

Thundering Cobra

Mieko Doi-Olson has multisensory track experience

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“I want to run it in Track Trials,” I explained to my husband Ken Olson, “... because I need to make that sound.”

There is nothing tastier than the hearty roar of Shelby Cobra. This was over a year ago when I was still struggling to get my SCCA regional novice license signed off in Spec Miata. A year later, Ken was finally ready for me to drive his Factory Five that he and his team in Minnesota so lovingly built 10 years ago. To make the car drivable for me, it required a bit of effort as he is 13 inches taller; the seat needed a platform and a mere eight cushions so I could see over the hood while reaching the pedals.

During the first session, I was fortunate to be the only one ready to go out so I had the track to myself for the first few laps to shake off the nervousness. Not trusting the manual brakes yet, it was reported that I started braking a bit early for turn 1 — allegedly at the Bremerton start / finish line — however there is no video to validate this.

As the day went on, I got a lot more comfortable in the car, but still hadn't gone flat out to make that sound. Finally, I lost my chicken foot and went for it. Oh, that sound! I could feel it to the bone! It was an amazing experience. But what I did not expect was the stimulation to my other senses. Besides hearing that magnificent roar, I could feel the wind blow. I could smell the exhaust and the rubber. I could finally see that little orange dot Dave Conover keeps telling me to turn in at. And it was almost as if I could poke Greg Fordahl on the



Sherry Masterson photo

Meiko Doi-Olson beams after making husband Ken Olson's Factory Five Cobra thunder like it's supposed to.

shoulder every time he passed me!

By the end of the day, with a lot of encouragement from everyone (thank you!) I chopped seconds off my lap times. And I was addicted to that multisensory experience. During the last session, the other driv-

ers pulled off early leaving me once again alone on the track. Going down the back straight, the overcast Bremerton sky opened up to a gorgeous light blue. Sheer contentment was what I felt with the smell of fall and that rumble I was making.