



Photo: Sideline Sports

## Family, Man, and Machine

By Keith Williams

Nothing in life is as fulfilling as the relationship between a husband and a wife, or a father and his son. One of the few real rivals is "man and his machine". Very few "man and machine" relationships compare to the "man with his BMW machine" on a track. (Note: I try to be PC, but this is written from the male perspective, please feel free to substitute if you like.) Couple that with your 23-year old son Ryan sharing the car with you on Father's Day weekend no less, and your wife Jerita biting her nails and closing her eyes on the bleachers, and you have the perfect weekend! I experienced such a weekend the last two years at Putnam Park in June.

In 2003, I tackled the track with an outstanding instructor, my first helmet, an outstanding pre-game pep-talk from Bill Wade, and a BMW 323. This was my first driving school of any kind. As I wandered into "no man's" land from time to time, the middle of the track, I was tactfully but directly (just the way I like communication) coached back into the proper line. By the end of the day I was no pro, or even close, but my progress in relationship to my first few laps was personally exhilarating. This feeling was topped by Ryan's reaction, which was "let's do this again next year". Ah Ha, I have found the secret formula to ensure we can keep him coming back to see my wife and I year after year.

This year's event was even greater. During the off-season, I upgraded for the 2004 event by procuring an E46 M3. As the 323 was still a much greater vehicle than the skill I pos-

sessed, the M3 was just too much of a temptation. The car performed almost flawlessly on the track. Given my current skill level, if I had to pick one word to describe the M3, it would be "forgiving". Forgiving is how Ryan described the car, and it really fits. The car accelerates well and corners beautifully. Due to the fact the M3 is weighty for a performance car, (3415 pounds), the car does not feel like you are about to break traction and go into one of those nasty spins at any time. For very skilled drivers, a few hundred pounds less and a lot closer to the edge might be better, but not for me. For me, the E46 M3 is ideal. The only weakness I observed related to a barely noticeable brake fade late in the day. Keep in mind two of us were using the car, so it was on the track most of the day. This negative was quickly turned into a positive. For the first time with the M3, I had the privilege of going "shopping" for an upgrade. Many thanks to Bill Wade and Bill Heumann, who gave me an excellent recommendation. After stainless steel brake lines and a change in pads, (a very inexpensive solution), I am ready to go again.

I hope to see many of you at Mid-Ohio Labor Day weekend. This is my first time venturing off the Putnam Park track, so my first goal is not to wander off line into the middle of the track again. We'll see where it goes from there.

## Random Reflections—Putnam Park 2004

By Michael Rohrbaugh

I like to take the back roads into work. Every morning as I dodge SUVs and school buses that could not care less that I spent all weekend washing my car, it is a constant struggle to avoid spillage of my coffee from my travel mug. Before you chastise me for defiling my bimber with food or beverage, it is important to note that I do not actually drink the coffee while I am in my car. It is for when I arrive at work. It's not that I am against drinking it while in the car; the coffee is just too hot. Like I said, it is a challenge to drive the curves as quickly as possible while NOT spilling my coffee. Every input, from accelerating to braking, to turning left or winding the wheel right, all inputs must be smooth. Like butter.

And so was the mindset when I showed up to Putnam Park on Friday. That's right, I played "hooky" from work on a Friday afternoon to go drive in ten-turn circles all weekend. To get out of work, I had some explaining to do. I was met with blank stares and questions such as, "like NASCAR?" as I told my co-workers why I wouldn't have my TPS report in on time. As I tired of the remedial geometry lesson, I quietly fled my cubicle lifestyle. This weekend, I was going to play race-car driver.

Having left the boasting and exaggerating back at the office, I was all humility as I sat through the driver's meeting on Saturday morning. Bill Wade, the man who makes the Bluegrass Driving School possible, stated, "the people you work with will think you are racing this weekend. Let them think that. Tell them you won." Perfect. Finally we got through class and it was time to get to the grid.

As we passed through the paddock towards the grid, a bit of nervousness came over me. It had been far too long since last I took to the track at Putnam. I hope I remember the braking zones, where to turn in, when to accelerate, and "BOTH FEET IN." Let's scratch the last one...hopefully, we won't need it. With Len Mueller, the world's greatest instructor, all buckled in and ready to go, there was but one thing left to do before we exited pit row for the track. Len, cue "Eye of the Tiger."

The first session came and went in the blink of an eye of the tiger. Just as I was settling in and finding a rhythm, the checkered flag waved and it was time to cool off. During the second session, I found myself a bit more relaxed, trying to remember to be like butter. By the third session, I was beginning to feel better than butter and decided I would try to drive fast. My driving line went to hell and my laps became inconsistent and a bit scary. I think I might back it off a little bit on Sunday.

Nearly an hour after I finished my last session on Saturday, I found myself reveling in the magnitude of my good time. The sun was setting and the champagne was nicely chilled. As I took another sip of champagne out of my Dasani water bottle, with Survivor belting away in the background, it occurred to me I was having just about the best time of my life (besides my honeymoon...jeez).

Sunday morning met us with more warm sunshine. It was shaping up to be another perfect day. After talking with Len a bit before hitting the track, we decided it would be best to take it easy during the first session, leave DSC on, and concentrate on being smooth. By about the third lap, it was quite apparent I was going faster than I had gone at any time on Saturday. By not focusing on going fast, I was somehow going fast. It's amazing the way that works. Turns were being approached at much higher speeds than at any previous time, and it was important that my brain keep up with my pace. Those that know me realize that is NOT a likely occurrence.

The second session on Sunday was my best of the weekend. It felt like I had finally put the jigsaw puzzle back together. Every turn was making sense, and I could feel the rhythm. I actually started to feel very relaxed. Like all good stories (and mediocre ones), this story has a conflict. As the second session drew to a close, I nailed the 3-4 combination, which meant I was approaching 5 at a much higher rate of speed. I didn't dare look at the tach, but I could hear the engine darn near clip the rev limiter. Unfortunately, I only braked about the same amount as I had been braking for 5 all weekend. Which, of course, was not nearly enough. Still not quite recognizing my mistake, I turned in for five, and realized there was no way I was going to stay on track. There's only one way to solve this problem...LIFT!! NO!! AAHHH!!! A beautifully violent figure-eight super

*(cont. on next page)*



The Putnam Five: (from left to right): Dave Nihiser, Brian Hoffman, John Ackerman, Jason Noble, and Len Mueller

(cont. from previous page)

loopy loop later, I finally remember “BOTH FEET IN.” I sat there, half on and half off the track, and let the tire dust settle on my car, in my car, and in my mouth. Now that’s some good eating.

Third session on Sunday was all about rebuilding my now damaged confidence. Which we did with aplomb.

So now it’s Monday morning, and I am back off to work again. All of my inputs are smooth, like butter. I don’t want to spill my coffee. I feel sharper as a driver, much more aware of all that is around me. Without even thinking, I spot my braking zones, my turn-in point, the late apex, and track out. Everything I learned I can apply on the street: forward braking, easing on the throttle, unwinding the wheel, and BOTH FEET IN. Wait, let’s scratch that last one...

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**Schedule of Events**

**Keeneland Concourse:** Aug 28, \*CHECK WEBSITE FOR DETAILS\*

**September Meeting:** Sept. 8, 7:00pm, Newport, KY Hofbrauhaus—Joint meeting with Buckeye Chapter

**SeptemMMMMber Fest:** September 24, 5 to 7 pm. 2338 Frankfort Avenue, Louisville. A celebration of Chapter M-cars followed by Frankfort Avenue Trolley hopping. See web site for details.

**October Meeting:** October 12, 7:00pm, Louisville

**FALL TOUR:** Details to be determined—\*\*CHECK WEBSITE FOR UPDATES\*\*

**President’s Column**

Vrrrrrooom, vrrrrrooom, nay, perhaps it should be the more appropriate German “Wrrrrrooom, wrrrrrooom.”

What a summer this has shaped up to be! From the Maifest car show held at the Bluegrass Brewing Company, to the Chip and Dent Fest at Don Jacobs BMW, we started the summer off strong.

Then with the superbly run, 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Bluegrass Bimmers Driver School at Putnam Park and Club Race in June, the Bluegrass Bimmers Chapter has been busy. Add to that the Keeneland Concourse auto show on August 28<sup>th</sup> and a joint meeting with the Buckeye Chapter on Wednesday, Sept. 8<sup>th</sup> at the Hofbräuhaus in Newport, KY we continue to keep things exciting!

Not to end there, all of you M3 drivers (and anyone who wishes to attend), we will be announcing an exciting event to be held the last Friday in Septem///Mber in Louisville that promises to be I///Mpressive! Please come out and get involved.

Mein Gott! I love this club!

Fahr Wohl,  
John “Hans” Ackerman

**BLUEGRASS CHAPTER WINS PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD**

The Bluegrass Chapter has received an award of \$300 from ZF Industries for its Public Service efforts in 2003.

In 2003 we raised:

- \$334 for Cabbage Patch Settlement House in Louisville, from the Cumberland Rally
- \$430 for YWCA Spouse Abuse Center in Lexington, from the Christmas Party
- \$229 in matching funds were earned from National

In 2004 we have raised:

- \$370 for Cabbage Patch Settlement House in Louisville, from the Maifest Car Show

## Innocence Lost

by Jason Noble

Few things in life conjure a warmer smile than the memory of one's first time. Years of longing and mounting anticipation, combined with the stories of those more experienced than yourself, leave one's brain to liken the event to a pilgrimage to the sacred Mecca. All of this weighed heavily on my mind as I journeyed north on an unusually crisp morning, towards my rendezvous with fate.

She was a high strung girl in red attire, a bit on the high maintenance side, but very easy on the eyes. I wondered if I had what it would take to seal the deal. Could I woo her into a delicate submission and still come away with no bodily harm?

A long time friend, John Ackerman, a fellow far wiser in the ways of the world, told me that it was all about the dance. The dance would have to be a mutual partnership, one in which leading took back seat to following. Become too overzealous, and you could crash and burn, so to speak. Not enough input, and an overwhelming sense of melancholia would wash over you and leave you still wanting. So we

danced...for an entire weekend. In the sweet seclusion of a Midwestern countryside, we learned each other's every move, pushing each other to the very limits and leaving oh so little for the imagination to ponder. Money was never used so enjoyably as was the nominal fee for our brief interlude. Finally, after all of the smoke had cleared and the sweat washed away, a conclusion combusted in my brain... performance driving school at Putnam Park is almost better than sex.



Photo: Michael Rohrbaugh



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