

Cars, travels and a cup of espresso

Sunday, 23 June 2019

The Weekend with Brack Driving Concepts

I was planning to go to this event for more than two years. From my first look at their lesson schedule to my actual participation, I drove over 50,000 km on at least 8 different cars. To be honest, my initial reason was to become a more sporty driver, but my actual visit was to restore my interest in driving (I am simply tired of wasting time behind the steering wheel during rush hours on GTA roads). Now I can pronounce myself as my own hero - I could wake up at 5-30 AM, drive to the Motorsports Park and be in the class by 8-30 AM!



Lovely morning at SMP

So let's talk about the school. For over 30 years, coaches at Brack Driving Concepts (BDC) have been teaching High Performance Driving, Racing and many other cool things with cars. Ken Pavri and John Burnet, both professional racers, started this school for regular drivers to bring more joy and confidence into day-to-day driving. All their instructors are true car enthusiasts! For example, Kevin is a full-time mechanic in a dealership of a luxury German brand. He is also building his own racing car.



Kevin's toy

My instructor and his wife were interested in racing, came to advanced driving classes years ago and later joined BDC school as coaches. I saw them doing laps with their Ford Focus ST - that was very impressive. Not to mention that I survived three laps with Chris driving. When we got out, Chris laughed at me - he said that since I mentioned being afraid of traffic he was expecting me screaming, but I was able to sit quietly and took note on how he was passing the corners where I was making mistakes =)



Big guys driving



That corner was a bit tricky for me. Also two cars from racing runs lost control and ended up on the grass there

After 2 hours of driving, we got to the Shannonville Motorsports Park (SMP). We left the car outside, collected all potentially flying objects from it, and got into the office for registration. The day had 3 parts - learning in the class, learning on the track and fun on the skid pad.

There were about 10 students. Three more ladies - two got the class as a gift for Christmas, one like me received it for her birthday. Guys were there to remind themselves about real driving or to practice. My absolute favorite was Andrei, a Camero driver who went to the track on Monday, ended up in the swamp after losing control on one of the corners, was towed away from there and came back on Saturday with the driving school.

Learning in class had two parts. First part covered specifics of the track, reasons of dangerous situations on the roads, vision and how to analyze the road properly, tyre selection, mirror adjustments, etc. Actually, I was surprised that properly set mirrors were showing blind spots. Took me some time to adjust myself for understanding the distance between my car and objects in the mirror, but it works better!

Second part was mostly about car control, do's and don'ts on the road and why cars behave like they do.



Discussion of the achievements

The practical part started with introducing the car to our instructors. They drove our cars for two laps to show us the turns, the signals and so on, and then it was our turn. Honestly, my first three laps were very slow. They also pointed out a bunch of bad habits that I had developed with my long commutes. The main goal, however, was to feel the dynamics and to build trust in the car. After leaving the track, the instructors went through mistakes and suggestions.

My second attempt was much faster and more confident! On the last run in the end of first lap I said to my instructor: You do not say anything, that's suspicious. He just laughed =)

Time on the track was divided between our school laps and real racers. During the breaks in studying and driving we were watching real guys on the track. Our instructors were participating as well. That was breathtaking! Real speed and huge power unleashed! We also walked around parked cars and trailers, spoke to the owners and looked at engineered creations. People were mostly from Ontario and Quebec.





Our group had a great family that moved to Ontario from Newfoundland. They brought their Camaro to school, which by-passed my Mudpuppy a couple of times throughout the day on the track.

Our last challenge was the skip pad. There we had to drive around cones on the wet surface with traction control off and experience under-steer and over-steer by driving in circles. That was the most fun of the day! I'm not even sure what was more interesting - to put your own car into a spin or to watch others doing this. Though definitely, the biggest achievement of these exercises was to get control of a car which is losing traction.



Slalom and wide turns on the wet surface



Preparation for under-steering and over-steering challenge



Waiting for our turn and enjoying watching our classmates



Mudpuppy spinning

Summary? It was an awesome weekend! I could finally try to turn the traction off, drive in manual mode (my car has a Shiftronic transmission), pass corners on a high speed, and to make the tyres squeak. The best compliment was received from my daughter, who told me: "Do you feel that you're driving much smoother?"

Would I go there again? Definitely! I know that my little blue car has much more power than is being used daily.

Huge thanks to Ken and Alex for inviting me, Chris for surviving my driving, SMP for delicious lunch, and my classmates and other instructors for fun and joy throughout the day. It was my best weekend this year so far!

And one more special thanks to Shannonville's gas station for full service! Canada used to have full service gas stations all over the place about 20 years ago. It's when you get to the station, open the window and say how much fuel you need and the boy fills up the tank, takes cash from you and brings back the change from the store. I haven't seen it for ages!