

Lotus Enthusiasts Organization

NY-NJ Area

Dateline: February 10, 2006



As the "Winter that Wasn't" continues into 2006, we hope that your Holidays were fruitful and that your Loti were well. Many of us have been driving our cars through the month of January as there was not much salt on the roads.

We have several Lotus events already, lined up for your pleasure! Starting with:



Driving Fever Party

Yes, it's Baacck! Sandy, David and Allison Nagler will once again host our annual winter meet at their house, on **Saturday, February 18th**. It's food, fun, videogame and slot-car racing, and a chance to reacquaint yourself with the quirks <GRIN> of your fellow Lotus owners! The fun starts at **1:00 PM** at 7 Vincent Drive, Chester NY. Bring whatever makes you most competitive with HO slot cars or

Playstation. And, bring your Significant Other along with your appetite, there is always plenty of delicious food and drink courtesy of our hosts.

Just make sure you **RSVP by Monday, February 13** to David at LotusHack@lotusowners.com or call Sandy at (845) 469-6001. This event runs rain or shine, bring your daily driver if the weather is bad.

Go Kart Challenge, Sunday March 19th

Once again we remove the winters' rust with our indoor driving event, the **Go Kart Challenge**. The Funplex in East Hanover, NJ, is the place, with their indoor electric go-karts. They have dual karts too for those who want to introduce their offspring to automotive g-forces.

Let's see a good turnout...it's always a fun time. We could divide up into models or dealers groups or whatever, all the better to enhance the competition.



RSVPs are not mandatory, so just show up on the **19th, at 11 AM**. Wear some Lotus clothing, and bring the family. Directions to the Funplex are at <http://www.thefunplex.com/> . It's on Route 10 West. Any questions contact your fearless Editor at carbuff@lotusowners.com or 973-927-3765 Evenings.



Here are some reports on 2005's final gatherings:

First Track Day in my Europa TC

by Michael Colavito



Last September as I tried to go to Lime Rock Park (LRP) in my '72 Europa TC for the Vintage Festival, I hadn't driven more than 15 miles before the engine just quit quite suddenly on I-684, forcing me to limp the car back home. Now here I was, registered for a track day event at LRP, to be run only two months later. This meant the car would have to drive the 80 miles there, do many laps at speed and drive back. Turns out, I almost made it.

Driving the TC on the street is fun, but running it on a track, is I believe what a Lotus is all about.

Reliability issues with the car had kept me from running it in any speed event or autocross previously. The problem I had driving to the Vintage Festival was I was sure, a minor, but unfortunately a recurring problem. I figured I could resolve it though fairly easily. Famous last words.

LRP is popular and it is difficult to reserve a spot in a track day there, especially on a Saturday. There is no racing at LRP on Sundays at all. I had wanted to participate in the track day run by Hunting Ridge Motors of Greenwich, CT. the day before, Friday, Nov. 4th, but I couldn't get the day off of work. So I had put my name on a waiting list for the Nov. 5th event run by Performance Drivers Association (PDA). Luckily, there was a cancellation and I got in, but I only had a couple of week's notice.

I wanted to run the TC in it's first track day, at LRP in particular, because I had twice previously run track days there in my 1997 Mazda Miata and very much wanted to compare the lap times and the experience of driving the same track in the two cars. I really had no idea how the two cars would compare. I love the Miata's handling. It is agile and nimble and a blast to throw around through the curves. However, as much as I like the Mazda, my heart has always been with Lotus and I have to be honest and admit that I was hoping the TC would at the least, perform close to the levels of the 25-year newer car. I guess if it did, it would reinforce my decision to buy it and much more importantly, redeem my faith in the Lotus brand, a faith based on over 35 years of admiration for Lotus, but a faith based on second hand accounts, reading other peoples experiences with Lotus. This wouldn't be second hand; this would be first hand, real-time so to speak. Was the reputation for outstanding handling, for which the Lotus name is known, true? I was excited and a bit apprehensive to find out. I didn't want to be disillusioned.

To get the car ready for the event and to ensure it would pass tech inspection I had a list of things that needed to be addressed. All were minor, but time consuming and I only had two weekends to do it all. The breakdown on the way to LRP in September was due to sudden, intermittent total electrical system failure. Easy to fix right? I figured all I had to do was finish cleaning up all the major electrical connections, a task I had started when this problem first cropped up during the summer on the way to the Bear Mountain car show. I had cleaned the battery connections that time and got home and thought I'd solved the problem. That is, until it reoccurred on the way to the Vintage Festival. So now I disconnected, cleaned and reconnected the heavy cables at the starter motor and starter solenoid.

Then the car refused to crank over, it would only click the solenoid. Hmm, must have put something back wrong. Check, no everything was connected correctly, but still, no cranking, just solenoid clicking. Charge the battery, still just clicking. Great, I only had two weekends to work on the car and now I was spending one of them fixing a problem I didn't have before I started fixing problems! And I had a long list of things to do and checks to make. Among other things, I had to mount a fire extinguisher, replace my headlight switch, fix up all the loose wiring hanging from behind my dash, inspect brakes, brake hoses, suspension integrity, wheel bearings, tires, fix the seatbelt buckle, fix the drivers seat (which wouldn't adjust), check the gearbox oil and torque the wheels. While this story isn't supposed to be about fixing my car, lets just say a weekend was spent on the starter problem and only fixed after removal, disassembly, cleaning, reassembly and reinstallation of the starter motor. The following weekend I managed to accomplish all the remaining tasks. Late that Sunday night I torqued the wheels to a torque a little higher than I normally do to be on the safe side for the expected high lateral loads the



car would be subjected to during the event. In so doing, one wheel nut stripped! Great, five days to go and now this problem. I took the nut off and a broken helicoil fell out of it. Thank you previous owner. Frustration and anger at the shoddy work of the PO was replaced soon enough by gratitude that I didn't discover this in the middle of the fast diving turn leading onto the front straight at LR. A call to Bean Monday night, got me a new wheel nut the day before the event.

Registration and tech inspection went well. The car passed and I breathed easier and for once, there were no rain clouds in sight. There was a Seven and an Elise registered so the Lotus brand was well represented. Let's make it clear right from the start that I am no race driver. I have to keep reminding myself of that fact, as cars that SHOULD be slower than me, hang right on my tail through the twisties and then ease pass on the straights. A more competent driver in either my TC or my Miata, I'm sure, could lap much quicker than me. That said, my comparison of the TC's performance to that of the Miata's is a fair one as I am only comparing times and performances with me behind the steering wheels each time, driving with the same effort.

PDA ran the event with five run groups designated by color and classified by experience. Despite my experience, I opted to be in the White Run Group, which was one group up from rookies. Like I said, I'm no race driver and don't like holding up faster drivers. There would be 4 sessions of a half-hour each for each group, plus an optional driver's classroom instruction session. This was not optional for the rookie green group. I always make it a point to attend these instructional sessions, as I never fail to pick up at least one new tip even on a track I am very familiar with.

My son Craig was with me to time and help with any problems though he opted not to drive this time out. He had followed me up in our Miata. We figured we figured we could use it to finish the event should something disable the Europa. While I was at the morning drivers meeting Craig raised the tire pressures to 35 psi front and 40 psi rear. My TC has AVO adjustable shock absorbers and I opted to run the first session with them set to the mid position hardness as I knew that the track was not very smooth. I had considered lowering the spring perches as well, but we didn't have time before the first white group session nor the rest of the day either.



My first few laps in session one were done at a fast but careful pace as I got reacquainted with Lime Rock's turns and racing surface. Also, I wanted to ease up to speed while taking stock of how the car felt through the turns and on the straights. When I was confident that no major parts were going to depart the car, that there were no strange sounds from anywhere and that the car felt stable on the straights, I increased my pace. Stability at speed on the straights was a concern to me as my TC suffers from a lack of this in highway driving. I haven't pinned down yet just what is causing it. I can't quite tell if there is in fact anything wrong with the car. It could just be the small, non-stock steering wheel and me not yet fully used to the super sensitive steering. I just don't drive the car often.

I have to say that when you read or hear of drivers of Lotus cars, especially those new to the make, they get out of the car after their first drive and have a huge grin on their faces. I did about 12 timed laps in the first session. As I pulled into the paddock area and Craig ran up to greet me, he could immediately see that I was smiling the ear-to-ear smile. And at that point in time I had no idea how quickly or slowly I had lapped. I already didn't care about lap times as I was just having too much fun.

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The car totally amazed me. No, I wasn't the fastest car out there, but the car just felt so good on the track. None of my concerns about stability down the straights or through the high speed turns were valid. At racing speeds, pushing the car hard, it just felt good. An analogy springs to mind in trying to describe this. Imagine a thoroughbred-hunting dog kept too long as a pet in the city. When it's finally brought out into the wilderness on a hunting trip, the dog would rejoice in its environment, and to be doing what it does best. Silly analogy, maybe, but one that helps me describe how the car felt on the track. It felt like it belonged there.

The fastest lap at Lime Rock that I've managed in my Miata was a time of 1:24.50. OK, stop laughing you Lime Rock veterans, I told you I wasn't a race driver. For me, that was my best in that car on that track. My first session average in the Europa was 1:21.2 and I had a best lap in that session of 1:20.15. Over four seconds quicker is a huge difference at a small track like Lime Rock. But like I mentioned, it wasn't the numbers that mattered, at least to me they didn't. It was just how much more secure the car felt at speed and how much more fun the experience of driving it on the track was. I'm sure that it was this feeling of sure-footed stability that accounted for the lower lap times. I was able to push harder in it with confidence than I could in my Miata.

While the Miata was fun to drive at speed, there were still places on the track where I had to work harder at keeping the car on the black stuff. This is in no way a put down of the Miata. I absolutely love that car. It is to me simply the best everyday, dependable, blast to drive sports car you can buy. It has given many drivers of today, the experience of what driving a good handling open, small two-seat sports car is supposed to be. It does so many things well, braking, accelerating, turn in, early powering out of corners and it will get you where you want to go every day. It starts first time too!

However, the Europa is much lighter, has similar power, is more aerodynamic, has quicker steering and at the level I drive it, it has near neutral handling. All of these combine to make it that much more fun to drive and that much more confidence building. And that translates into lower lap times. To be fair, the Miata is almost totally stock, only sporting alloy wheels and wider than stock tires. The Europa is not stock, having the Weber setup, AVO adjustable shocks, non-stock springs and wider than stock tires. Without the Webers and with stock springs and shocks the comparison would be fairer. Yet I still believe that the Europa in that configuration would lap faster than the Miata, but at less of a difference in lap times. I'm confident that the feeling of sure-footed handling would still be there and allow me to push just a little harder in the Europa.

After session one I felt that the track was very bumpy and so Craig set the AVO's to their full soft setting and took 5 psi out of all the tires. These adjustments helped a bit over the bumpy concrete patches that cover all of the apexes. Offsetting this improvement slightly however in the remaining sessions, was a decision I made to drive the entire track in top (4th) gear. The car still has significant pull in fourth at speeds as low as 35 mph so I would not be losing too much time and I would be reducing the stress on the engine. Also, I was finding it difficult to downshift smoothly. I've never mastered the art of toe and heel downshifts and I'm one of those who is a firm believer in the double de-clutch downshift. The only two places where I'd be losing time would be entering the short back straight and climbing out of the steep uphill turn. We were not using the chicane on this day, so third gear would



not be needed for that. Reducing the stress on the engine was I felt important because I was just hitting redline on the straight. I had to back off to try and keep the needle in the yellow. My speedometer needle bounces around quite a bit despite numerous attempts to fix it. As it was, it was bouncing between 95 and 110 mph at the end of the straight. I've yet to determine why my car redlines at a speed somewhat below factory indicated top speed. I don't know if a previous owner changed the final drive ratios or even if this is possible with the type 356, 4 speed, Renault transaxle, which I believe is fitted to my Europa. In any event I didn't want to stress the engine more than reasonable. I reckon that backing off at the end of the straight was maybe adding a second or two to my lap times.

Craig was busy and could not time me in session two, but it felt similar to me to the first session. He did get one lap timed at 1:21.9. Session two had a moment I will remember however. A Honda S 2000 spun in the esses directly in front of me. I was fairly close behind and had the experience of what seemed like an eternity trying to decide which way the Honda was going to leave the track so I could pick the other way to get by. For a moment its driver and I were staring at each other as he was traveling backwards in front of me. Fun. In session three I had an average of 1:21.13, and in session four I decided to relax a bit, not think about lap times and just enjoy the rare opportunity to drive a great car at speed in a safe and controlled environment. In this mode, I actually had an average lap time of 1:20.47, did three laps below 1:20 and did a best lap time of the day at 1:18.92. I was elated. I should have driven the whole day relaxed!

A few other observations I made during the day. First the Europa seemed to have a fairly big advantage over many cars in braking at the end of the main straight for "Big Bend", a sweeping hairpin turn. On many occasions I had to almost lock up to keep from rear-ending Corvettes and other cars. The temptation to dive to the inside at these times and pass turning into the bend was very strong, but this was a track day, not a race. Would've been fun though. Second observation, both that Elise and the Seven were stinking fast! I didn't get to talk to their drivers after the last session, but I was very curious at to how their lap times compared.

At the end of the day, packed up all the gear headed home in the dark, with Craig driving the Lotus this time and me following in the Miata. There was little traffic and I was enjoying the view of the Europa ahead, lights ablaze. A real pleasant drive until 5 miles from home, on the Saw Mill River Parkway when I suddenly heard the buzz of the twincam starting to break up and Craig slowing up dramatically. Dang, so close to home after such a great day and so many hard miles. I put the Miata's emergency flashers on as Craig tried to find a place to pull onto the grass verge, there being no shoulder. Engine dead and wouldn't restart. With a flashlight and cars whizzing by inches away, we searched the engine compartment, but could find nothing obvious. Craig decided to try restarting it again and to our surprise it fired, but did not sound healthy at all. I told him to try and make it to the next exit, which we knew, was only a few hundred yards away. He just made it there, the engine dying again at the end of the ramp. This time however, when he got out of the car he told me immediately he knew what the problem was. He opened one of the fuel filler caps and there was a huge pop from the fuel tank as air rushed in to it to fill the vacuum caused by non-venting caps. Both of us knew about this problem with the caps, but had completely forgotten it that day. We vented the other tank, which also had built up vacuum. I drove the Lotus the rest of the way home with no further problems. Great day, one heck of a great car!

"Last Drive" of 2005, November 13th

LEO had a great turnout for its last 2005 event, a Spirited Drive through Hunterdon and Mercer counties with an interesting stopover in Hopewell, NJ for a tour of the Steel Wings Aston-Martin restoration shop and the Lotus dealership there. It was great to meet Ed Sansone and the crew of Princeton Lotus. The Steel Wings Aston Martin restoration shop was great too.



But the main attraction was the great roads and the wonderful turnout. We even had more than one pair of drivers from the same family!

The day was clear and the temperature was moderate, as more and more Lotus owners signed up as the day approached! We got over 25 cars and met a lot of new owners.



Just as we got started, about a mile into the Drive, we got word that Reja Bahk wanted to join us, so we parked the Caravan while Dominick Munifo turned around to herd him into the group. We were all disappointed to note that Reja arrived in his



Saab and not his Turbo Esprit! But, we finally got to press on.

With so many cars, it was hard to keep everyone together. We had to stop several times to regroup after difficult intersections. Those with FRS radios knew what was going on, but those without were confused. Sorry about that, guys, even with three sheep-herders amongst the flock we couldn't keep going that easily.

Then there were the usual pitfalls of Lotus Ownership. In the "Some People Never Learn" category was Dom Giangrasso, whose S1 Esprit suffered the exact same malady that befell it after the October picnic: His clutch slave cylinder fell apart, and this time his rescuers did not find all the pieces. But Dom comes up with the Plucky Perseverance Award for cobbling up a slave cylinder actuator made up of sockets and extensions! They were a little late at the lunch stop at Hopewell Lotus as a result, but they made it! Some others who were late joined us directly at the dealership too.

I must say the Ed Sansone of Princeton Lotus made the LEO members feel at home in Hopewell. In addition to providing a delicious lunch, we got to tour the Steel Wings Aston Martin shop. Owner Jim Clerk let us wander around the rare cars in



various states of restoration, and we got to see how they made some of the custom upgrades for the older cars as well. A great time!

Then it was off onto the final leg of the journey, back towards the Duke Farms in Hillsborough. Unfortunately, with all the excitement and the delays from the group being so large, we arrived just before sunset and agreed to save the Duke Farms tour for another day.

It was a fitting end to the 2005 driving season for the LEO Group!

David Nagler contributed to this Report.



Automotive Forums

(Humor)

As a Lotus owner, you may have visited some of the major forums or newsgroups devoted to our cars. They assure that you are never "alone" in the world of Lotus ownership.

There are many different forums for many different cars, however. Each one reflects the priorities of its owners. Here are samples of this weeks' major topics in automotive forums around the world:

Bentley Forums I used the ashtray today. How do I replace it?

BMW 3 Series Forums Why do I keep getting pulled over, it ain't stolen.

Honda Civic Forums Why isn't my BOV loud enough?

BMW 7-series forum Where to get a service on my Rolex?

E-series Mercedes Forums I blew my headgasket today, is it repairable or should I look at a new car?

VW Beetle forum The Save the Earth concert was a success (pics)

Lamborghini forum Wind noise around 210MPH. How to fix?

Miata forums Some ***** in Toyota Hilux just ran over my car!

Hilux forum Miata stuck in my undercarriage. How do I safely remove it?

Rover 800 forum Problems parallel parking at bingo.

Range Rover Forum Is the price of petrol going down anytime soon?

Delorean forum Just got back from the future and blew a head gasket. Please help. I'm still stuck in 1985.

Honda Accord forum Mum is giving me the car. Looking for some cheap used 18-inch rims.

Toyota Prius forum Do our cars use AAA or AA's? Is Lithium powered better?

Ferrari forums Need suggestions about a business trip to Colombia. Want to get in and out fast.

Porsche forums Tyre just went flat. Is it best to trade or sell the car myself?

Mini forum Just flipped the Cooper after seeing The Italian Job. Suing the Movie Company.

Ford GT forum I frightened myself on the way home from work yesterday. How to get wee stains out of the leather?

McLaren F1 forum Some punk kid in a F16 tried to race me.

Hummer forum Had a fender bender today. 24 hurt, 10 killed. Do I have to get the black touch-up paint from the dealer? He's 25 miles away. That's \$65 in petrol.

Fiat forum Hello? Am I the only member?

Subaru WRX forum I'm thinking Blue and gold, how about you ??

Chevy pickup forum How do I git the dried tobacco juice stains off the side of mah truck?

Supra Forums Head too big to fit in car, should have bought a Targa.

Volvo forum What biker, I never saw a biker, he just came from nowhere, I didn't mean to hit him.

Lexus Forums Hey check out my new modification-Factory tail lights

Transit Forums Both my headlights are working, how do i fix this?

Saab Forums Hi I'm new and know nothing about cars!

Citroen forums What's the current market price for scrap metal?

Classified Adverts

(Submit yours to Atwell Haines, carbuff@lotusowners.com. Anything is accepted but Lotus ads get priority)

1972 Elan Sprint DHC, 167 hp engine built by MWE w/dyno sheets, Webers, newly painted white, full Spyder conversion: Chassis, suspension, roll cage, rear axles. Completely rebuilt, car is my reliable daily driver. New dash, new windshield, +2 front brakes: car is very fast & needs them. Modern ignition, K/O Panaspots, new A032Rs. Car will do 100 mph in ¼ mile, handles great, stops quickly. Needs nothing. One of best, most highly developed in US; not cheap. Best of both worlds: vintage look, modern performance. As fast as my Elise. Divorce forces sale, heartbroken (over car, not wife). **Gilbert Bohan**, 973-401-1593 (NJ), essentialbusiness@patmedia.net.

1983 Turbo Esprit. Red with tan interior, 29,000 miles. Car has been a consistent show winner and is beautiful condition. I am located just outside of Philadelphia, PA. Looking for \$15,000 OBO. Photos at <http://pg.photos.yahoo.com/ph/ljseidman/album?.dir=/4605&.src=ph> and details upon request. Lenny Seidman lseidman@erols.com Day-215-635-1000 Eve-215-572-7667

Stainless Catalytic Converter Test Pipes, custom welded, with or without O2 sensor fitting, for 89 - 95 Esprit. Unleash the engine's growl! \$275. Jim Cummings, 908-612-0548 or JCummi1561@aol.com

1988 Mustang 5.0 LX, 5 speed, dark red, loaded, adult driven, conscientiously maintained, 17 years of records, one owner, no winters. New tires & battery, 73,000 miles. \$5900 obo Atwell Haines carbuff@lotusowners.com or 973-927-3765.

Atwell Haines
'88 Esprit
Succasunna, NJ
973-927-3765

Lotus Drivers Wanted

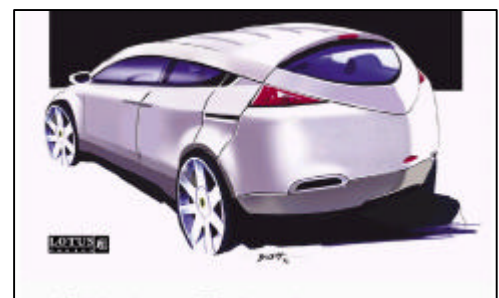
- Join a private drivers club
- Schedule track-time at your convenience
- Just a short drive from your garage



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