: no back seat, no jump seat, just a barrier directly behind the seats that holds the sound-system speakers.

The S package on the roadster gave us a turbocharged 1.6-liter engine with a six-speed Getrag transmission putting out 181 horsepower, plenty of power to get us around the country and even a

few excursions on track. The 0-60 time of 6.7 seconds added to the fun, but unfortunately we were not able to test the quarter-mile time at Brainerd.

At High Plains Raceway in Colorado, we decided to do a few photo laps of the track while the other drivers were taking parade laps. The idea was to photograph them on the track with me precariously hanging on while taking pictures out the back of the car, and allow the race cars to pass us to get each shot. But Guy was enjoying the handling of the Mini so much that he didn’t want to slow down!

We had plenty of good weather this year, and put the top down on many occasions. The roadster’s convertible top is very much old-school in its manual operation, and easy to lower directly from the driver seat. As far as the included wind-deflector net, designed to keep the wind off the back of your hair, well, we decided we didn’t need no stinkin’ wind deflector. It is a convertible, after all: Your hair is *supposed* to get messed up. So we left the deflector home.

The Roadster generated many curious looks and always had a few new fans gathered around to see what it was, wherever we went, since it is new to the market. Most were not

familiar with the new look of the Mini. On one transit from Pacific Junction, Iowa, to Hallet, Oklahoma, we stopped at a rest stop; while we were checking out a few provisions, the cashier said her maiden name was Cooper, and she offered to trade her old Chevy Cavalier for the Mini. As if that weren’t enough, her assistant tried to sweeten the deal by throwing in her old Cavalier as well. Although the trade was intriguing, we decided to pass, and moved on down the road. On our return trip, this time stopping for coffee, I was offered another trade, this time for a 2001 Honda. Again, I took the coffee and departed.

We drove over 5,000 miles in the new Mini S Roadster. Both Guy and I were impressed with its handling, power, comfort, and eye-catching style. If you are looking for a fun two-seater with enough room for two and a reasonable amount of storage, this is quite a car. It could be a good contender to run One Lap and give the other Mini Cooper S’s a proper run for the class win. Who knows? Maybe next year BMW will lend us one to give it a try!—Steve Rossini



Bill Guy, Steve Rossini



tle and be smooth to avoid the differential kicking in too much. That’s where the brakes were getting overheated last year.”

The modified contingent in the Luxury Sedan class included the 2011 M3 of David Chow and Nathan Sumner, who added a supercharger for more than 650 horsepower, plus a wing, a splitter, and suspension mods. This follows the path of the Schauts’ M3, which also boasted a supercharger to add an additional 200 horsepower, plus suspension work, brake ducting, and bigger tires in the rear. The Schauts were rewarded with a first in class and eleventh overall—and Chow and Sumner were right behind, with a second in class and twelfth overall.

When modifications are not enough for the SSGT1 Small Bore class, you enter a 2001 M coupe powered by a street-gas version of an S62 Daytona Prototype engine, with TC Kline suspension, huge brakes, and lots of careful engineering—including aftermarket fuel injection. The result is over 400 pound-feet of torque and nearly 600 horsepower on the engine dyno for veteran One Lappers Eric Brum and Roy Hopkins. But that was before the event: “Sometimes the best-laid plans just don’t quite work out, no matter how hard everyone tries,” said Hopkins. “Up to the morning of registration, it looked like the car could still make the start,” he added—but the car was a no-show. We hope they make it next year.

With the destination tracks changing each year, there are always new tracks to be conquered, which can add to the enjoyment of the event, or add to your stress level. Previous tracks include Daytona, Watkins Glen, Sebring, Mid-Ohio, Barber, and other major circuits. Maguire says that the best tracks in 2012 were “a tie between Road America in Wisconsin and Brainerd, Minnesota, with its mile-long straight leading into a banked right-hander for Turn One, exceeding 150 mph. Awesome!”

Simon, on the other hand, was surprised by the fun factor at Motorsports Park in Hastings, Nebraska, but said it couldn’t match his long-time favorite track: Hallett, Oklahoma. And Hair said that he struggled with Colorado’s High Plains Raceway’s blind crests in the morning session. “But I was able to knock off 7.5 seconds over three laps in the afternoon session,” he says.

Cariera, in the 2007 335i, agreed that the High Plains track was a high point to his week. “It was explained to me at great length that the Mitsubishi Evo had the advantage,” he says, “that it was physically impossible for us to compete on like tracks, with like drivers—and then we go out there and beat them by a full second in the afternoon session.”

Ramirez is another Road America fan—“It’s by far my favorite track”—while Dan Schaut says, “High Plains, no doubt. Beautiful and fast track, beautiful sky, wonderful views. I hate ovals with concrete walls!” he adds, referring to the

South Bend Speedway where he found the concrete on Day One. “We scraped the wall at the oval, and unfortunately hit a cone, incurring a major penalty. Concrete walls and race cars should not be anywhere near each other!”

For Garces, in the M3, the high point of One Lap wasn’t even a track. “The highlight was the autocross in Hastings, Nebraska, where I came in sixth overall.” Not all of the drivers would fare as well as Garces; who would think the autocross would sideline a 2012 Ford Mustang Boss 302, which took out a guardrail? The only other incident of the week occurred at Road America, where in 2010, the last time One Lap used the track, a car flipped over the catch fence at Canada Corner. This year Robert Dubler successfully duplicated the stunt in his 2011 Cadillac CTS-V wagon—but this time at Turn Eight. In both cases, the drivers walked away unharmed, but ended their One Lap efforts.

One Lap brought out some very talented competitors in 2012, not just from the BMW world, but from other marques as well—everything from Grand-Am drivers, Indy Lights drivers, driving-school instructors, journalists, and weekend warriors to newlyweds. The cars ranged from a growing onslaught of six Nissan GTRs, Porsche GTs, some very high-strung Evos, Vipers, Corvettes, a top-ten-placing Honda CRX, and even the first Ferrari F430 to survive two One Laps.

Now in its 29th year, One Lap of America has a growing list of twenty-year veterans. They return for the competition, traveling the country, visiting race tracks far and wide; but for most, it’s the people—a family of friends—that brings them back year after year.

And every year sees a new crowd of first-timers—out to see if they can feel that LSD working. ♦



Mike Renner lights up the 2013 M5 at the Tire Rack skid pad.



Dan and Ben Schaut



David Chow, Nathan Sumner