

THE HEART of DIXIE

BMW CAR CLUB
NEWSLETTER

BMW IN THE HEART OF THE SOUTH

BMW IM HERZEN DES SUDENS

Oktoberfest Autocross at Regions Park, Hoover, AL

OKTOBERFEST COMES TO THE HEART OF DIXIE

Lisa Drenning

Well, the long-awaited event, Oktoberfest, has come and gone, and it all went well because of a lot of hard work and planning. BMW CCA put on a top-notch event and our chapter, along with other regional chapters, planned and ran the individual car-related events. The Peachtree Chapter (Georgia) ran the autocross at Regions Park, while the River City Bimmers (Memphis, Tennessee) set up the TSD rally that ended at the Talladega Motor Speedway. Our chapter was in charge of the Driving School, the Gymkhana and the Fun Rally. We've had plenty of experience running driving schools in this chapter and the only difference at Oktoberfest was that it ran for 5 days rather than 2, and each day we were registering a new set of students.

Guests started arriving at Ross Bridge Resort on Monday afternoon, October 16th. Participants could choose from a long menu of automotive activities. At Barber, there

was the Driving School, Car Control Clinic, Club Racing School, Club Race (for certified racers), or the Gymkhana. Michelin had an area set up for test-drives of their tires and BMW had several new model Bimmers on hand for drives on the country roads around the park. I drove the 6-series convertible and I have to admit, it did give me the wants for a cushy newer model.

Other activities that were not held at Barber were the Autocross, in the spacious Regions Park parking lot (Heart of Dixie Chapter's Alan Thrasher won 2nd place in his class in the Autocross), the Time-Distance-Speed Rally that ended at Talladega Super Speedway, and the Fun Rally that ran from Highway 119 to the top of Mount Cheaha.

Then there were activities that members could experience at Ross Bridge. The Concourse d'Elegance (the car show) was held on the Golf Course. Unfortunately, it was a rainy day, so the cars disappeared shortly after judging. I arrived at 2:30 and most of the cars were already gone. Of course, there was always the Ross Bridge Spa or the Robert Trent Jones Golf course for some non-automotive diversions.

Each night, the Oktoberfest sponsors held dinner events, each one different than the previous. The week culminated in a huge awards night dinner at Ross Bridge with about

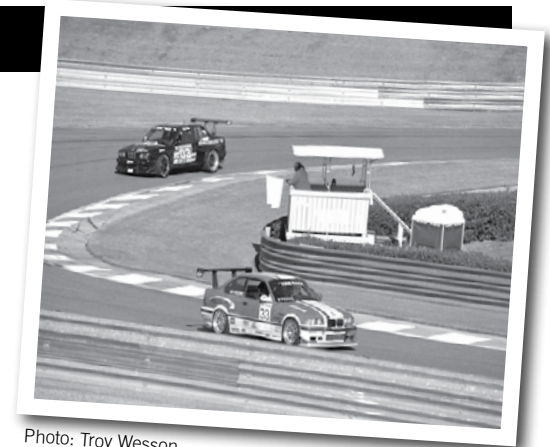


Photo: Troy Wesson

600 or so in attendance, and the dinner was not your typical conference center fare: Lavender Pear Salad, Petit Filet of beef and chicken with vegetables and a chocolate layer cake for dessert. One of the sponsors, Spaten Beer provided free beer and commemorative mugs to the delight of the beer-drinkers in the crowd. Not a bad deal after you've spent an exhaustive day at the track!

By Sunday afternoon, the last of the tired but happy drivers were leaving for home. It all turned out well, even down to the weather. There were a couple of drizzly days, but not that much on the all-important track days. The temperature was in the 70s for the most part and in Alabama, we have to be thankful for that. Many drivers from far away, who had never been to Barber Motorsports were delighted by the challenge and complexity of the track.

It was a good experience we will not soon forget. With some 700 club members milling about there was no way to meet everybody but it was fun meeting as many members as we could. Our club was happy to play a part in this premiere BMW CCA event. Check out the website for more photos of the event: www.albmwcca.org.



Above: Jack Joyner organized and ran the 5-day Driving School for Oktoberfest, along with the help of several dedicated volunteers. Thanks to all our members who pitched in for this big event.

2011 OFFICERS:**President**

Ron Drenning
205-492-2306 (cell)
e-mail: rdrenning@albmwcca.org

Vice President

Steve Lowery
256-773-1814 (home)
256-464-2147 (work)
e-mail: slowery@albmwcca.org

Secretary

Allan Morris
205-577-0263
e-mail: clubsecretary@albmwcca.org

Treasurer

Dale Sitton
205-987-2680 (home)
205-822-0299 (work)
e-mail: dsitton@albmwcca.org

2011 BOARD MEMBERS:**Membership Chair**

Pam Smith
205-870-4854 (Home)
email:
membershipchair@albmwcca.org

Event Coordinator

Carol Lowery
256-773-1814 (home)
256-722-7200 (work)
e-mail: clowery@albmwcca.org

Driving Event Coordinator

Jack Joyner
Email: chiefinstructor@albmwcca.org

Webmaster

Hank Bowman
205-979-7599 (home)
205-567-8623 (cell)
e-mail: hbowman@albmwcca.org

Newsletter Editor

Lisa Drenning
205-987-3293
email: ldrenning@albmwcca.org

Chapter Website:

www.albmwcca.org

Written & photographic contributions to the Heart of Dixie Newsletter are welcomed. Please send them to:

ldrenning@albmwcca.org

PO Box 361645
Birmingham, AL 35236

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Hello, fellow club members,

Many of you were able to make to BMW CCA's premiere event that was held for the first time in Birmingham during the week of October 10th - 16th and if so, you know that it was quite an event to remember. Of course, I'm talking about Oktoberfest, which took place at Ross Bridge Resort, Barber Motorsports Park and Regions Park for the Autocross. For our chapter's part, we were in charge of 3 events. In the weeks before Oktoberfest, my wife, Lisa and I laid out the route for the Fun Rally which ran from Highway 119 to Cheaha Mountain and came up with the questions for driver's to answer along the way. Troy Wesson constructed the props and course for the gymkhana event and he and wife, Theresa, ran this fun event on Wednesday. Jack Joyner headed up the driving school at Barber along with the help of Ted Vinson who came from South Carolina for this five-day event. Dale and Linda Sitton, Pam and Roger Smith, Brian Robertson and Jonathan Holly took several days off work to help make sure that this big event ran smoothly and it did. Thanks to everyone involved for your part in the success of our first Oktoberfest!

Moving along to other club news, the ballots for the 2012-2014 officers will be coming to you in the final issue of the newsletter, so there will be a change of the guard in January at our annual Kick-off Party. We are working on the date and place of the Kick-off party and should have something new and different in store, so we hope to see you there. The Kick-off Party is one of our most well-attended events with 80-100 members showing up to see what's in store for the next year. Speaking of that, the board will meet in early December to come up with our calendar for 2012, so if you have any suggestions, email me at rdrenning@albmwcca.org.

Also in December, we will be making a first-time trip to 100 Oaks Castle in Winchester, TN, all decorated for the Christmas season. We usually don't have events in December because club members are too busy with the holidays, but this tour filled up really fast. If you're interested in going, then send me an email and I will put you on the waiting list in case of cancellations.

We won't see many of you until the 2012 kick-off gathering so I hope everyone enjoys the upcoming Christmas season. Maybe you can talk Santa into stuffing that new BMW into the bag of goodies.

Ron Drenning
President, Heart of Dixie Chapter



The Oktoberfest Club Racing School, Class of 2011. Congratulations to the newest Club Racers!

TIME TRAVEL AND MEDICATION FROM OKTOBERFEST AT BARBER

One of the many track opportunities offered at Barber during Oktoberfest was a chance to take a few laps around the track in a McLaren F1 GTR, in exchange for a donation to BMW CCA Foundation. Not only did passengers get to experience a legendary car, but the driver was Bill Auberlen. As one track junkie put it, "This is what God drives in heaven." Brian Robertson couldn't pass up this chance to experience high doses of adrenaline and to see a master driver in action (see description below).

Brian Robertson

Crossing the finish line in first place at the Korean GP Sebastian Vettel screamed into his radio "YES YES YES YES YES and YES AGAIN!!!!"

This also sums up my experience riding with Bill Auberlen in the McLaren F1 GTR. Foggy memory, or not sure what a McLaren F1 GTR is? Think of it as the Bugatti Veyron of 1995; a 225+ mph, carbon fiber production car with soul stirring looks and the 'street cred' of winning overall at Le Mans in 1995. Lots of other coolness, but you can check its history on the Internet as good as me. Just know it has a 6.1 L BMW V12 that is beyond words, especially given that a street legal version was sold.

Before going out, Bill offered a visual teaser of slowing the car in the dark at Le Mans. The reflection of flames shooting out the exhaust lighting up the treetops before him... Armco glowing red from either side as brake rotors pull eyes from sockets... What a terrific Halloween ride, I think. Hmmmm, I like Halloween. Can you hear my justifications starting?

The McLaren features 3 seats in the over-the-counter version with the driver sitting front and center. The pair of "passenger seats" are offset rearward, one to each side of the fuel tank. A fire extinguisher occupies the right one in BMW NA's Le Mans version. I struggle to occupy the other. Hmmmm, 1 wife, 1 daughter, more justification perhaps?

Getting in... My seat is fitted with only a four-point harness. Just trust me when I say there is no room for the fifth. After a few contorted attempts while I hang from the roll cage, the mechanic gets the belts around me, in place, and locked. I spend the next few minutes making sure they are tight around the butterflies in my stomach. My seating position is like sitting in a small plastic trash can under a desk with your head tilted to the side because your helmet is wedged between the roll cage and the carbon fiber firewall and gold heat foil separating you from the V-12.

Passenger comfort... Upholstery is in the form of foamy tape on the carbon fiber. The seat's shape is trapezoidal and about as big around as a milk jug though the tight fit provides the ultimate in bucket seat functionality (note to self: pass on the roll at the meat 'n three next time). Legroom is plentiful with more carbon fiber on which to rest my feet.

The ride? Smoother and quieter than you would expect (now.

what can we do to put you in this McLaren today?). We scream through pit out and onto a hot track. I give thumbs up to the other traffic that resembles cones of varying colors. The McLaren's suspension is smooth, compliant, and soaks up Barber's curbs with ease. And yes, Bill drives it that hard.

Cabin noise? Well let's start outside. Most if not all gearheads present at Barber upon hearing the song of the BMW V12 stopped what they were doing and engaged in the purest form of group think. I'm no psychic but I believe I felt a collective "what the heck is that?" From inside it was again a pleasant surprise with no need for

earplugs. Just the kind of music that gives you chills; the same opera as outside but at just the right volume.

What was the riding in the car like?

Part time-machine, part medical device—an adrenaline pump of oceanic proportion that flooded my eyes, ears and blew every fuse leaving just a turning hour glass in

its place. The combined performance of Bill and car was uncharted territory. Drivers in driving schools fly at different altitudes. This was in a galaxy far far away—a death star in fact. Turns out it's a nice place to visit and I would want to live there.

After my journey, I learned this was nowhere close to 10/10ths, in fact, well short of a track record. Fresh out of storage, the car was still set up for the long straights of Le Mans, not the 140-ish mph at Barber (yes, I forgot to even glance at the speedo. No time and no need). The tires were worn and going off, not to mention cold.

But despite all these imperfections, those 3 laps remain way beyond my ability to comprehend. What was the car doing? Where would I have braked? How can anything handle, turn, brake, and just flat out go like this? How does Bill, the nice guy he is, have the ability to become such a demon of speed? How does he know if that car ahead sees him? Well, it turns out that last question doesn't matter as Bill and car already have the answer. With my mind still spinning I realize a few more driving schools (and lottery winnings) are needed before attempting any more justifications.

Having the BMW V12 LMS-powered McLaren F1 GTR at Barber Motorsports Park during this year's Oktoberfest was a treat well worth the cost. The chance to ride with a guy named Bill? Speechless. All thanks to BMW NA & RLR for bringing the car, thanks to my pilot and tour guide Bill, and thanks to BMW CCA Foundation for selling the best ticket to ride ever.



At the wheel of the McLaren F1 GTR at Barber Motorsports Park during Oktoberfest: Bill Auberlen; to the right, happy passenger, Brian Robertson.

TAKING ON THE CAR CONTROL CLINIC

Theresa Wesson

Have you ever wondered what you would do given a tricky situation out on the open road? Or have you ever wondered what a true oversteer or understeer feels like in your Bimmer? The Car Control Clinic supported through the BMW CCA Foundation and taught by the Tire Rack Street Survival School staff is the place to learn all of those important tasks and driving skills. I was lucky enough to take this course during the 2011 Oktoberfest at Barber Motorsports Park. In my husband's 2004 330xi, I got a great feel for what an "ultimate driving experience" can be had in a BMW.

In this half day class, I was taught the mechanics of steering wheel usage to avoid any object, change lanes, and come to a full hard stop. I have to admit the sudden lane changes with a full hard, ABS stuttering stop were my favorite part of the course. I was taught to be fully prepared for any object to fall off a truck on the Interstate while stopping before I hit another car or as they said in class "the bus load of nuns and orphans!" The course also had forward slaloms and plenty of sharp turns through many tiny orange cones that taught me how to look ahead and anticipate where I wanted to go. I also felt the car corner and squat its way along the orange cone laden path in the parking area, as tires squealed and talked through each turn. Every time I zipped around the cones I was amazed at how the car went exactly where my eyes went - which is why I left a trail of upturned tiny orange cones in the forward slalom the first time!

The extreme "cool" part of this course at Barber Motorsports Park was the ability to use the wet skid pad that is specifically designed for learning this important maneuver - the skid! I was fortunate enough to go onto the skid pad three times during my driving session. Each time I learned how hard it is to overcome the natural instinct to turn into the skid. I eventually learned to feel the tires losing grip and turn the wheel to allow the tires to grab patches of road before coming back under control. My final time on the skid pad gave me the opportunity to turn off the DCS (dynamic stability control) with approval from my instructor and feel what a difference that German engineering provides in safety! I highly recommend this course to anyone who attends a future OktoberFest and am ready to go play with tiny orange cones in a parking lot any day!

I was taught to be fully prepared for any object to fall off a truck on the Interstate while stopping before I hit another car or as they said in class "the bus load of nuns and orphans!"



Photo: Troy Wesson

Theresa Wesson on the Barber Motorsports Park skidpad at the Oktoberfest Car Control Clinic.

The Benefits of a BMW CCA Membership

- **Membership Rewards: Rebates Up to \$1,500 on BMW purchase.**
BMW CCA members in good standing (membership for 12 months prior to the purchase) may be eligible for substantial rebates up to \$1,500 on the purchase or lease of a new or Certified Pre-Owned BMW from any authorized U.S. BMW Center. See bmwcca.org for details.
- **Outstanding national events** including BMW CCA's premier annual gathering, Oktoberfest, which was held for the first time in Birmingham in October 2011.
- **12-month subscription** to the Club magazine, *The Roundel*.
- **Driving schools**, autocrosses, safety schools, fun runs and Club Racing.
- **Regional club-sponsored car corrals** at major road races, like the Indy and Grand Am Series at Barber Motorsports Park.
- **Free classified ads** on the website and in Roundel magazine.
- **Access to our Technical Service Advisors** for personalized advice.
- **Ombudsmen** to help with dealer issues.
- **Friends of BMW:** A roster of fellow BMW CCA members who can offer coffee and conversation, repair tools, workspace, sometimes even help when you're out on the road.
- **Club library and video services.**
Borrow BMW-related books and videos.
- **Availability** of a BMW CCA affinity credit card.
- **Free BMW CCA decals** available from the club office.
- **Access** to all areas of the growing online community at BMWCCA.org.
- **Access** to the BMW CCA social networking tools!

GYMKHANA—ALABAMA STYLE!

For those of you who have never heard of gymkhana, this is a timed motorsport event, similar to autocross that can feature obstacles such as cones, tires, and barrels. The driver must maneuver through a course performing many different driving techniques. What separates gymkhana from traditional autocross events is that it may require drivers to perform reversals, 180 degree spins, 360 degree spins, parking boxes, figure-eights and other advanced skills. Essentially, a gymkhana is any event featuring a starting point, a finish line and some sort of “obstacle” to get through, around, with the winner being the one who has the lowest time score and fewest mistakes. The gymkhana events that are held at the BMW CCA Oktoberfest feature themes based on the locale of the event. Troy Wesson of Huntsville created the gymkhana for this year’s Oktoberfest event, based on a favorite Alabama past time—outdoor sports. Speaking from experience, the course was a quite a challenge (half of it was driven in reverse) and a lot of fun to run.

With lots of southern hospitality and plenty of challenges, our chapter created and hosted this year’s Michelin Gymkhana at the 2011 Oktoberfest at the Barber Motorsport Complex. The BMW CCA permitted the Gymkhana to be located in a highly visible location at the Club Corral Parking Area, providing a steady flow of participants all day Wednesday. Fifty-five different drivers tried their hand at a course with a 100-yard reverse slalom, a mini golf putting green, a quarterback toss, a forward slalom with a finish line stopping box, and a magnetic fish fishing hole. Drivers received two opportunities to try their driving skills and luck at this “Alabama Outdoor Sports” themed gymkhana, with points added for situations such as orange cones hit or knocked over and with points deducted for occurrences such as a hole in one on the putting green.

The Gymkhana had three top place

finishers, after points were deducted and/or added to the total recorded time of course completion. Tony Lee borrowed a friend’s M1 to zip through the course and try his hand at the games, providing the best finish at this event. And although the friend’s car was used for this event, it was Tony that was awarded the set of four Michelin tires, provided by Michelin of course. Second place went to Alan Warner, who exhibited a steady hand in reverse thru the tricky 100 yard reverse slalom, and third place was awarded to Michael Lingenfelter, one of BMW CCA’s Regional Vice Presidents. This event would not have been possible without all the wonderful volunteers from our chapter and other BMW CCA chapters. —Theresa Wesson

At left: Troy Wesson (far left) presents the awards to winners of the Gymkhana competition at Thursday night’s Barber Motorsports Museum Reception.



Photos: Troy Wesson



At the starting line, drivers prepare to drive a reverse slalom for the first half of the event.



Stop 1: Drivers could try for a hole-in-one at the mini putt-putt golf course.



Stop 2: There was a chance to earn points at the Quarterback Toss.



Stop 3: After ending the gymkhana course, drivers had a final chance for a lower time score by “fishing” for points.

TOM WILLIAMS BMW TECH SESSION A BIG HIT!

Lisa Drenning

Saturday, September 17th was a nice treat for 22 of our Heart of Dixie gearheads who attended the Tom Williams BMW Tech session. James Corlew, General Manager and Trent Witsaman, Service Manager, arranged for club members to receive an extensive tech session from Shop Foreman, Bill Miller. Starting at 9 am, we were invited back into the very open and spotless shop area of the dealership for a basic BMW 101 class. Pam Smith brought her silver MZ3 Coupe and gladly volunteered it for the demonstration of the oil change (free oil included). She pulled into the shop and up it went on the lift.

Part 1 of the tech session covered changing the oil, but expanded into a discussion of the whole underside of the car as questions just kept coming. We began to realize the depth of knowledge that Bill has about these cars. After draining the oil from the oil pan, the discussion turned to other parts of the underside of the car and went on for quite awhile. We covered questions about ball joints, bushings, steering linkages, reasons for wear on tires, inspecting the differential and the best places to position a jack stand, among others. Bill pointed out all the strong places on the subframe that can support the weight of the car, which are easy to see when the car is up on a lift. This had some in the group wishing for an electric lift for their own garage. Bill also showed us how to use a screwdriver to release the spring clips on the brake pads, disengaging the spring force. I've helped Ron change our brake pads a few times and it is a challenge to get those clips to release. When Tom Williams replaces the brake pads, they usually change both rotors and pads. We must have spent more than an hour discussing the underside of the car before Bill lowered the car to replace the oil.

So, Part 2 of our tech session involved getting under the hood. First off, Bill changed the oil filter and replaced the engine oil using their automated system, plus showed us how to reset the oil service light. Then he removed the cover to the engine and we had a discussion

of valve cover gaskets, master cylinder oil, spark plugs and checking for wear and tear. We got a fair warning about replacing the radiators and expansion tanks at around 60,000 miles because of the plastic components.

Keeping a BMW in working order (or any car for that matter) is in the details. For example, in changing the oil, o-rings should be replaced, and the o-rings in some generic aftermarket kits don't quite fit the groove in the oil filter housing. This means that there may be leakage at some point. Also, you need to get a new copper ring when reinstalling the drain plug. If your service technician (or you) uses a power drive to tighten nuts, bolts or screws, this can lead to a very expensive repair if the threads get stripped. If you use a powered driver keep it in the "reverse" position and use your fingers and a torque wrench for all installations.

Next, Bill did a complementary inspection one of the member's car, Ron Castro's 7 series. Ron was having some issues with the car, but after an inspection it was determined that the car would be fine with the requisite expenditure of money that makes all BMW's run better.

The Tom Williams Tech Session turned out to be one of the most appreciated events we have held all year and they even provided box lunches! I don't know that much about the inner workings of a car, but found myself very interested because it was so well-explained. Thanks to our good friends at Tom Williams BMW for giving up several hours on a Saturday for our club!



The crowd gathers around for the beginning of the Tom Williams BMW Tech session.



Trent Witsaman, Service Manager, and Bill Miller, Shop Foreman of Tom Williams BMW.

BMW 5 Series
Sedan



bmwusa.com
1-800-334-4BMW

The Ultimate
Driving Machine®



ONLY ONE LUXURY CAR MEETS THE NEW STANDARD OF SAFETY.

A 5-star crash test rating is no longer handed out; it's earned. The 2011 BMW 5 Series is the only luxury car to be awarded an overall 5-star rating from the government's new crash test. The New Car Assessment Program testing criteria involve new standards in the rating system, including a test representing a vehicle crashing into a tree or pole, side impact test at a higher speed and a new female crash test dummy. Joy is embracing the new standards. The story of Joy continues at bmwusa.com/5Series.

JOY IS THE BMW 5 SERIES.

BMW EfficientDynamics
Less emissions. More driving pleasure.

BMW Ultimate Service™

Pay nothing. 4 years/50,000 miles.

\$0 Brake Pads Brake Rotors Scheduled Inspection
Engine Belts Oil Changes Wiper Blade Inserts

©2011 BMW of North America, LLC. The BMW name, model names and logo are registered trademarks. European model shown. The 2011 BMW 5 Series received a 5-star overall rating from the U.S. Department of Transportation's Safercar.gov program (www.safercar.gov). Other 2011 luxury vehicles tested include Audi, Cadillac and Infiniti. Each received a 4-star overall rating. All BMWs come with BMW Ultimate Service and Warranty standard for up to 4 years or 50,000 miles, whichever occurs first. Roadside Assistance comes standard for 4 years. See the Service and Warranty booklet for more details and specific terms, conditions and limitations. Based on \$0 cost for the BMW Maintenance Program. IntelliChoice estimated cost of maintenance for a BMW for 4 years or 50,000 miles, excluding tires, is \$0.

Tom Williams BMW

Grants Mill Road & I-459 • 1.800.640.6741
TomWilliamsBMW.com

HEART OF DIXIE CHAPTER

BMW CCA

PO Box 361645

Birmingham, AL 35236-1645

The Heart of Dixie newsletter is published by the Heart of Dixie Chapter of the BMW CCA. The club membership assumes no liability for the information contained herein. The ideas, opinions and suggestions expressed in the newsletter are the author's and no authentication is implied unless otherwise noted. None of the information is factory approved. Modifications made to your vehicle within the warranty period may void its warranty.

HEART OF DIXIE BMW CCA UPCOMING EVENTS

2012 KICK-OFF PARTY

January 2012

Meeting time and place TBA

The 2012 Kick-off Party will be held sometime during the month of January. Details are being ironed out, so check the upcoming newsletter for more information or watch for email updates.

CHRISTMAS FUN RUN TO 100 OAKS

Saturday, December 10

Tucked away in the rolling hills of Winchester, Tennessee, lies a real fairy tale castle. It is listed by the Smithsonian as one of the few remaining historic castles in America. Named one of the Top Ten Most Romantic Castles in the World in 2008. We will head out from Huntsville and take a great route going north and have lunch at the Castle followed by a tour of the Castle and grounds. One Hundred Oaks Castle is decorated for Christmas and will be beautiful.

Registration is closed for this event, but if you are interested in attending the tour, email rdrenning@albmwcca.org to get on the waiting list in case of cancellations.



Photo: Troy Wesson

A few scenes from the Oktoberfest nights: Top photos (Awards Night): Dale and Linda Sitton; Brian Robertson and daughter; Bottom photos: Ron Drenning presents the award for winner of the Fun Rally at Awards Night; Theresa Wesson and Satch Carlson at the Barber Motorsports Museum Reception.