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**Skip Barber**



**Room for two: Skip Barber National frontrunner A.J. Riley won both of the "Open" races at The Glen, while Quentin Wahl won the Masters Division class in both races.**

**MAKING TRACKS**



Rick Roso photos

for lack of marrow donors, Pat and his mom formed Driving for Donors. Their mission – raise money and awareness for marrow donorship and to sign up 2007 new marrow donors.

When Pat lost his hair to chemotherapy, he realized that he could raise money by selling ad space on his head on Ebay. It caused a sensation and he and his little bald head quickly became an Internet phenom.

Masters National driver Michele Marden took up the cause and got every Skip Barber driver at Watkins Glen to pledge money for every lap they completed. Skip



**With "Pat-heads" bestowed upon their Mazda-powered racers (LEFT), masters and juniors from the Skip Barber system crossed swords at Watkins Glen (ABOVE).**

## THRILLING FOR A CAUSE

Skip Barber Racing teams up with Driving for Donors while giving its amateurs a chance to run with the big dogs

**R**It's a rare thing when drivers in an amateur regional race series are afforded the opportunity to race in front of a crowd of fans at a high profile professional race weekend. We all know it's a bunch of fun to, say, head to the road course at New Hampshire International with your car for a weekend of dicing with dozens of like-minded racers. But boy-oh-boy, it's a whole 'nother kettle of fish to go blasting down to Turn One at a big-name venue in front of a big crowd of race fans who've shelled out cash to watch the show. If you're a racer with Skip Barber, twice in the past three years you've had the chance to race during the popular Grand-Am Rolex Sports Car Series weekend at Watkins Glen International.

The Skip Barber Racing School has had a long association with The Glen. In 2005 they called vp of competition Todd Snyder to ask if the Race Series wanted to run as a support event to the big Grand-Am weekend. The Glen organizers understand that Barber's various championships not only have histories of producing the next generation of pro drivers, but also have a tremendous following in the amateur ranks. With some phone calls and e-mails, a deal was done: Skip Barber would hold two non-points "open" races during the Rolex Daytona Prototype weekend which could be entered by any Regional or National driver. Despite the fact that many Skip Barber Regional drivers under the age of 18 couldn't enter (New York state law), a big field of 25 put on two great races – one of which had Grand-Am driver

Roberto Moreno on the grid, who wanted some quality seat time since he had, in his long and storied racing career, never driven Watkins Glen.

This year, Skip Barber at the Sahlen's was a slightly different animal. There was more at stake – Regional Series drivers would score points that they would transfer into their Eastern or Midwestern Regional Championship campaigns. Plus, this was a stand-alone points event for the Masters Division of the BFGoodrich/Skip Barber National Presented by Mazda. So, the Regional driving contingent – there was one Skip Barber National entrant, 19-year-old A.J. Riley – would be mixing it up with the quick guys and girls of the Masters National (and thus "class" points would be awarded).

Skip Barber Racing also took advantage of the weekend's higher profile in order to benefit Driving for Donors, a charitable campaign both the TRG Grand-Am GT team and the Jeff Gordon Foundation have associated with. Ten-year-old Pat Pedraja has leukemia. Seeing fellow sufferers die

Barber Racing would then match the total.

"The weekend was amazing," said Marden. "All of the Skippy drivers came on board 100 percent, pledging money for the lap-a-thon. The Skip Barber marketing guy even had decals made of Pat's bald head and personally installed them on all 30 cars."

The races themselves were – typical of Skip Barber races at Watkins Glen – exciting, closely fought affairs. Riley won the first event, duking it out over the 10 laps with Masters Division driver Quentin Wahl and Regional stand-out Brent Milner. In the second race there were five different leaders over the first five laps, then Riley took the lead and barely edged (by 0.134sec) 2005 winner Ivo Dimov. And Marden? She came home 15th in race one, then a Masters Division career-best ninth in race two.

"We not only raised awareness of Driving for Donors, but also collected \$32,000," said Marden. "Pat called me before Saturday's race and wished me (and all of us) a good race. Getting into the race car, with his face on the nose, buckling on my helmet, which I'd covered with pictures of him, wearing a T-shirt with his face over my heart, it occurred to me that no matter what happened, it was already a great race weekend." **Rick Roso**