

Autocross... and why you should try it

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OK, we've all heard Jerry Juracek and Steve Johnson talk about autocross at the BMC meetings. And we've all snoozed through the autocross section of the club budget. We've even seen the autocross schedule come out via email. Many members participate in our events, or have in the past. Well, this discussion is geared toward those of you who haven't. So, let's talk about why autocross is good for you!

I'll admit it... I'm hooked on autocross. It's a blast! It gets the adrenaline going, just like a great roller-coaster ride. It's also a great chance to hang out with other Miata people, many of whom are very knowledgeable about our little cars. Sometimes, you can learn a lot just by standing around and listening or learn even more by asking questions! Oh, and the fresh air and sunshine are just icing on the cake!

But autocross can also be beneficial to you as a driver. We've all been in situations on the street that required a sudden, heart-pounding stop, or a split-second swerve to avoid an accident. Or perhaps you just like to have fun on the backroads and enjoy driving a good line through the curves. In either case, autocross is an opportunity for you to "push" the car a bit, in a safe and controlled environment. It allows you to "feel" how the car reacts at its limits and will help you find your limits as well. It will make you a more confident driver and better prepare you for those tense situations on the street.

The only other way to get this kind of experience is at a dedicated driving school. And what do they mostly use for driving exercises? Autocross! For example, The Mid-Ohio School charges \$350 for their defensive driving course and \$625 to \$750 for the 1 day high performance course. You could run a couple seasons worth of BMC autocross events for \$350! A course at The Mid-Ohio School is money well-spent, but a series of autocross events can be an excellent alternative.

OK, I hear some of you asking, "Isn't it hard on my car?" "What if I hit something?" If you just want to come out and try an event, the wear and tear is really pretty minimal. Our Miatas are light and practically made for this. You'll put a little wear on the tires and brakes and that's about it, no more so than a good weekend in the mountains. The only thing you could hit is a rubber traffic cone and those marks come right off... trust me, I know!

So now maybe you're asking, "Don't I need special equipment and a helmet?" "Do I have to do anything special to my car?" No, there's no special equipment required, though you're liable to see the die-hards with race tires and a harness. You won't need anything extra to come try an event. The club even has brand-new helmets you can borrow for the day. No other prep is required, other than to make sure the interior is cleaned out. We don't want anything rolling around on the floor while you're trying to dodge the cones! We provide a tech inspection of your car before you start to make sure everything is good to go.

"What if I'm not fast enough?" Well, all speed is relative, just ask Einstein. You're just racing against the clock, so there's no need to worry about being fast at your first event and no one is expecting you to be. The point is to give it a try and learn something. In fact, my sister and I have the same 4 goals for every event we run:

- Be safe!
- Have fun!
- Learn something!
- Try not to come in dead last... :O)

There are a lot of friendly people at the autocross events and they'll be glad to help show you around and get you oriented! We even provide a ride-along coach for your initial runs to help you around the course. They can be available to work with you as much as you like.

So here's the deal: Come out and do a full day (10-12 runs) for the club member price of \$25, or do a half day (5-6 runs) for half price. Don't forget, you'll be out in the sun, so a hat, sunscreen and comfortable shoes are always a good idea. A cooler with drinks is recommended, but no alcohol is permitted on site. The event schedule and details are available at www.buckeyemiataclub.com .

Come on out... you might just get hooked like me!