

## Elgin Racing Shines in the Dark

by Dave Back

Winning the annual Devil in the Dark 12 Hour Endurance Race at New Jersey Motorsports Park has become a coveted prize for competitors with many teams returning year after year chasing the elusive victory. Endurance racing is very demanding for the drivers, the crew and the machinery. Experienced teams have a tremendous advantage as they have a good handle on fuel consumption, tire wear and pit stop strategy for twelve hours of racing.



***The Johnstone Supply Racing and H&H/Fall-Line BMW's give chase to the Ford Boss 302R Mustang of Elgin Racing***

There is no replacement for experience and having the savvy to adapt to changing track conditions, weather and mechanical concerns that can make the difference between winning or a close second.



***Drivers holding a tight line through turn five to avoid a spinning car***

Last year's Devil in the Dark (DnD) was true to form. When the Elgin Racing Ford Boss 302R

Mustang showed up many of the experienced teams were a bit skeptical as to its durability. For those who were skeptical of its ability to endure twelve hours at speed the Boss 302R shined, running strong hour after hour.

As last year's race progressed into its eleventh hour the Elgin Racing Boss 302R seemed to have victory in hand when a shower of sparks from the rear wheels lit the darkened track and an investigative pit stop found the rear brake pads disintegrated and the caliper pistons grinding against the brake rotors.

With no time for repairs in the closing minutes they returned to the track adopting a driving technique minimizing the use of the brakes, the aggressive down shifts quite evident when slowing at the end of the straight. Fortunately their lead was just enough to preserve their victory, but had the race been another hour in length, there's a good chance the victory would have slipped by.



***The BMW's of Johnstone Supply Racing, H&H Racing/Fall-Line Motorsports and Ratchet Head Racing give chase to the Elgin Racing Boss 302R Mustang***

No longer the dark horse, the Elgin Racing Ford Boss 302R Mustang stood as one of the favorites to win this year's DnD.

Their qualifying times lived up to expectations as they took the pole and topped the E1 class,

qualifying over a second and a half faster than a field of strong running BMW's from Ratchet Head Racing (two entries), H&H Racing/Fall-Line Motorsports, Johnstone Supply Racing and Dewspeed Motorsports.



***Entropy Racing diced their way to a 3<sup>rd</sup> place finish in the E4 Class***

Qualifying in the E2 through E4 classes was hotly contested with the Team Cheapskate BMW posting a lap two-tenths faster than the Dog Gone Racing SRF3 for E2 honors.

The two S.A.C. Racing Miatas took the top two qualifying spots for E3 while the Two Men and a Dwarf/Emerson Oil Miata bested the Thomaniac/Lamaniac Motorsports Miata for the top E4 qualifying position.

As the first hour of the race unfolded the brisk pace set by the Elgin Racing Boss 302R Mustang gave them the early lead holding a solid twenty second gap over the second place H&H Racing/Fall-Line Motorsports BMW who in turn held a ten second gap over the third place Johnstone Supply Racing BMW.

On the same lap as the top three, the two E2 competitors shuffled their qualifying positions as the Dog Gone Racing SRF3 took the point position from the E2 pole sitter Team Cheapskate BMW.



***The S.A.C. Racing Miata caught and passed the E3 class leading Flatout Miata in the final hour for the win***

The S.A.C. Racing Miata maintained its E3 class lead, with the Flatout Motorsports beginning to challenge, moving up into second.

In the hotly contested E4 class the Entropy Racing Spec Racer moved up from its fourth place qualifying position to leading the E4 Class.

During the second hour an oil spill the length of the front straight lead to a double yellow and ultimately a red flag halting the race. The drivers were directed into the pits to allow for an extensive track clean up. During the red flag, unless pitted before the double yellow flag, teams were not allowed to work on their cars without being assessed a penalty.

The down time gave crew chiefs a moment of time to evaluate their strategy knowing that a pace car lead double yellow restart was ahead of them and the field would be bunched up taking away the early lead built up by the front runners.

After the lengthy delay in the second hour and many teams doing a round of pit stops, the third hour found several position changes with the Johnstone Supply BMW now leading with a tenuous five second advantage over the hard charging Elgin Racing Mustang, both now a lap up on the field.

The Dog Gone Racing SRF3 now found itself third overall leading the E2 class over their Team Cheapskate BMW competitor.

The S.A.C. Racing Miata continued its lead in the E3 class, with the hard charging Flatout Motorsports Miata putting in a good effort trying to reduce the gap.

A good battle ensued in the E4 class with the Entropy Racing Spec Racer leading the WE Racing Miata.

As the fourth hour came to a close the battle up front shifted as the Elgin Racing Mustang now lead the Johnstone BMW, who overtook the H&H Racing/Fall-Line Motorsports BMW.



***Dog Gone Racing put in a commendable drive, leading the P2 class much of the race***

Team Cheapskate and Dog Gone Racing swapped their E2 class positions as did Flatout Motorsports managing to chase down and find its way past the S.A.C. Racing Miata with the WE Racing Miata getting by the Entropy Racing Spec Racer for the lead in E4.

A tight battle ensued at the close of the fifth hour as the Johnstone Supply BMW lead the Elgin Racing Mustang by less than a second with the H&H Racing/Fall-Line BMW falling slightly off the pace four laps down on the leaders.

The Team Cheapskate BMW stretched its E2 class lead to two laps over the Dog Gone Racing SRF3

with Flatout Racing continuing its lead in E3 and WE Racing leading E4 both driving Miatas.



***The Team TGIW Miata put in a good effort to take 2<sup>nd</sup> in the P4 class***

The Elgin Racing Mustang and the Johnstone Supply Racing BMW continued to set the pace at the halfway point of the race followed by the H&H Racing/Fall-Line Motors BMW still four laps down on the Elgin Racing Mustang, the three teams holding the overall and E1 positions one, two and three.



***Running up front, the Elgin Racing Boss 302R Mustang and the Johnstone Supply Racing BMW had quite a battle for much of the race***

Fourth, fifth and sixth overall with E2 class positions of one through three had the Team Cheapskate BMW four laps up on the

RSTPerformance.com/Yushino Mazda RX8 who held a two lap advantage over the Dog Gone Racing SRF3.

The battle for the E3 class was really heating up as the Miatas of Flatout Motorsports held positions one and three, the S.A.C. Racing Miata between them second in class, and fourth in class belonging to the Team Matt and Mitch in the Meathead Racing Miata. It was anyone's race at this point as all four competitors found themselves on the same lap with not more than twenty seconds separating them.

The E4 class was close as well, with the class leader WE Racing Miata leading the Team TGIW Miata who held a mere five second lead over the Entropy Racing Spec Racer.



***The WE Racing Miata ran strong all race long earning a well deserved E4 class win***

In this day weather was not to be a factor as the seasonally cool temperatures and partly sunny skies never hinted at a potential for rain, thus one less obstacle to overcome in the twelve hours of racing.

At the completion of the seventh hour the field began to shake up as the Elgin Racing Mustang maintained its overall and class lead and began pulling away from the Johnstone Racing Supply BMW who dropped to fourth overall.

The fast and steady running Team Cheapskate BMW now found itself second overall leading the

E2 class two laps up on the RSTPerformance.com RX8.

The S.A.C. Racing Miata reclaimed its early lead in the E3 class, now running seventh overall with the Flatout Racing Miata still in close chase.

Meanwhile in the E4 class, the WE Racing Miata stretched out a three lap lead.



***The RSTPerformance.com RX8 ran as high as second in the E2 class until losing ground late in the race***



***Dewspeed Racing, last year's E3 winner, stepped up to compete in the E1 class. Overcoming early race problems the team moved up the pack to take 3<sup>rd</sup> in the E1 class***

At the eight hour mark both Elgin Racing and Team Cheapskate continued to dominate their classes and the overall positions, with the Elgin Racing Boss 302R Mustang setting the pace and

building an eleven lap lead on second overall and E2 class leader Team Cheapskate BMW.

The Johnstone Racing Supply BMW who had been sharing the overall lead now found itself third overall, second in the E2 class nineteen laps down on Elgin Racing.



*The Johnstone Supply Racing BMW shared the lead early in the race*

As the H&H Racing/Fall-Line Motorsports BMW began to fall off the pace the Dewspeed Motorsports BMW continued to move up through the pack turning in consistent fast laps to overcome early mechanical and electrical issues. Their consistent driving and quick pit stops helped them work their way up to twelfth overall and third in the E1 class.

The E3 class continued to be a battle between the Miatas of S.A.C. Racing and Flatout Motorsports, both on the same lap while WE Racing maintained its lead in the E4 class.

The ninth hour saw Elgin Racing still running strong as they continued to dominate the E1 class and lead overall.

Things were heating up in the E2 class as second overall and E2 class leader Team Cheapskate found their once comfortable lead beginning to shrink as the hard charging Dog Gone Racing SRF3 was now just a lap behind.

Pushing hard, the Flatout Motorsports Miata once again overtook the S.A.C. Racing Miata for the E3 class lead with Team Matt and Mitch also getting by S.A.C. for second.

WE Racing maintained a fast and steady pace and the lead in the E4 class.



*Flaggers have to resort to using lights at night. Here the crew in station two signals a double yellow*

Hour ten saw Elgin Racing still running up front setting the pace as they completely dominated the field, but not so for the E2 class as Dog Gone Racing managed to put their SRF3 ahead of the Team Cheapskate BMW for the E2 class lead.



*The pace car with its flashing yellow lights on guides the field during a full course yellow flag*

The Miatas of Flatout Racing and WE Racing continued their class leads in E3 and E4.

E1 competitor Dewspeed BMW continued its upward march through the field, moving up another position to eleventh overall looking to challenge the Johnstone Racing BMW, who still held second in the E1 class.

With an hour to go, it was quite obvious that barring a significant mechanical failure, the Elgin Racing Ford Boss 302R Mustang was looking to repeat as this year's champion.

The Team Cheapskate BMW put the pedal to the metal and charged hard to retake the E2 class lead over the Dog Gone Racing SRF3. A solid effort by the McParland Motorsport Honda S2000 moved them to fifth overall and third in E2.

The E3 class leading Flatout Motorsports Miata found itself hotly pursued by the early E3 class leader S.A.C. Racing, while the E4 class leader, WE Racing kept their Miata in a comfortable class lead.



*In the distance Dave Teal drops the flag for a late night restart as the pack thunders into turn 1*

For those challenging for a win, the last hour of an endurance race culminates a day's worth of strategy, calculations, guess work and luck. For the overall and E1 class leading Elgin racing, and

the E4 class leader WE Racing, their leads were such that they could pace themselves to the end.

Not so for the E2 and E3 classes. The Team Cheapskate BMW had its hands full as the Dog Gone Racing SRF3 pushed hard in the last hour seeking to overtake them for the E2 win.

The S.A.C. Racing Miata who led the E3 class earlier in the day now found themselves a lap down and in hot pursuit of the class leading Flatout Racing Miata, both teams swapping positions throughout the race.



*The thrill of night racing. Drivers battle for position going into turn 1*

The stage was set for a tremendous closing battle as the both the SRF3 of Dog Gone Racing and the Team S.A.C. Miata took chase determined to overtake their class leaders. The SRF3 chasing down the E2 class leader Team Cheapskate BMW and the S.A.C. Racing Miata looking to best the Flatout racing Miata.

In the final hour lap after lap the competitors were only truly visible as they blasted by in the residual light along the front straight. Once through turn one could only anticipate their next time past start finish.

As crew chiefs monitored their lap times, the competitor's lap times and the clock, their final strategy was in full swing. No more driver

changes, fuel stops or tire changes, it was a race to the checkered flag.

The chilly night air was electrified with enthusiasm as the Elgin Ford Boss 302R Mustang maintained its significant lead running flawlessly through the night as did the E4 class leading WE Racing Miata.

The E2 and E3 classes were a nail biter as the E2 class leading BMW of Team Cheapskate saw its gap being closed by the hard charging Dog Gone Racing SRF3.

The E3 class leading Flatout Racing Miata, up by a lap with an hour to go, saw its lead dwindling steadily as the brisk pace of the Team S.A.C. Racing Miata continued to decrease the gap.

On paper, the SAC effort had the pace to overtake the leading Flatout Racing Miata. Several questions arose as to whether the Team S.A.C. Miata could continue to put in the fast laps necessary to overtake its Flatout competitor or could the Flatout Miata squeeze out some faster laps when needed to thwart their effort, or adopt a blocking strategy to offset being passed.

enough to put itself on the same lap as the Team Cheapskate BMW making up three laps in the final hour, but not enough to overtake them for the E2 victory.

It was a much different saga for the E3 honors. Leading the E3 class in the final hour, the Flatout Motorsports Miata's pace was not enough to hold off the hard charging Miata of S.A.C. Racing, who caught and passed them in the closing minutes to claim the thrilling E3 victory.



*The Team Cheapskate BMW maintained a fast and consistent pace taking the E2 class win and a 3<sup>rd</sup> overall finish*



*The Flatout racing Miatas finished 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> in the E3 Class.*

As the much anticipated checkered flag flew marking the end of a grueling twelve hour race, the team Dog Gone Racing SRF3 pushed hard



*The Radial Motorsports Acura worked their way through the pack to take 5<sup>th</sup> overall*

Taking the overall victory and a convincing E1 win, the Elgin Racing Ford Boss 302R Mustang never seemed to miss a beat. With an excellent

effort and challenging the Elgin Racing Mustang in the early hours, the Johnstone Racing Supply BMW resolved some late race issues and regained its pace to finish second overall and second in the E1 class.

Third overall and first in the E2 class went to the hard charging Team Cheapskates BMW followed closely by the Dog Gone Racing SRF3.

Saving their best for the last hour, with consistent hard driving, and breaking into the top five overall, the Radial Motorsports Acura Integra took third in the E2 class.



***Benefiting from last year's experience, the Elgin Ford Boss 302R Mustang ran strong consistent laps and though contested early, in the end built a commanding lead to take the overall victory and first place in the E1 class.***

Of course the event would not be possible without the efforts and dedication of the SCCA workers who weathered the day to give the competitors the opportunity to race in a safe, controlled environment.

Results:

E1: Elgin Racing Ford Boss 302R Mustang, Johnstone Racing Supply BMW, Dewspeed Racing BMW, H&H Racing/Fall-Line Motorsports, Ratchet Head Racing BMW

E2: Team Cheapskate BMW, Dog Gone Racing SRF3, Radial Motorsports Acura, Team Troxell BMW, Auto Technic Racing BMW

E3: S.A.C. Racing #70 Miata, Flatout Motorsports #29 Miata, Flatout Motorsports #90 Miata, Tullman Walker Miata, S.A.C. Racing #13 Miata

E4: WE Racing Miata, Team TGIW Miata, Entropy Racing SR, No-Rags Racing Miata, Thomaniac Miata