

DRIVER OF THE YEAR 2016

What motivates a young person to drive a race car, or become a car lover at an early age? Some of our drivers have had a love affair with cars at an early age, I was one of these. Others get connected to cars, especially race cars, as teenagers and some not till later in life. And if you had parents who had a passion for cool cars, you naturally got hooked too. Maybe your parents even pushed you and encouraged you as you started on a path to driving a race car. We have all seen pictures of Jeff Gordon riding around the yard on a tricycle.

Looking for that candidate who deserves the Driver of the Year has always been a challenge. One of the qualities we see in every driver who is on this trophy is the dedication to improve each year and to never give up, and put that unsuccessful race behind. Next weekend is another chance to start again, learn from the past.

Our candidate has gone down this road like all who came before him. He started out – at age 16 – with a non running Open Kadett which was a good way to make use of auto shop class he was enrolled in. He gained knowledge working in his fathers auto shop as part of that education - the next step being an SCCA Drivers School – He went thru the Drivers School

with his fathers 1959 Alfa Romeo Guiletta and started down the path of racing sports cars.

At age 18 he began racing his own car a Mazda 808. In those early years luck was part of every weekend, like a June Sprints he won his class, but was disqualified for being 12 # under weight. Never one to look back, but always looking to the next race he continued to improve. Our driver has been to the Runoffs in 1993, '95, 2007. 2009, 2013 and this year. Every year since 1995 he has steadily acquired more top three in class at races. By 2014 he was either 1st or 2nd at every Cendiv National race, with a season ending in 1st in points in the division.

In 2015 he was on the podium in his class at all the Majors Races in Cendiv in spite of stiffer competition. All that he learned that year was put to the test this year. Years of experience was finally going to be rewarded - in three Majors he placed 1st in class and finished 1st in class Points Standings. Travelling to the Runoffs, he drove to his best finish there, 4th place. In Majors Points standing, only two points separated our wining driver from overall first place. This is the mark of a winner that we would choose for Driver of the Year. His crew, has always been brother Eugene, wife Collete and his father.

Driving a Mazda RX7 in GT3, we award George Cichon Jr. the Driver of the Year.