

Jayme Coggin
New England Region Autocross
Event #7

A Great Day At Devens

It was a typical August morning, cool comfortable and crisp air. I woke up around 5 am to pack my gear into my 2007 Nissan 350z, once I was packed I was off! I was headed to Devens Airfield in Ayer Massachusetts to race in an Autocross event with the New England Region SCCA group. This was NER's 7th autocross event of the year, but it was only my 3rd event. I had high expectations for myself going into this event, whenever I participate in something that is competitive, I want to have fun and win, it does not matter if it is my first time trying something or my 100th time doing something I want to have fun and win. In the first event I raced in, I placed 7th out of 17 in the novice class missing out on a trophy by one spot. It would not have been a win but it would have been awesome to come home with a trophy from my first autocross event, but no matter, I had a lot of fun. On to my second event, this time around I had a better idea of how the car handles and what autocross is really like. So yet again I set my expectations high wanting a win. I wound up placing 6th out of 27 in the novice class, which again still is not a win but I atleast got a trophy this time around, still had fun! Now back onto the current 3rd event I am about to race in, again I set my expectation high wanting a win and to have fun. I get to Devens Airfield around 7 or so when the gates open up. I unpack the car as usual, fill the tires up with more air, get it tech inspected and get myself comfortable like the past 2 events I have been to. This time around I am becoming even more comfortable with what is going on and have a better understanding of exactly how the day is going to go. I place my headphones on when the course opens up for walking, I take my blank course sheet and lay out the track on it with a pen to help myself remember the course better. After walking the course twice and writing it down on my blank sheet I had it all memorized. The past 2 events I did, I did not take an instructor much at all, which after event 2 I realized was a poor decision. At that particular event my fastest run was on my 4th try out of 6, one would think you will sort of progressively get faster throughout the day especially as a novice still learning immensely. So this time around I planned on utilizing an instructor as much as I can. After the first heat in the morning I was leading the novice class. I was very excited and was having a lot of fun. When the afternoon heats started I was quickly bumped out of 1st down to 5th. When my second heat started I was ready to try and make improvement to my runs, my goal was to shave off roughly 2.5 second off of my best time. Unfortunately for this event we were only going to get 5 runs in because their was going to be a special run off at the end for a fundraiser the group had been putting on. So I only had 2 runs to try and run 2.5 second faster than my best time so far. Run 4 did

not go well, I ran a 72.619 which was .028 slower than my 3rd run. I was bummed out, but as the instructor told me all you need is one run to go fast, so I stayed confident, thinking of what areas of the course I need to either go faster, brake earlier, or just try to keep my car tighter. Run 5 began, everything was going well, about 1/4 through the course I was stopped, someone did not replace a cone quick enough! Having been stopped, I was guaranteed a rerun, so the instructor said " now lets learn something" so I pushed the car a lot harder than before trying to find places I can pick up time. When I got back to the grid, I was told in 5 minutes I will be given my rerun. When the 5 minutes was up I began my final run, I used what I learned in my previous run trying to push the car as hard as I could without making any drastic mistakes! As soon as I crossed the finish cones my time came up....70.3 I managed to shave off 2.291, with my PAX it bumped me into first by .271 of a second. When I saw the time I took a deep breath trying to keep my smile down, not trying to get too excited. There were still a few people in my class who had the chance to go after me, they could do what I did and bump me out of first. I parked my car in the paddock, packed my stuff and watched my phone for the live updates, crossing my fingers the whole time I was watching. After the final heat was done, I lucked out, no one managed to beat my best time. When it was time for awards I had a big smile on my face the entire time I waited to hear my name as class winner of the Novice class! I could not wait to call my wife and tell her I accomplished my goal of winning my class and having fun. I have since been back, racing in the normal street class for my car, knowing I am racing against people who have far more experience than me, and have cars which are much better prepared for the class. Even though I am not experienced enough to win my class just yet, I am still have a ton of fun! I want to thank the SCCA and the New England Region group for putting on awesome autocross events. I am on the hook, I love it. I recommend coming to these events to everyone.

Jayme Coggin
#5 CS 2007 350Z