

## In the money

*START YOUR ENGINES: Portland-area drivers, race-car builders make their mark at SCCA championships*

**BY JEFF ZURSCHEIDE**

*The Portland Tribune Oct 19, 2006*

---

**Back when I started racing, a friend of mine observed: “It’s fun to drive fast, but it’s better to drive faster than someone else.”**

In a nutshell, that’s why people struggle and save and travel halfway across the country to try to win a trophy and some bragging rights.

About a dozen drivers from the Portland area made the trip to Heartland Park Topeka for last week’s Sport Car Club of America National Championship Runoffs.

I went along to follow their story.

In the end, three of our local competitors would stand on the podium, with one narrowly missing the highest honor possible in amateur racing.

And both custom race-car manufacturers based in Portland came home with recognition of excellence in their craft.

SCCA national championship racing is divided into 25 classes of cars. This means that a Dodge Viper doesn’t race directly against a Mazda Miata or a sports racer built to use a motorcycle engine.

The class structure can be confusing, but it’s designed to ensure close racing that rewards good driving.

Todd Harris, owner of the Pro Drive racing school at Portland International Raceway, finished third in his spec racer Ford. A spec racer is a purpose-built racing car that is required to run a sealed engine purchased from the manufacturer.

All the cars are identical. The class has been running for a little more than 20 years, so there are many drivers with the experience needed to win.

Harris qualified in third place, dropped to seventh on the start and then worked his way back through the field to earn his place on the podium.