



NJMP Lightning 2022

NEWSLETTER

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

2022 VRG Event Schedule

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| April 1-3 | Wild Hare Run with VDCA – Virginia International Raceway, Alton, VA
Event Chairman: Mike Jackson, 561-622-7554, vdca@vintagedrive.com |
| April 25 | Driver Development Program – Jefferson Circuit, Summit Point, WV
Advanced/Refresher Clinic for VRG's current experienced racers and veteran drivers returning to the sport – Chief Instructor: Denny Austin, denny@vrgonline.org |
| May 10-12 | Driver School – Summit Point, WV
Level 1/Novice Students – Chief Instructor: Denny Austin, denny@vrgonline.org |
| May 12-15 | Jefferson 500 – Summit Point, WV
Event Chairmen: Cal Trumbo & Jim Karamanis, 304-449-7050, j500@vrgonline.org |
| June 23-25 | Vintage Motorsports Festival with VSCCA – Thompson Speedway Motorsports Park, Thompson, CT – Event Chairman: Mark Gunsalus, 508-272-1323, mgunsalus@charter.net – Assistant EC: John Jeffery |
| July 15-17 | Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix at PittRace – Wampum, PA
Event Chairman: Ian Wisbon, 412-400-9375, ian@vrgonline.org |
| September 2-5 | Lime Rock Historics with VSCCA – Lime Rock Park, Lakeville, CT
VRG Event Chairman: Paul King, 508-847-4809, paulking@vrgonline.org |
| September 23-25 | VRG at The Glen – Watkins Glen, NY – Event Chairman: Mike Lawton, 978-274-5935, lawton@vrgonline.org – Assistant EC: Matthew Barbour |
| October 14-16 | New Jersey Historics – NJMP Lightning, Millville, NJ – Event Chairman: Butch O'Connor, Tel: 973-295-3674, Email: bfo@spsk.com – Assistant EC: Nial McCabe |
| November 18-20 | Annual Turkey Bowl – Summit Point, WV
Event Chairman: Jim Karamanis, 304-449-7050, jim@vrgonline.org . |

**2022
NJMP
Lightning**



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Bill Stoler's SNAPSHOT – 2022 NJMP Historics

Earlier this year, when the VRG announced a return to NJMP with a new date in October, my first thought was – gosh, the autumn weather in South Jersey has the chance of being very pleasant. Well, it turned out that my expectations were exceeded – the weather was perfect! Blue skies and pleasant temps greeted us on Friday – it was if the state of New Jersey rolled out the welcome mat for the return of the Vintage Racer Group.

Returning to NJMP had the feel of re-visiting an old friend and it was our first visit to Jersey since the summer of 2019. It also marked a return to the Lightning circuit that we last visited in 2017. I enjoy the historical significance of this place – the site is an old WWII Army Airfield. The tracks at NJMP are named after the WWII aircraft that flew here – the P-47 Thunderbolt and the P-38 Lightning.

My informal polling indicates that many prefer the 1.9 mile “Lightning” track over the longer 2.25 mile “Thunderbolt” circuit. Longtime Formula Ford racer Frank DelVecchio states that it’s worth the tow from Connecticut and that “Lightning is one of the best in

the Northeast, with good flow – fast and challenging. It’s a fun track to drive.” Fellow FF pilot, Tim Nichols has raced Lightning many times with the Bertil-Roos series and agrees – “It’s a fun track, fast. The car is at its limits through T1-5 and the bowl is basically half an oval – with a couple good straights for passing, I’m looking forward to next year!” Denny Austin likes the track too – “The ‘Lightbulb’ is one of those defining sections like the Carousel at Summit Point and the Esses at the Glen that reward the best drivers with fast lap times. It’s one of our favorite corners!” Although this race wasn’t on the original Formula Ford Challenge Series schedule, it attracted 15 Fords and the FFCS Feature Race produced an exciting race with a three-wide finish! Joe Griffin, Tim Nichols and Stefan Vapaa battled all race long in a collective draft and only .067 seconds separated 1st to 3rd with Griffin edging out Nichols and Vappa at the checkers. Griffin said “What a great race!” Runner up Nichols stated “That ole FF draft kept us in the hunt, and no one could really get away. I’ve had some close finishes, but that was the closest three-way I’ve ever been at the finish line!”



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The event marked Thom Leavy's first event since graduating the VRG Drivers School at the Jefferson 500 earlier this year. The resident of Jersey enjoyed being able to drive a street legal race car from the garage to the paddock. Leavy said "As a rookie, I enjoyed a fairly straightforward track that allowed a humble 1.6 liter Miata to build up enough steam to see god heading into Turn 1!" Lisa Pollock Pagington had a great weekend in her "Flower Power" Miata and says, "I love Lightning – I've been on track with four different cars here, including an open-wheel at the Bertil Roos school – it's just a great track."

If there was an award for demonstrating perseverance over the weekend – it would have to go to the team thrashing on the familiar Karamanis Ford Pinto. Friday morning, the Pinto stopped shifting during the first session. After the tow back to the paddock – it was discovered that a crack had developed, and the fluid was lost. They called crewmember David Neil who brought a spare with him to the track. With the help of Ralph Pagington they installed a spare (but it was junk too!) So, the team made one good transmission out of two (I saw hammers being used!) The good news is Jim joined the big bore race as a test session and

hit the track later in the afternoon with his mid-bore class. Lisa Pollock Pagington recalls thinking: "I'm positive Karamanis is going to come in on a rope!" But the Pinto defied all odds and raced from last to first, taking the win on Saturday afternoon! The good fortune continued during the Sunday morning enduro, and Jim drove the car back into the trailer!

Quite simply, it was a great weekend at New Jersey. Everyone I talked to was grateful for the effort that event chair Butch O'Connor put into bringing this event back. Obviously, the turnout was lighter than we hoped, but the enthusiasm for the event was evident. I don't think it was too bad considering that it wasn't on our original schedule. The change from a summer date to October resulted in a gorgeous weekend with tons of track time. It's my understanding that the track location is in the geographic center of our membership. This event has the classic VRG "vibe," and it has gained momentum. Let's keep it going. We already have a date – October 13-15, 2023. This announcement gives the event an early chance to grab a spot on everyone's calendar for next year!

Now it's off to Summit Point and the Turkey Bowl!



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Racing with a Little Help from My Friends

by Steve Hirschtritt

My weekend at New Jersey seemed finished before it got started. Thursday evening as usual, after finding a paddock spot, I unloaded the Turner and set up my “at the track” hotel room and got the car teched. Friday morning’s practice and qualifying went smoothly, but in the afternoon race a broken axle on my Turner required a tow off the track. The broken axle took out the hub, brake drum, etc. and the wheel became extended out of the wheel well, thus the car had to be lifted off the ground to tow it back to my paddock spot.

I was preparing to load up and call it a weekend when Scott Janzen prodded: “You’ve got another car at home and it’s only Friday; you could go home and get it! I thought about this for a while. It would mean tearing down all my bedroom stuff and moving all the canopies etc. and then towing the broken car back to Reading and at least five hours of driving. NOT HAPPENING.

But then Mike Kurtz (who had already blown an engine in his Triumph) said – “I’ll ride along with you to get it!” With good company and another driver, I thought that I just might be able to do this. Thus, we converted my weekend bunkroom back to a race car trailer, loaded up the broken car and headed back to my home near Reading PA. The trip took about 2.5 hours and after making the switch from the Turner to the Sprite, a short break with a glass of wine, it was back to NJMP! Mike and I arrived back

around midnight, unloaded the car and I converted the trailer back to a hotel room before trying to get some sleep! Morning came quickly and I took the car to tech, only to find out the brake lights didn’t work! The thought of troubleshooting this problem with little sleep certainly didn’t sound appealing – so I asked Ralph Steinberg, “Can’t I just put a big sign on the back that says NO BRAKE LIGHTS?” Ralph quickly shot down my request before another friend, Rich Rock offered to help diagnose the problem which turned out to be a faulty mechanical brake light switch. Obviously, something not to be easily found at your local auto parts store.

Rich suggested going to the parts store anyway and rigging something up. I didn’t feel like running around looking for parts, but with good friends willing to help, and a convincing “come on I’ll drive” from Rich, I relented! After visiting three stores in Millville, Rich found a momentary switch that he felt would accomplish his brainstorm. Rich fabricated a bracket and a wire lever and, voila, brake lights working. Sounds easy... it took hours and the fabricator told Ralph: “it’s not elegant but it works” and Ralph gives me a tech sticker.

I ended up having a good race with Richard Jefferson on Saturday afternoon and even ran the 45-minute race on Sunday – all thanks to the help of few friends! Thanks to Rich Rock, Mike Kurtz and Scott Janzen.



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We Need Race Reporters!

No formal education required! – just tell us how the weekend went, throw a few sentences together and send to Bill Stoler at wrstoler@comcast.net or Rob Brownlee Tomasso at rob@rbtomasso.com.



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

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