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NEDIV Council

## **Open Letter to the NEDIV National Drivers**

The NEDIV Race schedule for 2010 was recently published. Since then there has been concern expressed by some of the National drivers that there are no double National race events on the calendar.

This issue was discussed at the NE Division meeting in November prior to finalizing the schedule. Although there were a number of double Nationals requested, in the end the regions, as represented by the Regional Executives, decided that there should be none on the schedule for 2010.

The issue of having 3-day double race Nationals has been debated within the division for many years. The arguments are primarily driver preference and regional finances. It has long been stated that many drivers don't want to extend the weekend by the extra day (at least not on non-holiday weekends) and that they don't want to be disadvantaged if they can't attend the double event and have to travel to two separate single events. More recently a strong viewpoint is emerging that the double race weekends are less expensive for the drivers than two separate, single events and that the economics are changing some of the driver's preferences. Undoubtedly both sides of that issue exist, as well as several positions between the extremes.

The other stake-holders in this issue are the racing regions – those that host the National races. Total participation in National racing has been declining by about 10 – 12 % per year for the past 4 years. Combined with increasing costs (track rental, insurance, etc.) it has become more difficult for the regions, especially those hosting the smaller events, to break even financially. The same trends exist in Regional racing but consistently greater numbers of entries per event make it more economical to host a Regional race. The regions believe that large double race National events will draw entries away from the smaller single race events to the extent that the single events may no longer be financially viable. The recent feedback from the drivers who are lobbying for the doubles as being more economical are validating this concern.

Many of the National participants are “local” drivers who enter the one or two Nationals at the tracks closest to them but don't travel to the majority of the National races. If their local track loses its National these drivers won't fill the void with another National event at a more distant track. On the other hand are the drivers who only enter enough Nationals to qualify for the Runoffs. These days that can be accomplished by only entering two double race events. However, of the 450 drivers participating in the 2009 Nationals in the North East, only 75 actually attended the Runoffs. Does it make sense to design the National racing program for that limited population.

For the 2010 season two of our historical National race events, Summit Point and Mosport, were dropped by the host regions for financial reasons. There remain 7 National races, all single race events, nicely distributed geographically and on the schedule.

So, that is the dilemma – more doubles to provide economy to some of the drivers at the cost of having fewer National races by forcing more regions/tracks out of the National racing schedule.

This issue will be discussed further at the Division's annual Round Table meeting in New Jersey on March 13 – 14. This is a rather straight forward issue but with no easy solution. It is very important that the decision makers, the RE's in the division, hear from more of the National drivers, hopefully from the full spectrum of viewpoints, so that they can make well informed decisions. Better yet, the drivers are invited to attend the Round Table to present their views and participate in what will be a lively debate.