

## Houston Autocross committee meeting minutes 17Jun2020

Attending: Robert Horton, Chris Humphries, Daniel and Laurie McCelvey, Donna Trusty, Jeff Thomson, Lynn Ketchum, Matt Baum, Reymond Singson, Michele Brown, Brian Maskrey, Richard Tomlinson

### Timing system:

Back in March we had issues with lots of reruns in the third heat, both finish and start false trips. During setup the t-link in the truck was showing varying rates of charge at the event two weekends ago. So we replaced it with the spare. Since we had no timing issues this time so we are pretty sure that we can blame the March problems on the bad battery in that tlink. Race America told us we could replace the battery ourselves by taking it apart to solve our immediate problem. We still have the spare tlink so we are good for this weekend but we need to decide before July event. Race America doesn't want to support the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation timing system going forward. They want to get all their customers onto the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation and are offering discounts to any customers to encourage them to upgrade their equipment to 3<sup>rd</sup> generation.

### Options to consider prior to July:

1. They can upgrade our current AC4 by installing a card in it; that would eliminate the tlink we use in the truck. If we decided to send RA all our tlinks and AC4 to be converted to Gen 3 we would get new t-links, and updated sensors for about \$1000. Tlink gen2 and gen3 devices can interoperate according to RA. The BMW Houston guys told us that you can't mix 2<sup>nd</sup> gen and 3<sup>rd</sup> gen but RA says they do work together. A tlink upgrade is \$450 each, so if we upgrade all including the spare it would cost about \$1500. RA says they can turn it around in 1 week. A little frustrating that we pay annual maintenance but have to pay RA for upgrades.
2. The Pronto timing software (<http://www.prontotimingsystem.com/>) is what the SCCA National folks use. It uses Farmtek hardware. They are putting together a proposal for us. Based on numbers we saw on the internet, it similar to the RA upgrade price. The Pronto guy says our Yagi antennas and timing displays will also work with it without any changes. The little rubber ducky antennas the Farmtek hardware ships with are listed at 300 feet. We will need to see what annual service and purchase cost are for the Pronto system before we decide which way to go. The Pronto software is reportedly somewhat easier to use than Axware, a few people have used it at National events. It has separate applications for registration, timing, and announcing instead of an all in one like Axware.
3. Houston SCCA Time Trial guys are looking into timing system options also.

Rallycross around the country has started using RFID chip based systems because it works with the mud flying around. It would be interesting to know what the timing accuracy would be since the sensor would have to make an estimate based on closest approach. (Did some research: RFID timing is used a lot in marathons and other foot races. If the radio antenna used is directional and preferably a pad the car would drive over then it would be more accurate than a horizontal setup).

### Last event (early June):

- No helmets failed tech. We had a bunch of people show up on Saturday while we were doing setup in order to get the annual tech. No one showed up without a helmet. One Mustang with

bad numbers had to use tape but was annual tech; we think he forgot to bring his numbers. We told the tech workers to have the competitors sign the sheet. This time to reduce the amount of paperwork being handed between people we will just have the tech workers write down the names/number/class on a list.

- 106 drivers, plus 7 DB entries. We lost money as far as we can tell, but we don't have all the expenses yet. For the event alone we lost an estimated \$20. Porta-pottie rental is \$329 typical, over \$508 this time with the addition of the washing station. If we add annual expenses, we lost about \$450 for the event. We would need 21 more entries to be a profitable event. We estimated 80 people to break even before the event so we will look at the numbers to see what can be learned. The DB entries were handled on MSR so we did not have to handle cash. Push the DB entries at the next event.
- The starter on the timing truck was broken and we had to tow the truck and trailer with our pickups and straps. We have the timing truck starter but have not installed it yet.
- Course was pretty good, no pavement breakup issues. We could run that course again.
- The wind ripped the door off the timing truck broom closet so we will need to fix it this weekend. We also need to recharge some fire exchangers.
- There was a competitor that got affected by the heat and got confused about where the course was. They drove the car over to a safe area and parked. Since the car was well off course, the corner captains did not red flag, which means we had to find out from the times and organize reruns. Probably best that we just red flag if we see that in a future event.
- From a virus standpoint, we saw pretty reasonable behavior, though the drivers did not always stay 6+ feet apart. A few people asked for masks. Lots of people used the hand sanitizer we provided. We did see people standing too close but everyone was pretty respectful if asked to provide some distance. The wind was pretty stiff and the sun was shining so we were very low risk of passing infection. We should attempt to keep participants to provide a safe environment so that our customers will feel confident enough to continue coming. If we don't keep our attendance up we won't be able to continue holding events financially or else charge more. Daniel shared the Texas Medical Center Covid-19 bed occupancy charts to show that Houston has an increasing infection rate.

#### Mid-June event:

- Lots of discussion about whether we want to tighten or loosen the rules/guidelines for the next event.
  - At San Antonio last weekend they had almost no virus provisions, probably will not attend another one.
  - Spectators – We had between 5-10 people, some friends of drivers and some just wandered in. One guy and his wife came through multiple times after being asked to leave. Should we have a +1 allowed (given a wrist band at registration table)? Our requirement of members only made our event very different from the event in San Antonio. Some couples normally bring a child to our event and swap watching duties so both can drive. Our current policy prevents that possibility.
  - Non-members – Novice difficult without the option to show up without being a member. Spouses, +1 would be a good idea to limit it somewhat. Propose that spectators not be allowed in hot areas such as grid and timing truck.
  - Entry cap – bumped the cap to 125 for July. We did not see any issue for crowd control in last event.

**We voted to allow +1 of annual waiver registered members at this June 20 event. That includes minors. We will send that out in the email blast.**

Nationals announced that the Minor driver program has been suspended.