

MID-AM REPORT

We rush through the first half of the season -- nine races in three months -- then meander through the last half over five months with eight more races including the Mid-Am Bonus Race, this year to be run at the Mid-America Motorplex for the first time.

The Bonus Race is always key to winning Driver of the Year. It's almost impossible any more to earn that honor without an 84-point score, which anyone with at least 60 points and five wins can do.

For that reason, 60 points is the benchmark for those shown on the Driver of the Year list in the Mid-Am points. Seven drivers so far are there. This year the sponsorship from SafeRacer will give the top 10 on the year-end DotY list a new driver suit. To be eligible, a driver must not only be in the top-10 in points, but also have at least four outright wins (first on the track in a class of at least two cars).

Loren Moore (OzMt) looked like he would win it last year until it developed that his honeymoon was scheduled across the Bonus Race weekend. Even as a newlywed Moore knew what was necessary to ensure a happy marriage. This year, it is assumed, the Moores may celebrate their anniversary at MAM. Winning nine of the first 10 races, six outright, Moore leads the list again. He also tops the ITE standings, and SP too, in his Corvette as he seeks to repeat his 2004 double championships.

Chris Albin (SIII) has won DotY an unprecedented nine times. No one else has done it more than once. Cutting back ever so slightly on his ITB racing to focus on his G Production car, Albin has only done seven of the first 10 races, winning them all in his VW Golf.

Steven Burkett (StL) has a sleek new Mazda RX8 which he races Saturdays in T3 (and Sundays in T2). Like Albin, Burkett has rolled to seven wins, four of them outright. This is the first year T3 has been a recognized class in the GCR so Burkett is the likely first-ever T3 champion.

Ron Davis (Kan) is defending his FP championship with six wins so far, five outright in his MGB. Davis also won EP titles twice in the same car before it was bumped down a class.

Chuck Leighton (OzMt) runs a limited-prep MGB in GP where he was the 2002 champ. This year he has five wins, and his one second-place was to Albin who since has run up enough GP national points to be withdrawn from the Mid-Am in that class.

Charlie James (NeOk) is in the wild and woolly Spec Miata class -- 42 cars are registered! But despite a couple dozen drivers chasing him every time out, James has not yet lost in five tries. A challenge looms, however, from **Jim Drago** (MidS), who has raced four times and also is unbeaten. It is the only close contest among the seven on the DotY list. At some point these two will find themselves on the same race track together.

Steve Bachenberg (KC) tops ITA in his BMW 325e, scoring top points every time out in his five races. Bachenberg is also going for a second consecutive championship.

With a near-record 172 drivers registered, this is shaping up as one of the biggest Mid-Am years ever. The all-time record entry was 173 in 1999, a total not achieved until mid-July. However, we may expect the count to drop in 2006 as a couple dozen Spec Miata drivers depart to focus on national points for the first time -- especially with the Runoffs coming to Heartland Park Topeka.

So what is happening in the rest of the Mid-Am Championship?

PRODUCTION ~ EP: **Forrest Tindall** (OzMt) won at HPT and tied himself with Court Whitlock (OzMt) for the class lead. **HP:** **Tim McGinley** (StL) still has the only points in class.

GT ~ GT1: **Mary Daly** (StL) has run her total to 48 points from four wins. **GT Lite:** **Britt Brown** (KC) and **Kenneth Probst** (SIII) are tied with one win each.

SPORTSRACING ~ S2000: **John Nelson** (KC) won his third at HPT to open up a gap over two-time winner **Ed Smith** (StL). **SRF:** **Rob Sherwood** is unbeaten in four starts. **Dan Axtell** (KC) also with four starts stands second, but the stronger challenge could come from **Jeff Stehney** (KC) who won both ends of KVRG's April doubleheader but hasn't been back on the track since.

FORMULA ~ FA: Everybody's a winner. **Willard King** (KC) has two wins and a second to lead over **Jason Mabee** (KC), also twice a winner in his F/SCCA car. Mabee would be leading but for entering one race as F/SCCA instead of FA. **Craig Chandler** (OzMt) and **Phil Gumpert** (StL) have each won one. **CC:** **Tim Williams** (Neb) has the only points, from taking both ends of KVRG's April weekend. **FM:** **Lee Walther** (Okla) won one, then **Gary Phillips** (KC) won one, then the two met with Walther prevailing. **FF:** **Joe Spain** (Okla) has the class lead over **Gary Payne** (StL). **CF:** Next-door neighbors **Michael Dierkes** and **Jim Krispin** have hooked up together twice, trading wins, so they are tied atop the class. **FV:** The strongest Vee field in years has **Patrick Hughey** (KC) with four wins but just six points ahead of two-time winner **Matt Guzowski** (StL). **Michael Lauer** (Wich) has also won a pair.

SHOWROOM/TOURING/AMERICAN SEDAN ~ AS: The only difference between **Jeff Kopp** (KC) and his pursuers is a third race in which he finished 2nd. That gives him a 9-point lead over **David Guinn** (Wich) and **Otto Roberts** (StL). **SSC:** **David Gird** (Wich) has a pair of wins in his Dodge Neon.

IMPROVED TOURING ~ ITS: **Bob Gill** (KC), seeking a fourth straight championship, has only stumbled once in five outings. He has 14 points in hand over **Mark Andrews** (StL) and **Jack Schulz** (OzMt). **ITC:** **Jarold Boettcher** (KC) has a comfortable lead at the moment from three wins, but **Matt Armfield** (Kan) won the only two races he ran. **IT7:** The Lambs lead, but not comfortably. **Connie Lamb** (Okla) is only five points ahead of her husband,

Lynn, who is in turn only three up on **Nadeem Bari** (StL). Edge to Bari, who's won three times in four starts, while the Lambs have three wins between them in 13 starts. Two-time winner **Scott Peterson** (KC) is not out of the picture either.

On the I.T. Tour

Drivers in the Midwest Division I.T. Tour have already put six races behind them. Just four left to make up any deficits -- Hallett and Heartland Park in July, Gateway and Mid-America in August. Drivers must start at least three races to be eligible for championship awards.

ITS ~ **Mark Andrews** (StL) is the only driver in the whole series to have made as many as five starts. With two wins, a second and two thirds, Andrews owns a 17-point lead over **Bill Denton** (MidS), who won the second Memphis race. Other class winners were **Paul Lerman** (StL) at the first Memphis, **J.J. Perodeau** at Hallett and **Bob Gill** at Heartland Park.

ITA ~ **Ben Bricker** (NeOk) has won a pair. That's good only for a 3-point lead over **Steven Bachenberg** (KC) and **Jude Rudder** (OzMt). However, it is noteworthy that Bachenberg and Rudder were both second to Bricker in their meetings, which may or may not mean anything. The only other winner this season has been **Phil Robinson** (Sill) at Gateway in his only time out

ITB ~ That **Chris Albin** (Sill) is atop the class is no surprise. That he has not won every race is, but then, he hasn't run every race this year. **Patrick Findley** (MidS), runner-up to Albin three times, stands second on the list followed by **Tristan Poplin** and **Harlan Donaldson**, who won the races Albin didn't.

ITC ~ **Jarold Boettcher** (KC) has won three and **Larry Orr** (MidS) has won one, but Orr says he is no longer an ITC contender. He and racing buddy **Nick Chinopulos** have acquired a pair of Mazda RX7s to go to ITS. The Fiats, says Orr, are parked.

ITE ~ **Loren Moore** (OzMt) won the first three races and nobody is really threatening him yet, but there's time. In second is Gateway winner **John Waldbaum** (Neb), one point ahead of **Scott Davie** (Ark) and **Jeff Demetri** (Neb). **Mark Kirby's** Viper won at Heartland Park.

IT7 ~ **Nadeem Bari** (StL) has won three times in four starts, enough for an eight-point margin over **Lynn Lamb** (Okla), who won at Hallett. **David VandeBerg** (DMV) and **Mark Jeffery** (MidS) won their only starts.

SM ~ **Jarrod Igou** (DMV) took his second win at Heartland Park after an earlier triumph at Mid-America. That puts him just one point ahead of **Roger Johnson** (MidS). **Tom Kraft** (DMV) scored at Gateway and stands third in points. Winning their only finish to date are **Rick Harris** (Wich), **Charlie James** (NeOk) and **James Drago** (MidS). Spec Miata currently has 43 drivers on the points list. This will be the final year Spec Miata is part of the I.T. Tour as it will become a National class in 2006 and will run in a different race group -- probably with Showroom Stock. At least that will free up some I.T. car numbers!

--Rocky Entriken