

SPORTSCAR *ENTHUSIAST*

June 4, 2023



SCCA at the DETROIT GRAND PRIX

**Posing, in GM's Renaissance Center,
after the morning meeting, above.**

The Turn 7-8 team poses early on Sunday, below.



Each morning began with a walk through the parking building. As the owner of a very original 1966 Mustang, I was drawn to this 1966



convertible, parked by another volunteer.

In contrast, GM's lobby featured a number of C-8 cars, below, and a variety of IndyCars, and vintage IMSA racing Corvettes.



Our morning meetings began with comments from Bill Armitage and Cindy Wisner, at right. Chicago Region Starters, Wayne and Pat Foss, below, were mentioned Sunday. I had dinner with them the evening before. I had great fun sharing stories with them.





There were a few extra chairs, above.



A few folks took notes during the speeches, while most relied on their memories.

Doug Mitchell, at left, spent time on the corners, during the IndyCar sessions, but was "in control" during the TransAm and IM-SA sessions. Doug has had a role in the Detroit GP since just about the beginning.

For more than 60 years, I have preferred pics that are a bit blurry to blinding the innocent with a flash as I snap candid pics like these.



I got to know Dave (very tall above, holding his hat in his hand) before we arrived in Detroit. He lives in Marquette, one of the smaller cities that I drive through on my thousand-mile trip to Detroit. On Dave's left, in the 'Aussie' hat is Alex Dellatorre, SCCA's Detroit Region Executive.





In these pics, Cindy and Patrick show their cat-herding skills as they arrange everyone for the cameras.





These are the 5 best pics of the whole group, in a variety of poses.

Send me a note if you want a JPG of one specific pic.



Lon Hake greets Gary, above. Gary and Steve B below. Gary let us all know that this would be his last year "in control" for IndyCar.





We were invited to label and leave things like chairs on the delivery truck for use the next day. The blue & gray chair bag above was not claimed. Later the mystery was solved, when its owner arrived late. His car had been hit outside the parking garage. 100% the other driver's fault, but the police reports took a while. Below, one of my flagger-friends rides 'shotgun' in a shuttle truck.





For decades, flaggers were taken to their stations in a string of new pickup trucks. For 2023, a cargo van was added to our delivery fleet.





John F got to ride up front in the cargo van. John has been a good friend since the late 60s when we both autocrossed in the Detroit area.



Those working between turns 7 and 8 simply walked a couple of blocks to their station. The rest fit into these pickups and the big yellow van.

Some drivers allowed sitting on the edge of the bed. Each person tends to call out to the



driver the station number where they want to disembark. My comment to the folks sitting on one side of the truck? "At the first sharp turn, all of you are getting off!" I hoped each person would then grip the truck tighter. Much more specific than the generic "Be careful."





When you cannot simply lean on the wall of the truck, you can brace yourself like the guy in the doorway above. Lon and others wave to me.





The last truck load of flaggers enters the track, above.

In the 60s, when I commuted on my bike down Brush and Beaubien, the area was not so pretty. My suburban friends were afraid to go there. Now, this area has been transformed, from low-rise industrial, to this.



Service vehicles, like the flagger convoy, enter the track through the gap in the wall in the middle of the bottom of the pic at right,

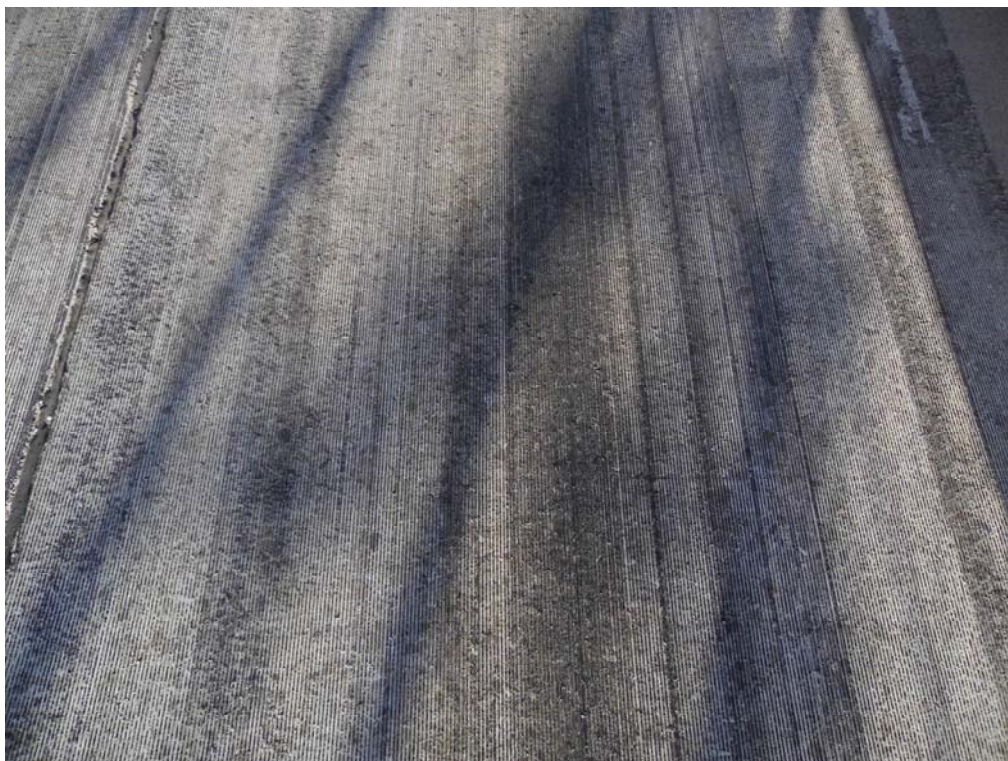
In the bottom pic, the race cars are headed toward the camera, and braking for turn 8. The concrete roadway has been shaved flat with diamond tools, to make it very flat. This is critically important for consistently high rates of deceleration. A few low spots remained, which meant perfect traction on one line, but far less if you approach turn 8 a foot over to one side. Walking the track would teach the drivers where the traction is.





The low spots appear as dark blotches and the as-poured rippled areas, like left of center below.



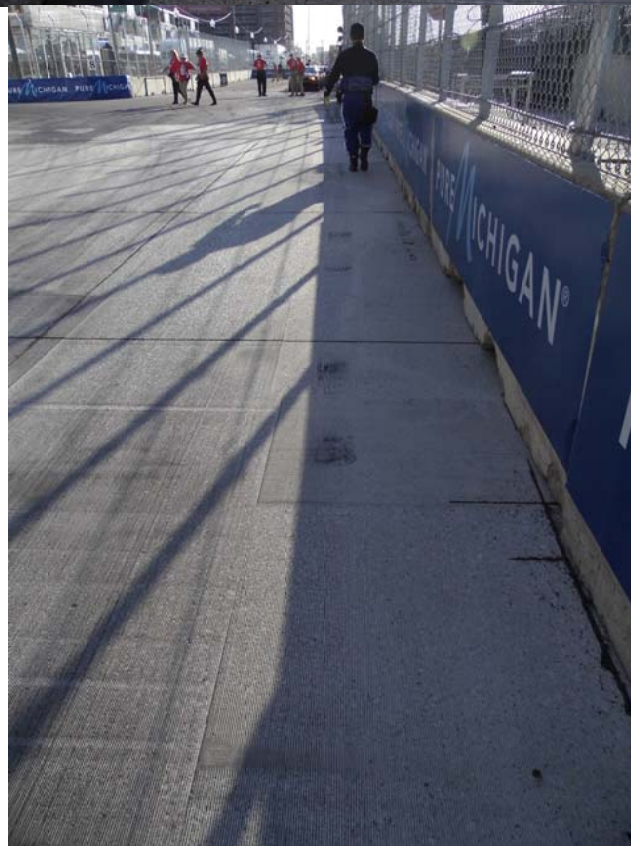


Every high spot has been coated in sticky rubber. Stand, and try to twist your foot. It is impossible.





The diamond cut grooves above run left-right, which is the direction of travel. Tire rubber has melted onto the track even in the low spots above. The problem is that even a spot that is 4mm lower than the pavement nearby upsets a very stiffly sprung racecar. As I am snapping these pics, the red-shirt folks and others are still rushing to their assigned spots.



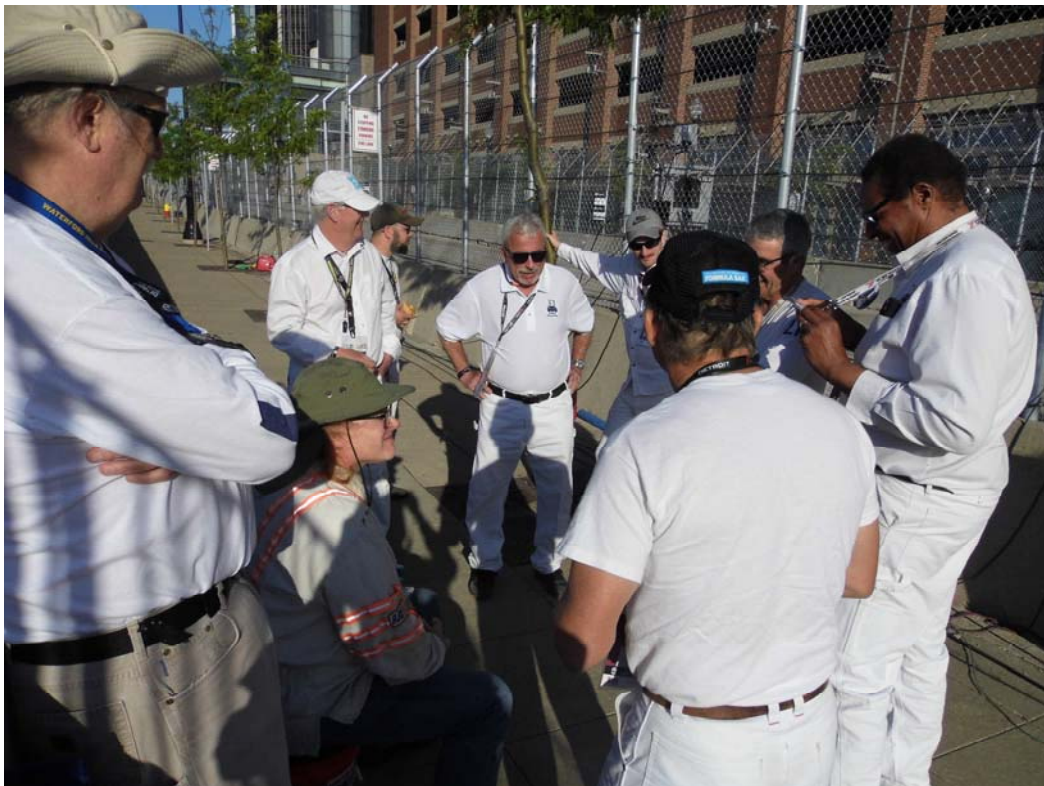


The team here covers the straight from turn 7 toward turn 8. Ed Arthur, at right, was the section chief.





The morning corner meetings tend to cover topics like rotations (trading jobs with the guy a few hundred feet down the track), rules, and the finer aspects of flagging from here.



More pics from early Sunday morning. Brian had the yellow flag (that he is holding) snatched out of his hand by a rear race-car wing.





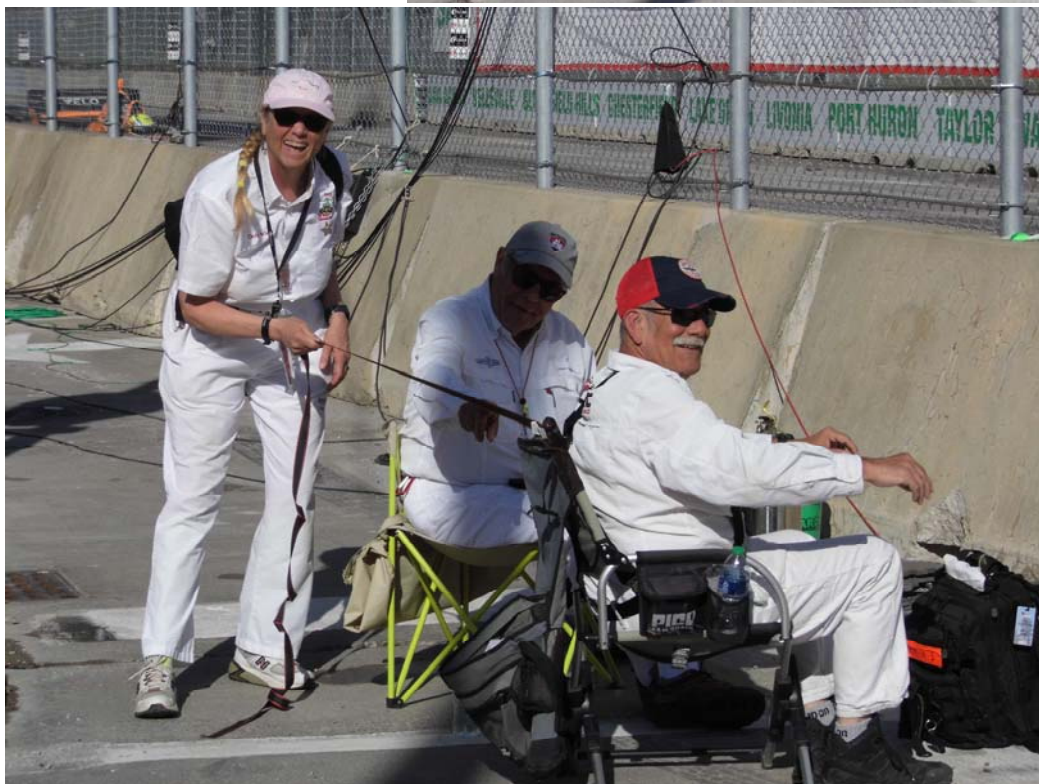
Below, Cindy is at the Turn 1 station, as the flaggers enjoy a break between sessions. Race traffic went from left to right, then turned 90 degrees to their left.



The RenCen dominates all of downtown Detroit, even the most distant parts of the race course, such as turn 1.

These huge vinyl wraps transform these glass sheathed concrete boxes.

Below, Cindy has snapped a leash onto one of her flaggers.



At right is the shelter for the turn 1 folks. This is a fairly unique situation in the world of street racing. No fan zone or service workers nearby, and shade for much of the race day.

Below, is where the MERV and tow teams waited. Also here is the hydraulic lift that puts the network TV camera high above the fence.



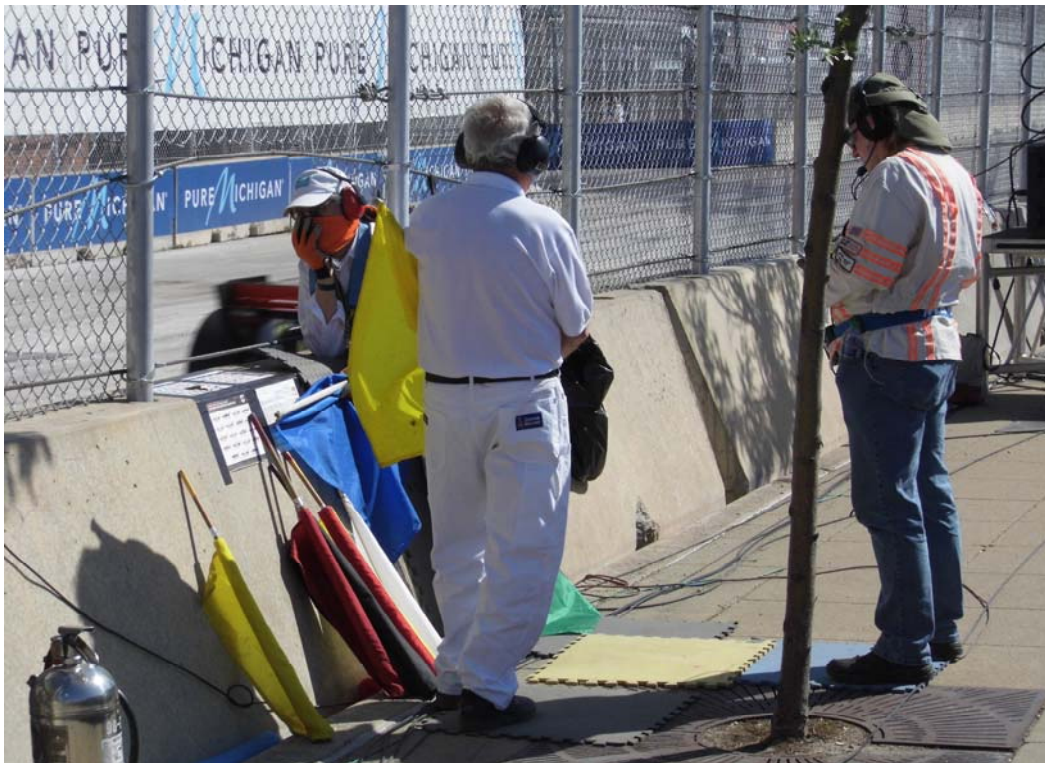


Race control bureaucracy takes many seconds to authorize the entry of MERV and tow teams during a session. This allows the folks doing these critical jobs time to watch a few yards from their trucks.



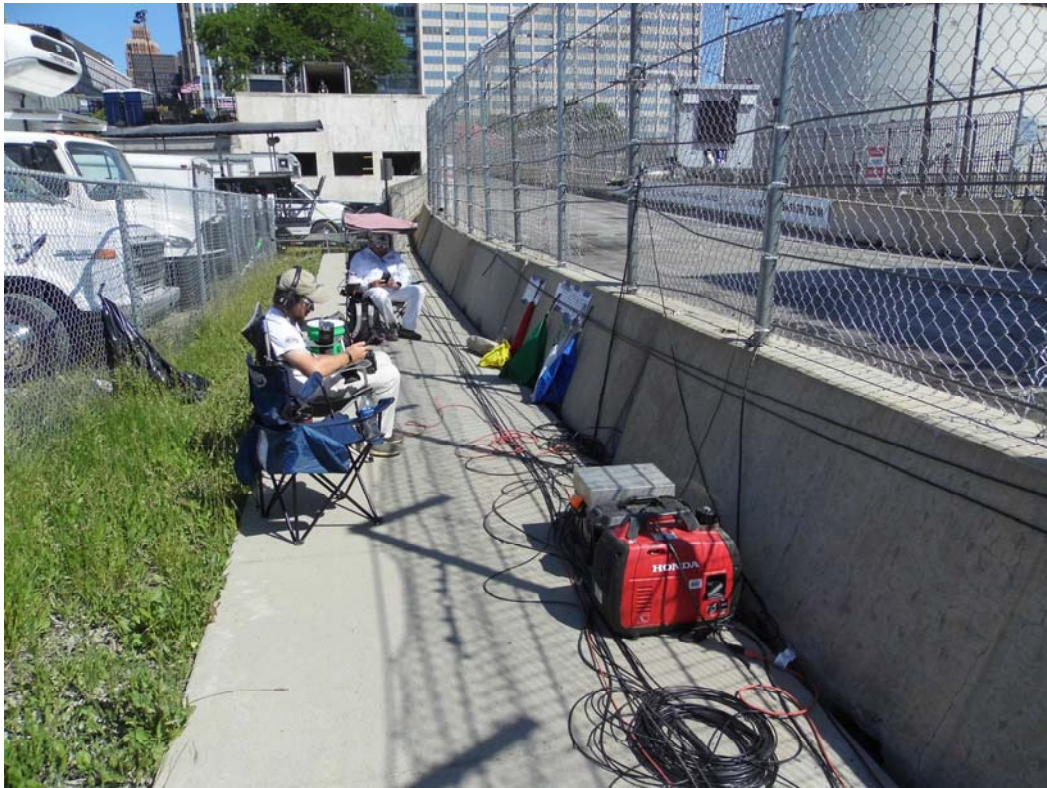


The AMR team member above wanted to talk as he finished polishing the truck. I gave him one of my cards, so hopefully he will see this pic.



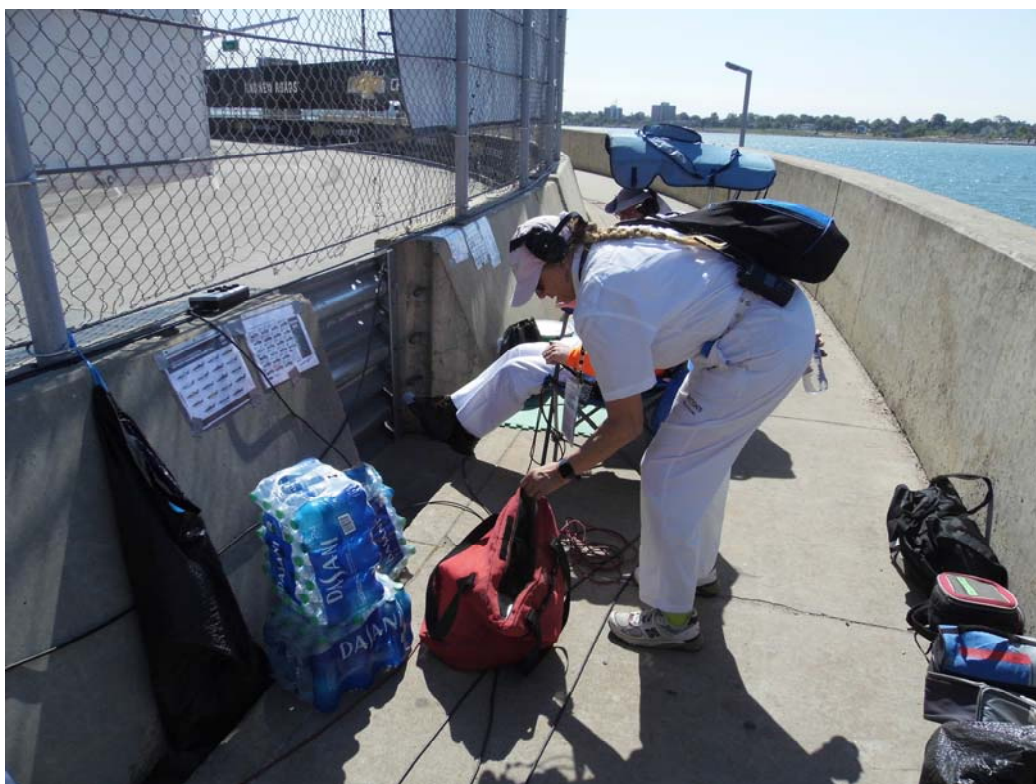


Flag teams in action between 7 and 8 at top, and between 6 and 7 above. In the pic below, the car is leaving turn 5.

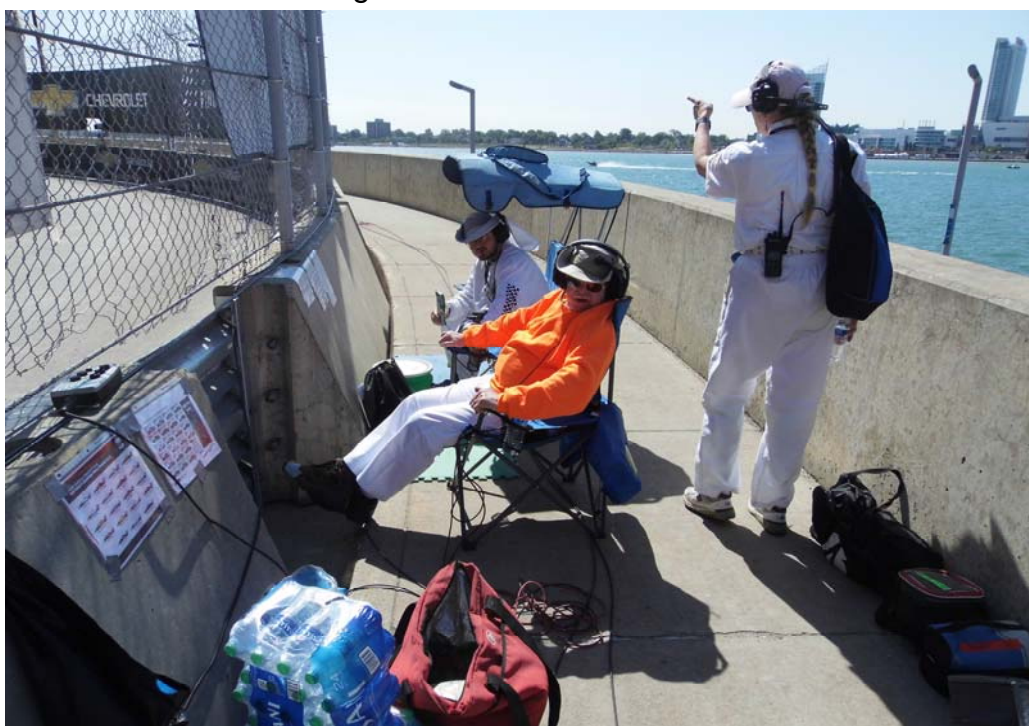


The station above is between turns 4 and 5. The portable generator powers the warning light on the fence. Below, Cindy poses with her folks from the turn 5 team.





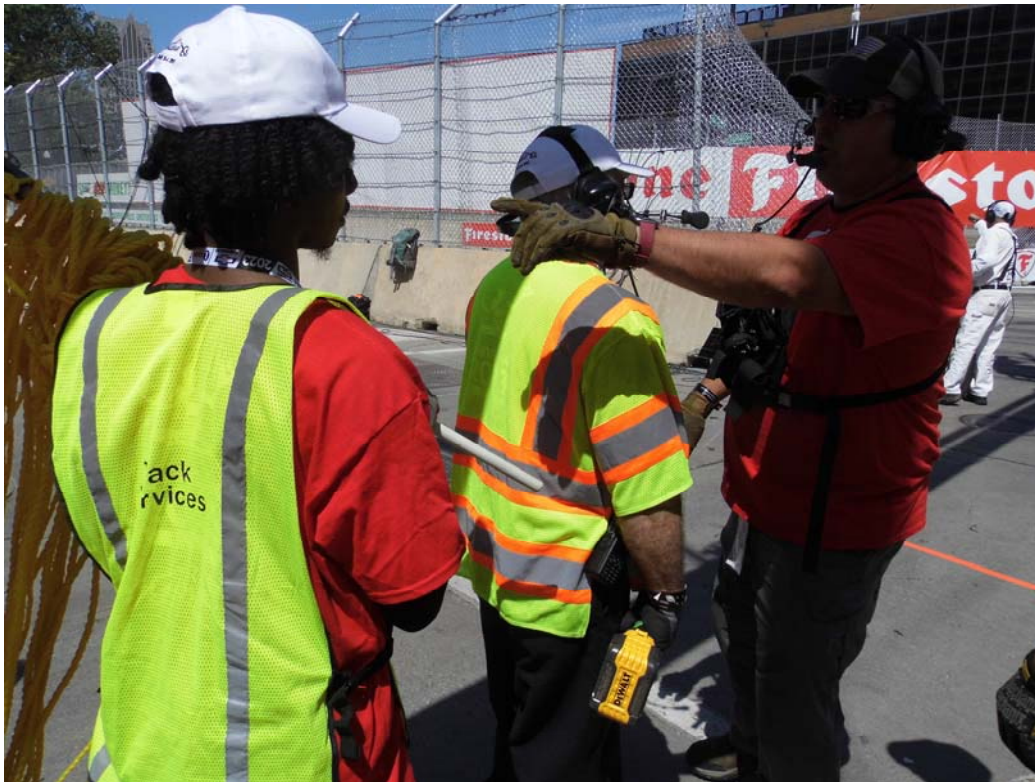
Above, Cindy checks this cooler for water bottles and ice. Only early in the weekend did we run low on ice, calling for a resupply run. I made sure all the coolers along the river had ice.



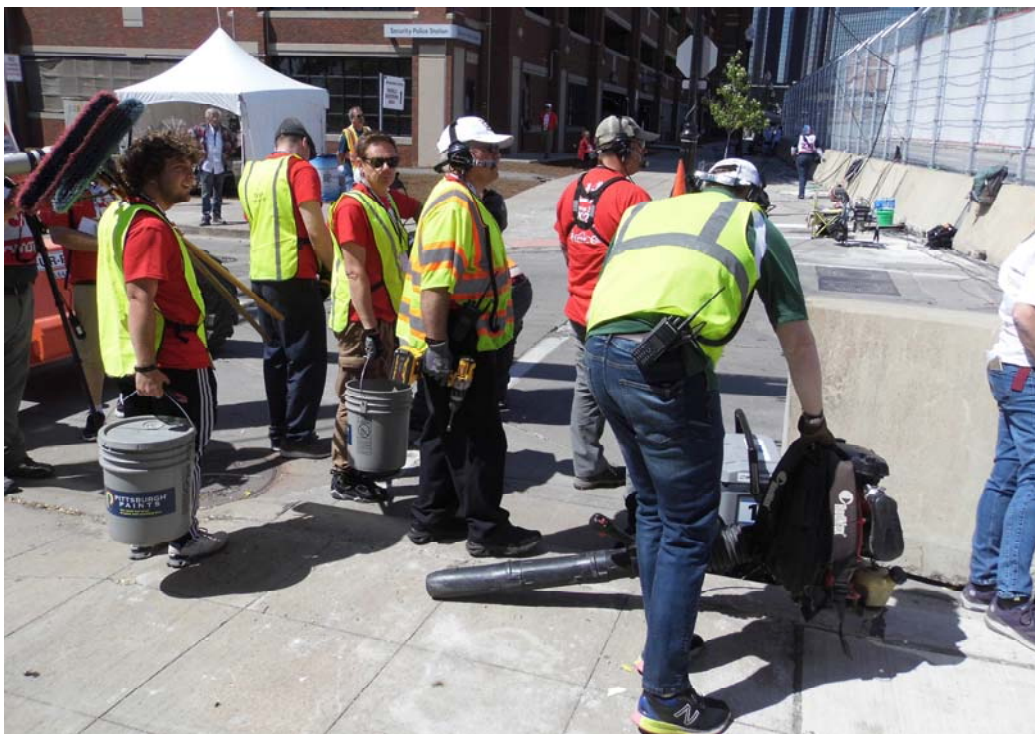


Early on Sunday, I got a golf-cart ride to the SCCA compound. As I returned to Station 1, this car drove straight into the wall. It dribbled a bit of coolant (pure water, per the rules) but several yards from the race line. A wrecker was positioned in front of it, and the red MERV team truck placed to protect the workers. The track services team was in place, but were not needed. Instead, the yellow car was lifted and hauled away a few hundred feet. Even the banner-ad was not badly damaged.





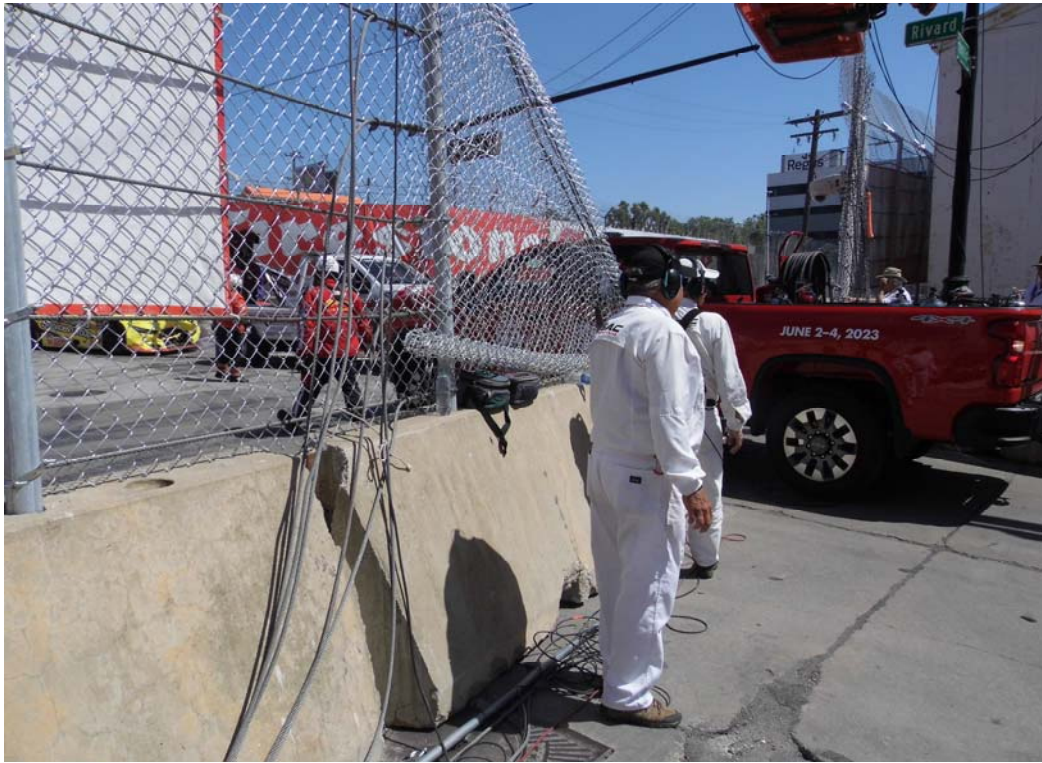
TRACK SERVICES were ready with a big leaf blower, pails of absorbent, 2 big brooms, and cordless drills (to remove and repair tire stacks and the belting that protects them).





The turn 1 apex flaggers, above and at left below watch as the red pace car goes by. The 5 behind the Jersey Barrier below had other jobs.





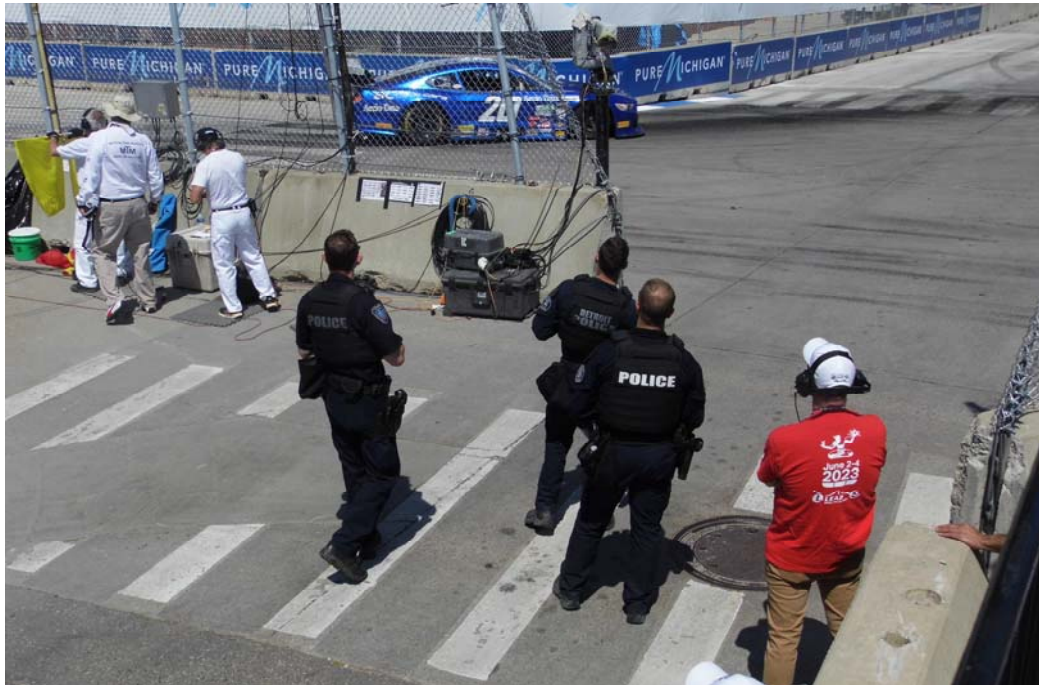
Above, the MERV truck backs off the track, and toward where I am, leaving room for the wrecker to drive straight south and out of the way.



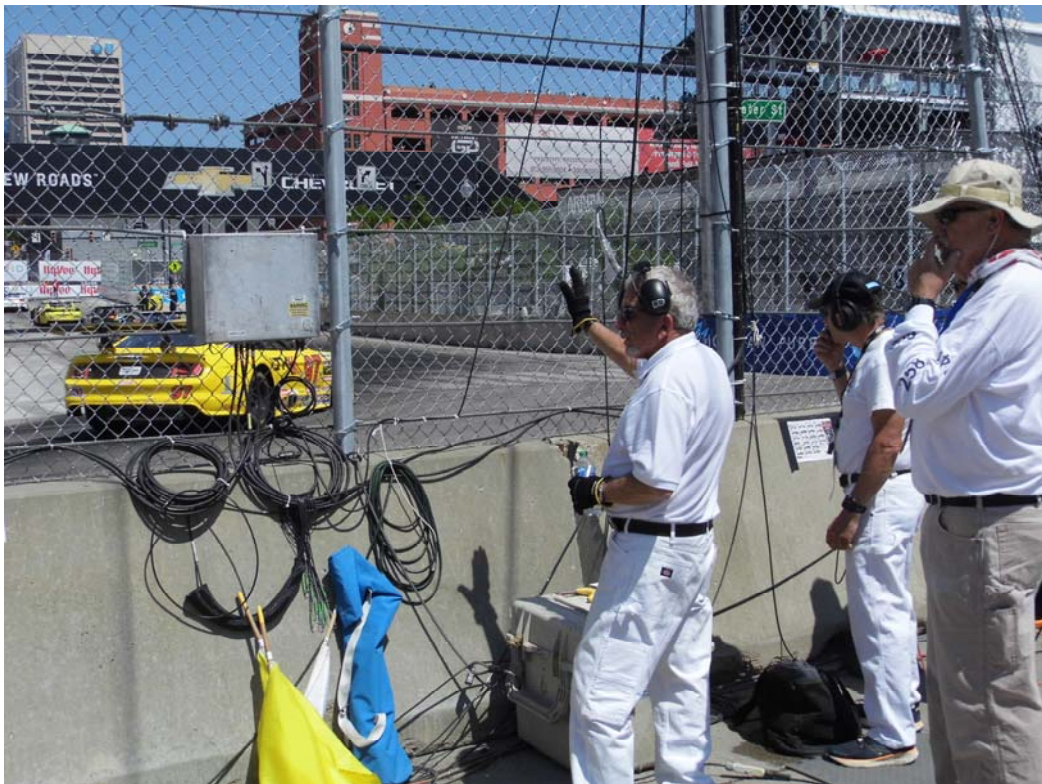


As the #88 is towed away, the fireman and MERV Chief watch over the area, until the wrecker returns a few minutes later. Its right front tire was torn and fell off the rim after it was parked. Dave led the main turn 1 team in the shade, below.



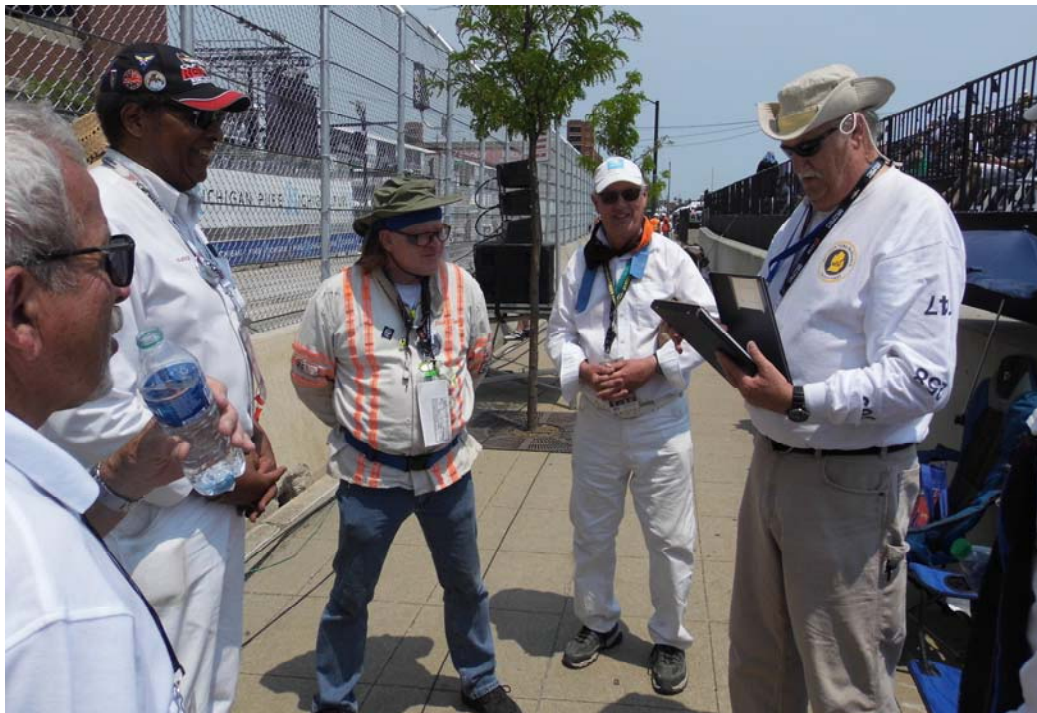


As the Sunday TRANSAM race continued, our apex flaggers are at the far left. I asked the Detroit police officers if they had been offered hearing protection. One said yes, but they wore nothing in or on their ears. After the checkered flag, the flaggers wave to congratulate the drivers.





Above, Ed and his Turn 8 apex crew watch the track, as the INDY NXT cars go by. After the NXT race, Ed held a ceremony for his newest flagger, at right, below, to answer a multipage questionnaire.





As he got every question right, we were all happy, above. Below, Ed shakes his hand as he hands over the 'prize', a flagger's whistle.





In the warehouse end of the track property, Detroit Region SCCA had this compound, a big tent, trucks, and the equipment trailer. Below are several tables and the sort of bags in which our lunches were delivered.

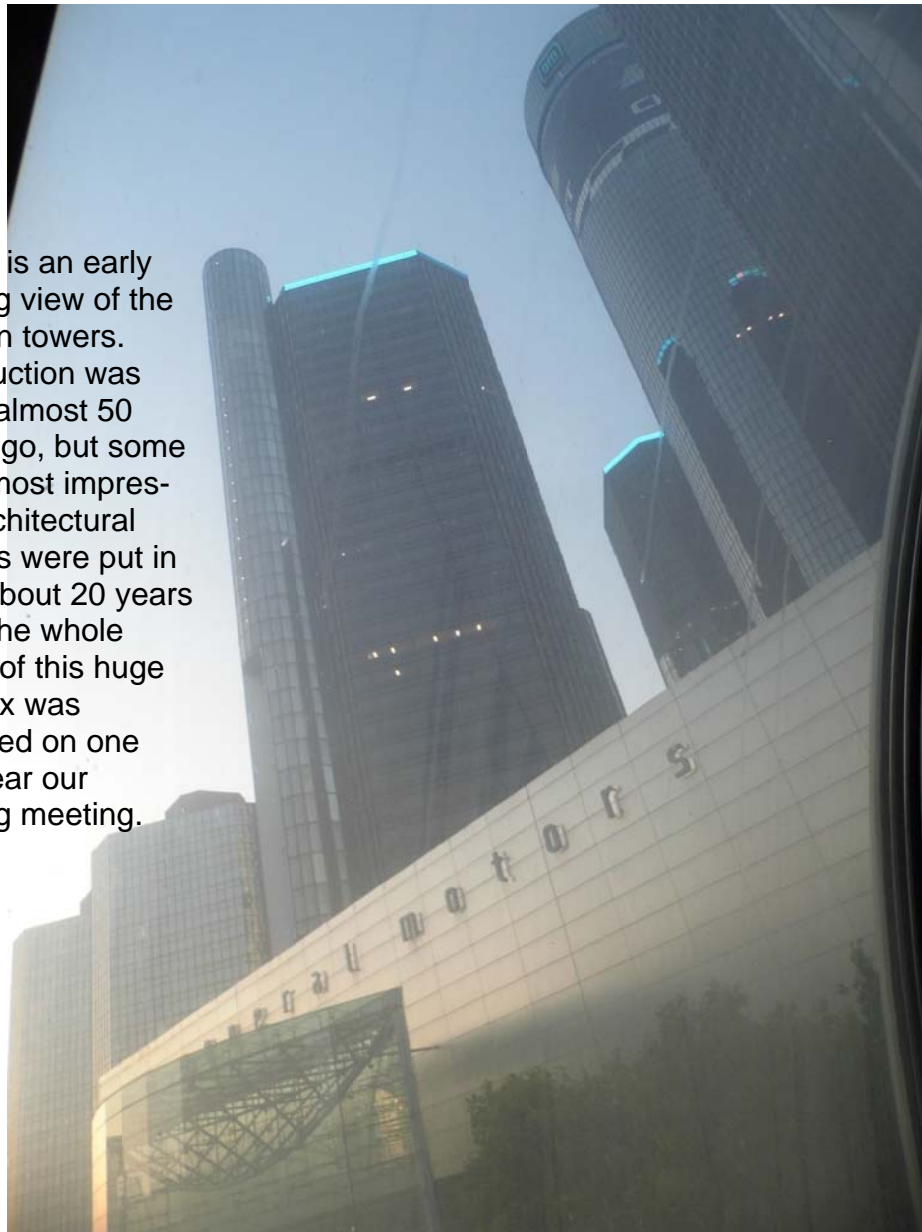




Above is not just a course map, but all the details required by the track's emergency plans. You can see that the RenCen is pretty much centered on the course. Most of the stuff still in the equipment trailer is needed for club racing etc., but not at the big INDYCAR race.



At right is an early morning view of the RenCen towers. Construction was begun almost 50 years ago, but some of the most impressive architectural features were put in place about 20 years ago. The whole history of this huge complex was explained on one wall, near our morning meeting.



Except for otherwise-attributed material, all other photos and text in this issue produced by David Grant. We hope you enjoyed them.

Copyright 2023 D. Grant

Comments & Stories with Pics are always welcome!!

You can write to us at raceofficials@gmail.com

Sportscar Enthusiast @raceofficials is on Twitter & Facebook.

Search for “raceofficials” and you will find us.

Please click Like, Follow & Share.

Thanks!