



by Diane Dale



Lately we've been covering some of our more regional Z racers... this month I thought it'd be interesting to hear from a Z Car Owner far south of the border. Rick and I met up at the Watkins Glen Zippo Grand Prix in 2003 and have tried to synch schedules ever since. Ironically enough, Rick's Z racing number is #13 (same as my Z car). Wow, how'd that happen???

Name: Rick Blaha
Occupation: Self Employed – PAK-RITE, Ltd. Packaging Company
Hometown: Milwaukee, WI USA

DD: Hi there Rick and welcome to 'Trackside' the bi-monthly column for racing news in Ontario Z Car Association's Zedline publication. Let's dig right in to the heart of the story... How long have you been racing?

RB: I have been racing for 3 years. Initially, I attended several driving schools, including Midwest Council (Black Hawk Farms, Rockford, Illinois), Panoz (Sebring, Florida) and Bondurant (Phoenix, Arizona)

DD: How did you get started?

RB: I have watched various forms of motor sports from the sidelines all of my (long) adult life. Always thinking to myself, "Someday, I want to be the guy out there doing that"

DD: What is your current race car?

RB: 1970 Datsun 240Z. This car had been a "Club" race car on the east coast of the U.S. since the 1970's. While the car was allegedly a class champion at some point, I have nothing to verify that. I purchased the car as a restoration "Project" 5 years ago, and two years and a lot of \$\$ later, it was ready to go racing. Along the way, I decided to replicate the blue of white paint scheme of the famous BRE race car of the early 70's that was the perennial SCCA CP champion.

DD: What are your Z car's specifications?

RB: Suspension – Stock Datsun with Camber plate added to front and rear struts, 1.5" Front Sway Bar, _" rear sway bar.

Tires/Wheels – Panasport 15x7, Hoosier D.O.T.
Brakes – Toyota 4 runner disc. (Front) Nissan Maxima disc (Rear)
Engine – 2,800 cc, 328 HP, Built by Rebello (California USA)
Carburetors – Triple Weber 44
Body – Fiberglass Hood, "Spook" front spoiler, Fiberglass Wheel flairs
Interior – A total race car, Kirkley seat, fuel cell, fire suppression system
Roll Cage – Welded six point full cage
Other – Original Datsun steel syncro "Comp" Transmission, (Rear) 190 Differential, 4:56 gears

DD: What race cars have been in your past?

RB: This is my first race car.

DD: And in the future?

RB: I am in the early stages of searching for my next race

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car – a 70's/80's vintage IMSA Mustang or Camaro

DD: What motivates you to race?

RB: Racing is an incredibly exhilarating activity. After being a spectator for such a long period of time, and now to be actively participating on "the other side of the fence" is a dream come true for me.

DD: Why the passion for Z cars?

RB: I have loved the Z cars since they came into the US in 1969. I followed closely, the success of Brock Racing Enterprises famous "BRE" Datsun and also watched with great interest, the success Bob Sharp enjoyed racing his Z's. The movie star appeal of Paul Neuman driving Sharp's Z cars was also great fun to watch.

DD: What's your favourite Z car, and why?

RB: The BRE Z – legendary and was dominant in SCCA CP for so many years. Bob Sharp's IMSA racers were also incredibly beautiful cars.

DD: Tell us about some events that you have been involved in that you've felt were significant or just plain fun or memorable?

RB: Our "home" track is Road America in Elkhart Lake, WI. which is only 50 miles from where I live. We race there three times a

year. The Brian Redman event in mid July is truly an experience that puts the history, the glamour and the excitement of Road Racing into full, glorious perspective during an action packed weekend. This is a huge event with upwards of 600 historic race cars with spectator attendance in the 50,000 range. I have also raced at Watkins Glen where I had the pleasure of meeting and racing against Diane Dale in her Track Dog Zed. This year, we traveled down to Sebring Florida to race against some very, very fast Porsches in an HSR event. To be able to race at these storied tracks is simply unbelievable. I would love to travel up to Canada as well as take a trip to the West Coast (U.S.) someday to race at Monterey.

DD: And your racing plans for 2005? Where can we find you the rest of this season?

RB: Our schedule at this time is; Mid June – Mid-Ohio for a SVRA Vintage event
Mid July - Road America for the B.R.I.C.
Early September – Watkins Glen
Mid September – Road America – Elkhart Lake Vintage Festival

DD: Thanks so much Rick – good luck with your season! Can't wait to meet you on the grid again at this year's Zippo Grand Prix

*By Diane Dale
Pictures provided by Rick Blaha*

