



TREMENDOUS TARGA

photos by gordon sleigh

Canada's Targa Newfoundland is a wild weeklong adventure on one of the most beautiful islands in the Atlantic. You won't find tropical breezes or sandy beaches in Newfoundland, but you will encounter beautiful harbor towns, rugged natural beauty, friendly people and some thrilling roads for high-speed driving.

September 10-17, 2011, saw competitors come from all over the world to compete in the 2200-kilometer race that mixes transit stages with full-speed sections on closed public roads. Forget flag stations; this is the kind of race where hitting a mailbox or sailing into the Atlantic are real dangers. In fact, one Ferrari Enzo famously turned into a submersible at this year's event. Visit targanewfoundland.com for complete results.

▲ The Subaru Impreza WRX team of Matt and Brian Oldford beat several heavy hitters, including a Toyota Supra, Dodge Viper ACR and Porsche 911 GT3 RS, to win the overall Modern class honors at Targa Newfoundland.



◀ It takes a lot of energy to woe an SRT Dodge Challenger. Rob Pacione and Brian Maxwell had the right rhythm, however, as they scored the Open class overall victory.

◀ Rally champion Andrew Comrie-Picard isn't afraid of slip angle, and he put on quite a show in this hardtop Toyota Supra en route to first in his Modern class and second overall. ▼ Justin Crant and Justin Russell nailed a perfect score—no penalty time whatsoever—in their VW Golf Trek in the Grand Touring category.



FLYIN' MIATA TACKLES TARGA NEWFOUNDLAND



"You know what it's like when you get back into the office after a track day weekend and everything's just a little bit more intense? You're kind of amped up, and everything's just a little bit brighter. You had this awesome, awesome weekend with a great duel with a Corvette on the track or something, and no one else really quite understands because, you know, they all mowed the lawn and got cat food or whatever. This whole thing is like that, except it's a week long. You come off that first event and you've got another day. You do that, and another day, and you've still got three days left."

That's perspective from Keith Tanner of Flyin' Miata. Keith and his wife, Janel, returned to the Targa this year with the same Frankenstein of a car that we discussed in the June 2010 issue—though it's even more of a monster now, sporting one of Flyin' Miata's famous V8 swaps. For the engine, they went with something a little offbeat. An as-yet unsanctioned series, V8R Spec, is attempting to hatch eight-pot Miata racing, and the engine is built to those specs.

The runt of the aluminum General Motors LS family, the 5.3-liter L33 truck engine, gets a new cam, heads and intake manifold. With these changes, it's good for about 400 horsepower at the wheels.

The most unusual part of their entire effort is how they funded the operation. Unable to nail down big sponsors, they went to the Miata community for support. With enough people putting \$25 or \$50 into the pot, Keith and Janel hoped they could raise the money necessary to make the weeklong trek from Colorado a second time.

It was a real grassroots effort. Hundreds of individual donors stepped forward, and several forums and clubs took collections from their members. They eventually raised a total of \$17,194 and were able to include a supercharged 2006 Mazda MX-5 in the running as well.

Both cars were leading their classes—Open for the V8, Grand Touring for the supercharged car—until they faced mishaps. The V8 car popped its stock main electrical relay, and the failure

(continued on page 140)

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Keith Tanner of Flyin' Miata piloted a Targa-prepared version of the roadster in Targa Newfoundland's Open class. His wife, Janel, served as navigator. Lurking under the hood was a modified 400-horsepower, 5.3-liter L33 truck engine.

(continued from page 138)

cost them 5 minutes and two positions, leaving them 4:58 behind the leader.

The Grand Touring class, Keith says, rewards experienced teams. Despite it being the first Targa for Brandon Fitch—also a Flyin' Miata employee—the 2006 MX-5 led its class for a few days until one mistake each by the driver and by navigator Zach Bowman pushed them down to fifth. The duo still earned honors, though, nabbing the best finish trophy for a novice team.

Keith hopes to return to the Targa, but admits it may be another couple of years. Traveling from Flyin' Miata HQ in Colorado to a weeklong event in Canada means they're away from work and home for almost a month. It's something they have to plan their whole lives around, both logistically and financially.

But, Keith says, being able to drive so freely on such beautiful public roads is pretty addictive. It's hard not to want another fix.—Alan Cesar



photo courtesy flyin' miata

FROM TOP: Keith and Janel also had a sister effort at the Targa: navigator Zach Bowman (top, far left) and driver Brandon Fitch (top, left of center) in a 2006 MX-5. Both teams stumbled during the rally, but that won't keep them from entering again in the future.



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