NHIS Entry on Web Site or Contact Brad Marshall

BeaveRun EarlyBird Entry included -- DEADLINE May 5

VINTAGE RACER GROUP

VRG NEWSLETTER

APR 07 • VOL 4.2

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For the driver who enjoys racing with others who value driver attitude, skill and car preparation.

VRG 2006 Directors

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VRG RACE SCHEDULE 2007

MAY 18-20 - Vintage Celebration New Hampshire Intn'l Speedway, NH

JUNE 22-24 - Mosport Vintage Festival - Mosport, Canada (support event)

JULY 6-8 - PVGP Historic Races, BeaveRun, PA

AUGUST 18-19 - Shenandoah Summer Festival, Summit Point, WV

SEPT. 21-23 - Fall Classic, Mont Tremblant, Canada

OCT. 19-20 - VRG at the Glen, Watkins Glen, NY

NOV. 23-25 - Turkey Bowl XI, Summit Point, WV

Visit the VRG website at www.vrgonline.org for changes and updates to the schedule

NHIS 17th Annual Vintage Celebration
May 18-20, 2007

This year's NHIS Vintage Celebration is shaping up as one of the best ever. The challenging 1.5 mile road course includes significant elevation changes and incorporates a section of the NHIS NASCAR oval. As in past years, the schedule provides for more track time than virtually any vintage event. The costs are the lowest of any events on the East coast and all VRG eligible cars are invited to participate.

During the weekend several special events are planned:
A seminar on safety restraint devices
A catered participants' party at the track on Friday at 5:00
A track talk to acquaint those new to the course to some of its secrets
A Saturday night clam and lobster bake at a new site near the track
An "all comers" race on Sunday afternoon

The featured "marque" for the event this year are all VRG eligible Formula Juniors. The NHIS event is part of a series featuring Formula Juniors this year and we plan to have a separate race for these great cars.

VRG's driver training school (both level 1 and level 2) will be offered starting on Thursday May 17th with classroom instruction and practice on both the skid pad and race course (Please see Ed Valpey Drivers School Article in Newsletter on page 2).

Following is contact information for the event:

Event Coordinators: Brad Marshall (bradusm@aol.com) and John Kieley (john.kieley@adelphia.net 603-878-1220)
Saturday Dinner Tickets: Send check for $35. to Rich Kieley, 76 Faith Dr, Hampstead, NH 03841 (rkieley@comcast.net)
School: Ed Valpey (603-387-2082)
Hotels: Red Roof Inn (603-225-8399) Other local hotels (concordnhchamber.com)
Entry and school enrollment forms: vrgonline.org

We hope to see you there. If you have any questions please contact Brad or John.

John Kieley

VRG Drivers Schools - 2007

Beginning in the 2007 season VRG will adopt a new format for our Drivers Schools designed to make these programs more accessible to VRG members. Last year, we conducted our Level 1 school in conjunction with the NHIS Vintage Celebration and the event was well attended and well received. Our Level 2 school was scheduled as a stand-alone event, and while there was solid interest the actual entries proved too few to justify the expense and the event was cancelled. For 2007, we are combining the two schools and will conduct both in conjunction with our NHIS and Beaverun events. While the two schools will be run on the same day and at the same facility, the curriculums will remain distinct, and each group will attend separate lectures and will receive unique instruction. The following describes the experience level appropriate for each, and lists some of the material to be covered in each:

Level 1 – Novice Drivers
This program is designed for those with fewer than roughly 20 track days/races, and those who have never had any formal skills training. The primary goal of this program is to make drivers safer, though most participants will find that this training will also make them faster. Some of the areas covered:

- Basic Vehicle Dynamics
- Skid Recovery (Understeer, Oversteer)
- Trail-Braking
- Racing Line
- Racing Starts
- Managing Traffic
- Vintage Attitude
- On-track Evaluation

Level 2 – Experienced Drivers
This program is designed for those who have more than roughly 20 track days/races, and those who have already had formal skills training. The primary goal of this program is to make drivers faster, but it will also make them safer. Some of the areas covered:

- Proactive Skid Control (Rotation)
- Throttle Steering
- Utilizing Secondary Reaction Weight Transfer
- Managing Contact Patches / Slip Angles
- Optimizing Exit Speed
- On-track Coaching

If an individual is unsure which level is appropriate, then beginning in Level 1 would probably prove most beneficial. The majority of successful drivers have spent time honing their car control skills, whether on a dirt oval (circle track racers) or a facility designed for formal skills training (road racers), and most return to these frequently as part of their training. In 15 years of teaching I've shared skid pads with drivers ranging from rank novices to current professional drivers… without exception, they've found this type of training to be extremely beneficial.

In addition to the change in our format for Level 1 and Level 2 schools, we are hoping to implement our Level 3 coaching before the end of the season. The recent survey conducted by VRG showed significant interest in this program, which will take place at racing events and will combine individual coaching with the use of Data Acquisition. The techniques and strategies typically implemented in this type of coaching require solid car control skills, so participation in a Level 2 school will be a prerequisite for the Level 3 program.

Ed Valpey

VDCA "WILD HARE RUN" VIR – APRIL 13-15

It may have been a stormy weekend for most of the East Coast, but at the beautiful and challenging Virginia International Raceway, VRG members were out in force and enjoyed a seasonably warm and dry majority of the weekend at the VDCA-hosted "Wild Hare Run" April 13th, 14th and 15th. This event draws entrants far and wide and we were pleased to see half a dozen Canadian neighbors attending. While Sunday was literally a "washout" with many folks headed home early, no one went without track time as Friday's schedule had four opportunities to be on track and Saturday's three sessions culminated in some fine racing as each of the groups held what turned into their "feature" race. Several entrants shared that they had had about enough after Saturday and that their thirst for track time had been more than sated by the generous schedule.

My personal "Pick of the Liter" was Hervey Parke's immaculate red and yellow Coventry Climax-powered Elva Mk V. While this car was making its maiden outing, it was an attractive addition to the group and no doubt will soon be capable of performance matching its good looks. Tom Grudovich upheld the honor of Elva founder Frank Nichols with a blazing run in his Mk IV at the front of the combined VDCA Group 1 and Group 4 crowd, to be expected from this talented and experienced pilot! Tom's other Elva, his Twin-Cam powered Mk 7, unfortunately suffered from another driver's mistake early on. The offending driver, in the VRG and VDCA tradition of enforcing driver conduct, was excused from the rest of the weekend.

Another car near and dear to my heart was Andrew Celovsky's light green (how do you characterize that distinctive shade charitably? <grin>) Fiat 124 Sedan. These boxy "people movers" were strong, popular and exported behind the Iron Curtain as "Lada" and "Polski Fiat" sedans, having proved remarkably durable and, with the proper modifications, reasonably quick. Thanks to Andrew for making the trip south so that we could share in seeing that car. My final personal favorite was the unique car/driver combination of VRG Board of Directors member Mari Ryan and her fantastic Coventry Climax-powered Lotus Mk VI. Mari blasted out of the pits to lead all and sundry for the "pursuit race" Wild Hare Run on Friday afternoon. Drifting serenely around the scenic Oak Tree Turn, she upheld the honor of Lotus founder Colin Chapman and her attentive crew chief Tivvy Shenton well! It was very nice to see her and her car out again.

One of the most captivating battles in VDCA's Group 3 (Vintage Sports Cars and Sedans) was the epic between Jay Nadelson's swift MGA and the exceptional driving of erstwhile VRG Board Member Mark Palmer. It was fantastic watching how this battle developed throughout the weekend with Jay's superior "juice" often matched by Mark's superb car control. Often, I could use Mark's line as an example to others "how it should be done," and in the Saturday afternoon feature, it was no great surprise that while Jay finished in front, Mark actually set "fast lap" of the pair. The race was a great run and a fine showcase for the talents of both the drivers and their cars. Bob Schoeplein's appropriately named MGA, "Honey Bee," was a welcome addition as Bob's smile and enthusiasm of just being out with friends was contagious. Henry Frye upheld Triumph honor in his rapid TR-4. He and the Elva Courier driving Hank Giffin had a heck of a battle in practice and qualifying until gremlins affected Henry's race. Hank, on the other hand, had a storming drive up the order, improving *ten* spots from his starting position! Talking about "Hard Luck" awards, Mike Muckle had difficulty with his very historic Turner Mk III and then his immaculate Lotus Formula Ford, so he turned to helping crew for his friend and fellow British car enthusiast, Dean Tetterton, for the rest of the weekend. The Formula Ford battles were intense and befitting the "equality" of the class, with the spectacle in the feature race of Jay Their's Macon leading a very tight pack consisting of the delightful Bill Hollingsworth, John Bechtol (yes, I got a hug from Dotti, *made* my weekend) and the stunning Alexis of David Allison. Unfortunately, Chris Shoemaker retired after a storming first lap. Bob Bruce led the Club Ford contingent and was mixing it up with the two-liter sports racers; such was the strength of his drive!

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VRG ANNUAL MEETING - 3/21/07
Cloverleaf Auto Service

THANK YOU BILL WONDER

If you did not attend this year's Spring Tech Meeting on March 24th you missed another memorable event.

Ralph and Candy Steinberg once again made everyone feel welcome and made sure we were all well fed. It's always fun poking around Ralph's shop, you never know what you will find.

The tech discussions by Ralph, Mark and Tivvy were informative, especially the discussion about towing safety. We all could use a safety review of our towing techniques.

The trip to Bill Wonder's Garage was a highlight of the day. Bill has a collection of rare and beautiful cars, all of which could be rolled out onto a track tomorrow and raced. His discussion of his racing experiences was interesting even to those in the group with no seat time. Even more interesting was Bill's recounting of the modifications that he and his crew made to each of the cars to improve their handling and race performance.

In all it was a fun and informative day capped off with a great dinner with good friends. We all came home with spring fever. Don't miss it next year.

Paul Bova

Photo by Darry Bova

VRG Winter Warm-Up

The 2007 VRG 'Pre-Season' got off to a rousing start on Saturday, March 10th as VRG members and guests gathered at F1 Boston for an evening of enthusiastic competition and spirited conversation, with excellent food and drink thrown in for good measure. The VRG Winter Warm-Up was put together by Ivan Franz, as a way for VRG members to shake off those winter blues and get the competitive juices flowing in advance of the upcoming racing season. Unfortunately, from the perspective of some of the 'veteran' VRG members, 'Age and Treachery' did not prevail over youth and exuberance during the evening, as we shall see!

F1 Boston is considered to be the premier indoor karting track in the Northeast. It is also a first class meeting /special event venue that includes a full service restaurant and bar, as well as numerous private function/ meeting rooms. As VRG members and friends began gathering shortly before 6 pm, they were pleasantly surprised as they were directed to their very own private dining area. After a few minutes for everyone to get acquainted, it was time for the mandatory drivers meeting. As the participants were known to be experienced racers, the short orientation program was in order. Two main rules were stressed; any bumping would result in a warning - three warnings and you were off the track. The racing format was reviewed; six 10-lap qualifying races, followed by a 15-lap feature race. The fifteen on-track participants were split into two groups. Each participant would get to race in four of the six qualifying races. Each participant would score points, based on their finishing position in their qualifying races. The top ten points finishers would qualify for the feature race.

The track layout (The City Course) was such that, with exception of the tight left-hander (The Corkscrew), you could virtually get around the entire course without using the brake, a very important point to remember when trying to maintain that all-important MOMENTUM!

It was time to race! After getting suited up in private locker rooms (you could use your own driving suit and helmet, if you preferred), it was down to the track and into the karts. The pace lap was single-file, yellow flag until the lead kart entered the sweeping left-hander that lead to the start-finish line and the green flag! Timing the start was crucial because as soon as the green flag waved, passing was allowed. If the karts behind you got a better jump, they were past you as they swept through the left-hand turn immediately after the start-finish. Then the big MOMENTUM would carry them all the way on the UP-HILL straight! The elevation changes were great fun!

As the heat races progressed, the hot-shoes were showing their stuff and the points were tallied and displayed on the digital scoreboard located in the infield. The top qualifiers for the feature race were: Graham Long, Roy Sokolowski, Ivan Franz, Chris Shoemaker, Paul King, Jeff King, Nick Candee, John Kieley, Mari Ryan and David Vorrhis.

Like the qualifying races, the feature race was started single file. At the green, the lead kart of Graham Long shot away and proceeded to put a substantial lead on the rest of the field. (Hmm, shades of Shumacher and I don't mean the VRG one!). Roy Sokolowski was comfortably in second, although not able to catch Graham. The rest of the pack were having a great dice amongst themselves, with the order being Ivan Franz, Chris Shoemaker, the King boys, Nick Candee, John Kieley, with Mari Ryan and David Vorrhis having their dice a little further back. As the race progressed, there seemed to be some bunching up of karts behind Ivan and of course the inevitable 'bumping' and WARNING SIGNS that result from such activities! Did I hear the word 'blocking?'

At the finish, it was Long 1st, Sokolowski 2nd, with Ivan holding off Chris for the final podium finish!

After getting out of our driving suits, it was back to our private dining area for some great food, drink and bench racing! Chris Shoemaker brought videos of The PVGP and BeaveRun events to share with the group. Mari Ryan made sure there were photos taken for posterity. There was some discussion about how Graham was able to run away and hide from everyone. It may have something to do with that 'Formula One' build of his.

Ah, to be in your twenties again!

It was a great evening of competition, with great company to share in the fun!

A Special thank you goes out to Ivan Franz for putting together this special event.

Let's do it again next year!

Paul King

Be an EagerBeaver!

Enter BeaveRun by May 5th

Send your entry for the VRG BeaveRun event by May 5th and you'll get a $65 discount off the regular entry fee. The **"earlybird" entry fee is only $235**, the regular entry fee is $300. So don't delay, get your entry in the mail this month and save some money!

The Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix Association, and VRG, are **making some nice improvements** to this year's event based on feedback from you, the participants. The track has hired a new food caterer and we're hopeful this will improve the quality and service of lunches and breakfast. There is also a new caterer for our Saturday night luau, who promises to have more lines and faster service – along with some nice additions to the menu. We've streamlined the entry form and medical information form (two separate, but simpler, forms) – available at the VRG web site, www.vrgonline.org. We've also tweaked the schedule slightly, to maximize the track time for each competitor. We're tentatively adding one more race group to better accommodate the medium-bore production cars, of course final race groups will depend upon the actual entries received.

We're especially pleased to be able to offer the **VRG Drivers School** at BeaveRun for the first time this year. Ed Valpey will be our Chief Instructor. The curriculum will be similar to our previous schools at NHIS, and will offer a Novice School and Advanced Skills School. This is a great opportunity for VRG members (and non-members) located in the Mid-Atlantic region.

A highlight of this year's event will be the **"Spridget Reunion".** All Austin Healey Sprites and MG Midgets are invited for this special feature! We plan to have an all-Spridget race during the weekend, to celebrate these popular (and quick!) little cars. If you race a Sprite or Midget, please join us and please help spread the word to your friends with these cars.

I would also like to suggest that you consider **renting a garage** at BeaveRun for this event. I've enjoyed one the past two years, they are very conveniently located, modern, and offer pleasant protection from sun or rain. The price is a very reasonable $250, and we have more stalls available this year.

Remember, this is all part of the Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix Association's "Week of Speed" festivities that support two fine charities in the area. Hope to see you there!

Mark Palmer

PVGPA/VRG

Official Entry
Historic Races at BeaveRun - July 6, 7, 8, 2007

Driver(s) Name_____ E-mail _____
(PLEASE PRINT E-MAIL CLEARLY)

Address _____City_____

State/Province _____ Zip _____ Country_____

Phones: Daytime:_____Evening:_____

I have a vintage Competition License: Club _____ License Number _____ Expires _____
--- *OR* ---
I am a Member and Qualified Driver with the following vintage racing organization(s): _____

Are you currently on probation or suspended from any vintage racing club? Y/n _____ if yes, explain on reverse side →

Emergency contact Name:_____ Phone: _____ At track? Yes/No _____

Car: Year_____ Make_____ Model_____ Color(s) _____

Actual engine displacement _____ Carburetors: number/type/size _____

Tires: Manufacturer/model: _____ Size: F _____ R _____ Treaded? y/n _____

Wheels: Type (alloy, disc, wire)_____ Width & Diameter F_____ R_____

Race number: 1st Choice: _____2nd Choice: _____ 3rd Choice: _____

Your lap time: BeaveRun _____ VIR long course _____ Mosport _____ Summit Pt _____ Other: _____ _____
NAME OF TRACK *LAP TIME*

Total size & type of your tow vehicle and trailer_____

FEES: ***Members of VRG, VDCA, and VARAC please use member discounts***

Early Bird (posted by May 5, 2007) Member $235.00 Non-member $275.00	_____
Regular (posted by June 22, 2007) Member $300.00 Non-member $335.00	_____
Late (posted after June 22, 2007) Member $345.00 Non-member $385.00	_____
2nd car same driver: additional flat fee of $225.00	_____
Friday Test & Tune: Full day - $150.00; ½ Day $80.00; Per session $55.00	_____
VRG Friday Driver School: $200.00	_____
Saturday Luau Party & Dinner: Adults: Number ____ x $25 =	_____
Children under 12: Number ____ x $15 =	_____
Garage Rental $250.00 per stall *(holds one regular car or two very small cars)*	_____
Additional voluntary donation to our charities	_____
Total: *********Make all checks payable to PVGPA*** ****************	_____

By signing this entry form, I acknowledge that vintage racing is a dangerous activity. Serious injuries and fatal injuries can occur. I have no physical or mental problems that would prevent me from safely participating in this speed event. I release Vintage Racer Group, Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix Association, BeaveRun Motorsports, all officials, employees, volunteer workers, and other participants from any liability for injuries or damages.

PUBLICITY RELEASE: The entrant/driver grant to the Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix Association the use of her/his name, voice & or likeness in electronic or printed media for news, publicity or future program use. I further stipulate that no other agreements with other parties conflict with this agreement

Signature(s) _____Date_____

MAIL TO: **Keith Lawrence 102 Sandcreek Drive McMurray, PA 15317**

PVGPA Medical Form
Historic Races at BeaveRun

To be filled in by all entrants. If your vintage race club or other sanctioning body does not indicate on your driver's credentials that you have a current medical with EKG please supply a copy of that medical, if available, with this form.

Medical Information:

Age_____ Blood Type_____ Date of Last Tetanus Shot_____ Drug Allergies_____

Special Conditions: Hemophilia_____ Epilepsy_____ Asthma_____ Diabetes_____

Contact Lenses_____ Other_____

Current Medications_____

Personnel Physician_____ Telephone #_____

Emergency Contact _____ Telephone #_____

Is this person trackside_____

VDCA "WILD HARE RUN" (con't)
VIR – APRIL 13-15

Additional "hard luck" stories could be told by Whit Ball, whose clutch could not transmit all of that prodigious horsepower to the wheels in his awesome Healey. Dick Barnes had a front pulley come loose from his 2-liter Ford engine and decided to park it after unpleasant noises were heard in the motor after it was put back together with donated parts. Freddy Danovitz had a tough time getting his MGB to cooperate, so he decided to turn his attention to driving the heck out of his Spitfire. He had a great run, so that made up for a little of the disappointment in not being able to run the MGB.

It was very nice to see Robert Stadel bring out his venerable Volvo P-1800. Robert and his lovely wife, Patricia, were fixtures at events driving this fast and well-developed Swedish sculpture, but after turning to his attention to fettling his latest acquisition, a Triumph-powered Ambro sports racer, the Volvo was set off to the side. It was really nice to see him back in that car, as he says, "it fits like an old shoe." Another spectacle present was Robert Andersson's extraordinary sounding and extremely fast big-block Cobra. Yes, a *real* 427 Cobra and not only that, but a driver that's not afraid to put his foot down! You actually *feel* more than *hear* this car as it thunders by, and we are so fortunate that Robert chooses to share his cars with us.

I saw Jim Hartman doing well with his Porsche and Michael Orritt holding up the Elva flag but did not have a chance to talk to them. Every time I saw Jim, he had a smile on his face, so his weekend must have been going to plan! As always, these weekends are as much to catch up with friends as they are to head out onto the race track. The Saturday evening feast at the VIR Gallery was enjoyed by all and I know that we all appreciated the efforts of Mike Jackson, Doug Meis, Beau Gabel, "Father Time" Neil Harmon and his lovely partner, as well as Chief Steward and Board Member Bud Merrill, who ran a safe and timely event, even with all the other activity going on. I hope you all have a chance to attend another VRG event soon. With NHIS coming up and BeaveRun getting ever more popular, you won't have long to wait!

Peter Krause

TECH TIP

To make repairs to your drivers' suit, or to sew on patches, it's important to use Nomex thread. Do not use common sewing threads, which are polyester or nylon or other materials that readily burn & melt. Nomex thread is readily available, in small quantities, from Weaverville Thread Inc. I just ordered some 1-ounce spools for $3.25, which is probably a lifetime supply for repairs & patches. Their web site is www.thethreadexchange.com or phone 1-800-915-2320. They have bazillion sizes and types. Their web site also has some good technical info to help you choose the right type of Nomex thread (bonded, soft, etc etc).

Mark Palmer

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

I learned about being a *snowbird* this winter. It is fun and it is very nice to put shorts on in the morning instead of snow shoes, but it is not the end all. We have a little townhouse in Hobe Sound and I took the Crossle along with the wife there for the winter. She stayed at the townhouse and Bob Bruce found accommodations for the Crossle at a race car shop along with his Crossle down the road in Tequesta. We got there too late for me to race in a SCCA race at Homestead in which Bruce tore the left front corner off his car when he spun in turn 1 on oil dumped by a blown Ford engine of the car he was lapping. We (the Crossle and Marilyn and me and Bob Bruce) did the Targa Sixty Six at Moroso in late February. GMT Racing, Vintage Racing Services, KTR, Hudson Historics, and Lee Chapman brought cars for winter testing. Friends and their wives met for the dinner Brian Redman gave on the Saturday night at which Bruce Kessler was the speaker. He and I were neighbors in Los Angeles and it gave us a chance to fill in the years. Quite a few from the northeast were there and it was a terrific weekend for the driver and his car. We (the Crossle and me) raced at Roebling Road in Savannah in the SVRA event and at the VDCA/VIR "Wild Hare Run" (the Crossle and me and Bob Bruce and his Crossle) last week. As there was a "noreaster" expected on Sunday we (the Crossle and me) started the drive to New York on Saturday evening, Bob Bruce packed up and returned to Florida. We (Marilyn and me) just got home from Florida, by car, yesterday (Sunday) with a station wagon full of clothing, food, and "stuff," (I flew to Florida last Tuesday to close up the townhouse and drive us home this past weekend). Darry Bova and I are attempting to finish up a Newsletter that was begun last week in between flying south, putting up the townhouse and driving north (again).

When we went south in January, the Lotus was apart and had not had its winter maintenance completed. It sits untouched. The Crossle has returned with a crack in the Hewland that needs to come out of the car, be disassembled, and welded. It needs a new roll bar as the present one is too low, and the brake calipers need to be rebuilt as one is leaking, and the head needs to come off so that the valves can be lapped (the Lotus' brakes get rebuilt too). My golf game went south as soon as we got there (Marilyn and the Crossle and me) – actually I must have left it up north as I was playing pretty well when I hung it up in October. The trees are in bloom, we have theater tickets in New York, it is 82 degrees, the fourth fairway is out my window, and normally at this time of year I would have the race cars prepared, I would be looking forward to late afternoon golf with the wife, planting flowers, our evenings in New York, and the coming season of vintage racing. As it is the race cars need lots of attention and all the things that I looked forward to in the spring I do not have time to do… because we (by this time you know of whom I am speaking) spent our winter in Florida. Being a *snowbird* is not the end all.

Bill Hollingsworth

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

Our Driver Development Program continues to move forward. Ed Valpey has completed the curriculum for Level 2 and is working on Level 3. At NHIS both Level 1 & 2 programs are being offered. We hope to have Level 3 operational later this season. Level 1 is for new and novice drivers. Level 2 will help experienced drivers take their skills to a higher level. You should see an improvement in your NHIS lap times and if it rain your comfort level in the wet will be improved.

Starting this season we are requiring medicals. Any medical less than two years old will suffice. We will accept proof of a current medical such as membership card from another VMC club with a current medical date. Any VARAC driver will be excepted as we recognize their medical program.

While VRG has highly recommended fuel cells in the past, starting with the 2007 season they will be required. Very few of our entrants this past year did not have a fuel cell. However, all it takes is one car to start a serious fire that may involve several cars.

Our Shenandoah event has been scheduled for August 18-19. This was done to reduce the conflicts with other events. While this event did not score well with our recent membership survey, we want to give this venue another try. I think the Shenandoah track has gotten a negative image that it does not deserve. It is a tight technical course that favors smaller bore cars. The paddock and facilities are new with electricity available everywhere, good bathrooms and showers. There seems to be a love/hate feeling about the carousel. We may try running one day without the carousel this year. Some consider the track dangerous, but I consider Lime Rock to have a greater risk for a serious "big one". We only need about sixty cars to make this a good event. Please consider giving this new date a try.

We ended our year with a cash position of just over $40,000. This is good solid growth, but we need a couple more years to build our assets to the level that will allow us to support a large event and absorb a bad loss without jeopardizing the financial strength of our club. We would like to acquire our own timing and scoring system, some radios and on board data recording equipment as part of our driver development program...
I welcome any sponsorship help with any aspect of our activities.

Have a great season!!

Bob Girvin

How to buy a Racing Suit

Buying a driver's suit is easy … buying the *right* one can be difficult! Most vintage sanctioning bodies provide only the most general guidance, the industry specifications are confusing, there is a huge selection of materials, manufacturers and retailers – it is bewildering! We'll attempt to sort through the maze here.

What level of protection do I need?

"Oh, I'm not going that fast" … "we're just amateurs, we don't need the best" … "the corner workers will put out the fire" … you've probably heard these comments. We say, rubbish! In my opinion, vintage racers should consider a *higher* level of protection than most other forms of racing, for the following reasons:

- Many vintage clubs do not require fuel cells
- Even if you have a fuel cell, others on the track with you may not.
- Most vintage clubs don't require an on-board fire suppression system.
- Many vintage events are run with the minimum required number of corner workers, so it may take longer for help to reach you.
- Our cars are older, and probably not as well-maintained as a new professional race car.
- If you drive a coupe, it may take you longer to exit the car (as compared to an open car).

Consider this: the FIA requires drivers to demonstrate that they can unbelt & exit their car within **five seconds**. And based on that, the FIA has mandated drivers suits that provide 12 seconds of protection (about 2.5 times the exit time). So try it out sometime: from your normal position, fully belted in the car, how long does it take you to exit? You might want to take the FIA's advice and buy a suit rated for 2-1/2 times that number.

The basics

We all know that the purpose of a racing suit is to prevent burns in the event of a fire. But, do you *really* know how much protection you have with your current suit? Most of us probably do not, and you will probably find it rather sobering.

The specifications for driver's suits are based on the time to reach a **second-degree** burn. Second-degree burns affect the first & second layers of skin, usually taking two-three weeks to heal, and often leave a scar. You will feel pain, and sustain first-degree burns, well before second-degree burns occur. It only takes a temperature of about 130°F to cause a burn, and the flame temperature of a gasoline fire is 2000° F.

The suit has to do two things: it has to *block flames* from reaching your body, and has to *prevent high heat* from reaching you. To block the flames, the material must resist combustion, and retain its integrity in the face of this 2000° gasoline flame. To prevent the heat from reaching your skin, the material must be a *very effective* ***insulator*** . The material achieves this insulating ability by trapping air in tiny pockets in the material.

By the way, most responsible manufacturers use the term "flame retardant" to describe their fabrics. This means the material will stop burning when the external flame is removed (self-extinguish). It does not mean that the material is "fire proof" or "flame proof" – there is no such thing.

Balancing protection and comfort

Heat exhaustion is a major consideration in vintage racing. We are often subject to long waits on the pre-grid, in an open car, in mid-summer. So there must be a balance between fire protection, and driver comfort (coolness). A one-degree rise in your body's "core temperature" has a measurable affect on concentration, and a two-degree rise causes a very serious loss of ability. To date, there is no industry test or specification for "coolness" of driver's suits. You will have to make that evaluation yourself, based on suit construction and materials. Many fire-retardant materials do not "breathe" very well, and do not wick away moisture. So suit construction becomes very important, when these materials are used.

The specifications:

Most vintage race clubs don't require your suit to meet any particular specification. Most clubs simply state that it has to be made of fire-retardant material, and perhaps the number of layers to be worn (most specify three layers). However, for your personal safety, it is better to buy a suit with proper specifications even if your club does not require it. Industry specifications do *not* rate suits by the number of layers—ratings are determined by performance, not layers.

There are two different organizations that publish specifications for driver's suits: the **SFI** in the U.S., and the **FIA** for all other countries. The FIA spec is simple: there is only one, and it is "pass/fail".

The SFI specifications are more complicated. The base spec is SFI 3.2 A, but there are various "levels" of protection:1, 3, 5, 10, 15, and 20. For instance, a suit that meets level five, will be labeled "SFI 3.2A/5" on the upper left sleeve and is commonly advertised as an "SFI-5" suit.

What do these different levels mean? The SFI "level", is an indication of the *time* you can be exposed to a fire before you are burned. The higher the SFI number, the more time you have.

What's TPP?

"TPP" is an international standard of "thermal protective performance". It is a measure of the time it takes to create a second-degree burn on human flesh, when the fabric is exposed to a 2000° flame on the outside. The exact meaning of the number is complicated, but basically you *divide the TPP number by two,* to figure the time in seconds. Example: a TPP rating of 20 will give you 12 seconds before second-degree burns occur. The SFI specs are based on the TPP rating of the suit, as shown in the following chart:

SFI Rating	Minimum TPP Value	Time to 2nd Degree Burn
3.2A/1	**6**	**3 seconds**
3.2A/3	**14**	**7 seconds**
3.2A/5	**19**	**12 seconds**
3.2A/10	**38**	**19 seconds**
3.2A/15	**60**	**30 seconds**
3.2A/20	**80**	**40 seconds**

This is rather sobering … with the suit you're currently wearing, you may have only 3 – 7 seconds to unbelt and exit the car. You might be able to get out that fast when you practice – but how much more time would it take in a real fire, after a crash, when you are disoriented and starting to panic? The reality is, we don't have much time, even with a good suit … and a poor one is downright scary.

For comparison purposes, the single FIA spec requires a TPP of about 21, although their test method is different. But basically, an FIA suit corresponds to SFI 3.2A/5 or a little better. The FIA suit provides roughly ten seconds of protection.

Generally speaking, the job of the outer layer is to block flame. The job of the inner layer(s) is to prevent heat transfer. A single-layer suit will prevent the flames from reaching your body – but will *not* provide much insulation from the heat. All the single-layer suits I know of, are rated SFI 3.2A/1 (if they are rated at all!) – giving you about *three seconds* to escape the fire.

Materials and fabrics

There are many, many flame-retardant fabrics. Most of these names are proprietary "brand" names, which doesn't tell you much. The most important ones to understand are Nomex, Kevlar, PBI, and Proban. These are the ones you will encounter most frequently.

Nomex: This is by far the most common material used for high-quality racing suits. It's a product of DuPont, and is a aramide fiber. The current version of the product is "Nomex III", and is blended with 5% Kevlar for strength. Nomex is *inherently* fire-retardant: that means the fibers possess this property themselves, without any secondary treatment. Hence, the fire-retardancy lasts forever. Also, it has excellent UV resistance. Nomex comes in many different finishes: "shiny", "sateen", "filament", "Coolquilt", etc. In a multi-layer suit, the outer layer is typically a tightly-woven shiny or sateen fabric (good flame barrier), and the inner layers are puffier wadding for insulation. The biggest drawback to Nomex, is that it does not breathe very well, and does not wick moisture. A two or three-layer Nomex suit without vents, can be very uncomfortable (hot). Most manufacturers try to design the inner layer to reduce this problem (quilting, Coolquilt, etc) to some degree.

PBI: This stands for polybenzimidazole and is a product of Hoescht Celanese. It is inherently flame-retardant, but lacks strength by itself. It will also stretch & lose its shape, so it is almost always blended with a lot of Kevlar (about 50/50). It is much more absorbent than Nomex, and softer, but more expensive. It breathes well. Also, PBI cannot be dyed, so suits made of this material are only available in "natural", a sort of medium brown-tan color. It is moderately resistant to UV.

Proban: This is the most common "treated" flame-retardant material. It is basically plain cotton, dipped in a proprietary solution to make it fire retardant. *You must carefully follow the manufacturer's instructions for washing "treated" FR fabrics like Proban and Indura, to avoid washing away the chemical.* And, most experts recommend replacing a treated garment after 4 years or 50 washings, at the most. Some people claim that the fire retardancy starts to diminish with the first washing, and is seriously reduced by the tenth wash cycle. The problem is, you cannot tell *when* the fire retardancy has been lost.

For equivalent thermal performance, Proban is heavier than Nomex, and it is not as durable. The biggest advantage is price – FR cottons are very inexpensive. And they breathe, and wick, very well.

If the suit fits …

Fit is *very* important! Do *not* buy a tight-fitting suit! A tight suit will stretch the fabric, compressing all those little air pockets that insulate you from the fire, and effectively reducing the protection. A tight suit is also uncomfortable, limits movement, and is much hotter than a looser-fitting suit.

Some of us are fortunate enough to be a "standard size" for a suit manufacturer. However, I'd recommend a made-to-measure suit. Nearly all the manufacturers offer this service, and some smaller shops actually specialize in custom-tailored suits. So have someone take your measurements carefully, see whether you truly fit into a standard suit, or opt for the custom. Expect to wait 4-6 weeks for a made-to-measure suit.

One piece or two?

Many of the U.S. manufacturers offer "two-piece" suits, a separate jacket and pants. While they may be more comfortable, they are not as safe as a one-piece design. The jacket & pants may cause a gap, just as you are trying to squirm out of a burning car.

About your underwear …

We could devote another whole article to underwear, but we'll be brief here … fire-retardant underwear is absolutely essential with an SFI-1 or -3 suit, and very strongly recommended with an SFI-5 suit. If you elect to forego racing underwear, then *be very careful* about the material of regular underwear. *Never* wear anything with poly, rayon, nylon; these will melt in a fire (even underneath your driver suit) with severe consequences to your skin. Even a cotton/poly blend is dangerous. You should only wear 100% cotton, or cotton/wool, if you choose not to wear Nomex long johns.

There is great debate about soaking underwear in water before a race … I will not list all the pro's and con's, it is your choice, but generally it is not recommended for Nomex underwear. I personally think it is a bad risk for any fabric (steam burns).

Styling & features

Some styling issues are purely aesthetic, but some features have safety implications. Some suits offer "vents" of knitted material, which allow body heat and moisture to escape. Other popular features are 360º arm gussets and a back gusset. These features make the suit more comfortable to wear, perhaps cooler and hence safer with respect to heat exhaustion. However, the knit Nomex material is not as good a barrier to flame as regular woven Nomex fabric. Another comfort feature is a knitted "soft collar". Some makers now offer integral arm restraints.

Pricing

Very roughly speaking, here are the price levels: A single-layer FR cotton suit is about $100, but I don't recommend it. A single-layer Nomex suit, rated SFI-1, is about $200 – better, but I still don't recommend. Two-layer Nomex suits, certified to SFI 3.2A/5, start at about $350 – 400. A standard three-layer American-style Nomex suit (still SFI 3.2A/5 but with higher TPP) will run about $450. *Note: a three-layer suit, without underwear, may be cooler to wear than a two-layer suit with Nomex underwear. It may also be cheaper than the combined cost of suit & underwear.*

European suits (FIA certified, usually having more features than a standard American suit) run about $600 and up, in standard sizes (same for "Euro-styled" American made suits). The top of the line European and American suits can be over $1000. A made-to-measure and/or custom design suit typically runs about $100 – 150 more than an equivalent off-the-shelf suit by the same manufacturer. Often, the manufacturer will only offer made-to-measure in their better suits. The smaller companies that specialize in made-to-measure will probably offer a better price, and more options, than the large manufacturers when it comes to MTM suits.

The manufacturers

The major suit manufacturers and their web sites are as follows:

European:

Sparco (Italian)	www.sparcousa.com
1-800-224-RACE	
OMP (Italian)	www.ompracing.it
Momo (Italian)	www.momo.it
Stand 21 (French)	

American:

Bell/Pyrotect	www.pyrotect.com
Simpson	www.simpsonraceproducts.com
Racequip	www.racequip.com
1-800-678-7223	
RPM Racegear	www.rpmracegear.com
1-317-244-9694	
G-Force	www.gforceracinggear.com
Deist	www.deist.com
Chicane (Pit Lane)	www.racesuits.com
1-760-635-3582	
VAS Enterprises	www.vasracingsuits.com

A few comments on the manufacturers – these are just my personal impressions, you should make your own judgements: Sparco seems to be the very top of the top … OMP, Momo, and Stand 21 are also very high quality European manufacturers … Simpson and Bell/Pyrotect are the two mainstays here in the U.S. … Pyrotect made their name with PBI suits, which were thought to be cooler than Nomex … G-Force is a newer company, and has very attractive prices on basic suits … Chicane and VAS specialize in made-to-measure suits.

Care of your race suit

Mostly common sense here. Keep it clean; do not wear it to work on the car! Nomex is pretty resistant to grease, oil, etc (better than PBI) but any stains will have a negative effect on fire retardancy. Follow the manufacturer's instructions on washing, some require dry cleaning, others allow home washing. Be especially careful about washing a suit made of FR cotton like Proban!

If you want to sew patches on your suit, make sure you use Nomex thread (of FR cotton thread). It is cheap to buy, and regular thread often has synthetic fibers that will melt in a fire.

If you have the great misfortune to be caught in a fire in your suit, *throw the suit away* and buy a new one. The suit may be damaged by the heat, even if the damage is not visible, and will not hold up if exposed to flame a second time. Don't risk it – driver's suits are intended to work in a fire *only one time.*

In summary, I would emphasize a few things. 1) *carefully* consider the *level of protection* you feel you need (TPP rating), and buy accordingly; 2) spend the money to get an *excellent fit* (buy made-to-measure if you need to); 3) spend the money to get a *comfortable, cool suit,* because heat exhaustion is a much a risk as fire.

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Contact me, Kim Eastman, at kim@vrgonline or 207 642 4610.