

Apex Racing Mid Season Report

With the Pro Mazda Championship well underway the Avenue Communities Apex Racing team has reached a nice stride. The team entered round six in Toole, Utah with Mike in a strong second in the points and Ken in tenth. Although the race did not bring the results that the team wanted it was a very successful weekend for the team. Mike was the fastest driver in almost every session with the exception of qualifying “ I felt like I gave the car everything that it had and unfortunately I feel that the track was getting faster as the session went on and we missed the pole by a little over a tenth of a second,” stated Mike. Ken ran his best time of the weekend in qualifying and would start the race from a personal best of 11th. “ I felt like I could have gotten a little more out of the car but was very happy with the handling, I knew that I had a great car for the race,” stated Ken.

The race would bring huge disappointment for both Ken and Mike. “We were forming up for the start of the race and Ryan, my crew chief, came over the radio and informed me that someone had spun on the warm up lap. At first I thought it was no big deal and we would just have to make one more lap, states Mike, unfortunately the officials decided to go to a single file start for reasons unknown to the team and robbing them of their hard work that had earned them a front row starting position.” When the green finally came out Mike had a nice run on the pole sitter. When Mike made a move to pass he was driven over to the left, misjudging the pass, Mike lost his nose cone, ending his day.

Ken’s race was also cut very short. “I got a great start and had moved up a few positions. I was just trying to settle in when a car tried to pass me on the inside of turn 17, on the second lap, the next thing I knew I was airborne” stated Ken. With both cars out of the race the team tried to keep a positive attitude and look at the fact that they had made huge strides in the right direction. “The team is really coming together. We were all bummed out, but I have never had so much support after making a mistake like that before. In some ways this weekend made me want it more than ever,” stated Mike.

The team would head off to Portland the following weekend with something to prove, and that is exactly what they did. The team started off the weekend right where they had left of in Miller Park, at the top of the charts. “The car felt great right out of the box. Darrel, my engineer, and I worked hard in practice to make sure the car was handling well and were not concerned with setting fast times, just on the balance of the car,” stated Mike. Ken had a tougher time than Mike for good reason. Portland would only be Ken’s 7th pro race ever which means that Ken has to learn a new track every weekend. “I think that Portland was a bit of a struggle for me coming from a track that was so wide open and grippy to the narrow slick confines of Portland and therefore it took me a few sessions to get up to speed,” stated Ken.

By the time qualifying came around on Saturday the team felt like they definitely had a car for the pole. The cars hit the track and Mike knew right away that they had nailed the setup on the car. “We were fast out of the box, I think that I was in about 4th at midway in the session. I came in for a quick adjustment, I knew that it would be a bit of a risk only because I did not want to use up the tires, but I felt like I could get a touch more out of

the car,” stated Mike. A touch more was exactly what Mike got. He would improve his time by 3 tenths of a second to move him into second on the grid and a replay of Millar park. Ken would not have as good of luck. “I think that I just missed it a little bit and here if you are a second off the pace you are in 15th but I am getting faster in every session and I am really looking forward to a great race,” stated Ken.

After a caution free warm up lap Mike would get to take a proper start to the race from the front row. “As we were standing on the pre grid for the race I turned to my mechanic Cam and said, well either this is going to be really good day or we are going to be out to lunch. He asked why and I noted that we had way less wing in our car than anyone else in the top five, as it turned out it was the right call.” The green flag came out and the pole sitter had a little bit of a run on Mike by mid point in the straight. Mike, with less wing in the car, was able to get a half car length by turn one. “I was a half car length in front of Ace when we went for the brakes. I think because I had the preferred line my car had a ton more grip. I glanced in my right hand mirror and all I saw was the side of his car. It was unfortunate because I think we would have had a great race today,” stated Mike. After the first lap the Avenue Communities car would never look back and would lead the race flag to flag for the teams second win of the season.

Ken’s day was a huge learning experience, he made a couple of mistakes as the day went on but would bring his Centerpoint Condominiums car to a respectable 16th place finish. “I am so happy for the team we all really needed a good weekend and even though I felt like I could have run a lot better today I am so proud of how far we have come in such a short time,” stated Ken.

So at the halfway point in the series Ken is in a solid 13th in points and Mike is locked in a very tight battle for the lead in the championship. The team has posted top times at every track that the series has visited this season. With five more races to go everyone is excited to head up to Three Rivers this weekend where they hope to continue the success of the past few weekends.