

# My First Autocross



## Short version:

Gas. B R A K E. Gas. B R A K E. Relief!!

## Slightly longer version:

(April 25, 2004)

Getting up at four o'clock in the morning is no small feat for a teenager, but can be managed for certain occasions. A first sanctioned NCCC race made the occasion list. Already the promise of going to the race was satisfaction enough. Only getting my license in January, my mother swore I would not be sufficient enough on stick shift to be able to race in April. We did not have another manual shift car other than the Corvette, and my sister's adventures with learning on it deprived me of ever getting a chance. One hour, one batch of chocolate-chip cookies, and a loaned Cavalier later, my mother was proven wrong. I am eternally grateful to Justin. It was the third hour in the morning and all was quiet in the house. Too excited to sleep, I lay awake anticipating how my father would react to a car returned in pieces. By the fourth hour everyone else was awake and ready to go. McDonald's was nearly empty at 5:30, with a few abandoned cars and some prospective racers. Familiar faces stepped out of the purple van and red (really orange by now) Corvette. The route was chosen, the caravan set off. Driver's meeting at nine, we were going to get there at eight. Only daylight savings time made it seven. No one remembered. An hour of waiting for another person to show up does not help to calm nerves, but once everyone did arrive it was all smiles, waves, and lots of encouragement and helpful hints (along with a favorite quote by Luke: "It's a car, it was built to be abused").

After the driver's meeting, engines roared. Uncomfortable enough in the overly large seat belt and helmet that requires some advanced seat uninvented by man for a minute hint of comfort, I could barely reach the ignition. But before I knew it, I was in line. The first worker says "1-1-2, 1-1-2" into the black walkie-talkie before waving me on. Then the starter smiles as he waves me to the timing lights. I let go of the clutch and push on the gas pedal. Nothing happens. I rolled backwards. For the third time ever, I killed the car. At a race. In front of everyone. It took a few seconds for the information to sink and attempt to reach the keys. I couldn't reach the ignition without moving the seat closer and effectively choking myself in the process. Finally I was at the lights. Pictures of a splintered blue car flashed before my eyes as the flag whipped in front of the windshield. Thinking that I was moving faster than lighting, I took off. Before I knew it I passed the slalom and the timing lights. Then I went the wrong direction and had to put the car in reverse. Not an easy thing for fairly new drivers, but reversing along concrete barriers without a rear-view mirror proved to be valuable experience when surrounded by sports cars.



By the end of the second race I was feeling pretty good. After looking at the times I realized that I was more like a big blue turtle inching around a track during a nap, but it was fun. Four events, two shouting friends, and one re-run later the day was over. Definitely an experience worth repeating. During that day the turtle slowly got faster, but it would take quite some time to get within a few seconds of the teacher. Yes, a few seconds is a lot of time, but I was ecstatic when I went from thirty seconds away to less than ten. No, that was not on the first day. The closest I got to a respectable time on the first day (or the first year, for that matter) was when I was a passenger in a fun run.

**Amy Cizel**

**Badger State Vettes**



Amy is shown here at the Midwest Region Awards Banquet in March, 2005 with Cal Camp, MW Region RE after he had presented Amy with her Award for finishing in 13th Place in the Ladies 2004 Regional Standings