Exciting news for the University at Buffalo Formula team as we return from the Virginia Formula SAE competition! The following newsletter is our post-VIR competition update, including the results and some of the highlights of the competition. Official results have not yet been posted on SAE.org, but the 9th place trophy that we have in our shop has some great stories behind it. Read on to find out more.

The University at Buffalo Society of Automotive Engineers Formula Team has completed its first competition since 2004. The team roared to the finish line with a 9th place overall standing at Virginia International Raceway this past week out of 43 registered teams. This competition was unique as it was the first ever to be held at this location. The SAE and VIR staff did a great job putting on the event, as it ran smooth and was a great experience for all who attended. As the competition started, UB Formula passed tech inspection with nearly no issues, which was a great way to start the week. The biggest hurdles the team faced entering the event were an engine that was not properly tuned, as well as some issues with the electronics. The team worked vigorously to solve these problems. With the help of some students from York College, the team was able to get a base tune to get the engine running and the car moving.

The next part of competition were the static events, consisting of the cost event, design judging, and the business presentation. In the cost event, a panel of judges reviewed each vehicle’s overall cost in a detailed report previously submitted by each team. This report is graded, and then at the day of the competition, the judges speak with team members about the report. UB Motorsports placed 5th in the cost event. The next static event was design judging. This is where engineers from
industry come and look over the car, and they proceed to ask the team questions about their design. This is a very difficult process, as the judges find many things to ask about, and push teams as far as they can with the questions asked about the vehicle. The grading is done on a letter scale, “A” being the highest. The “A” level cars proceed to the design finals where all the judges rotate around to find the best design for the competition. University at Buffalo was classified as a “B” level car. This is a great accomplishment, as only 4 teams were classified in the “A” category.

The final static event was the business and marketing presentation, in which the team makes a presentation to a mock panel of venture capitalists and manufacturers. The goal is to convince them that a limited production run of our car can create a profitable business. In this presentation, we emphasized the unique qualities of our car, including the simple, lightweight, but effective powertrain, the use of interchangeable parts, and the ease of manufacturing. The team took 4th place in this event.

Dynamically, the car performed well considering the limited testing time before the competition. We placed mid pack in both acceleration (13th) and the skid pad (12th), while placing 7th overall in autocross. UB Motorsports entered the endurance event with a 7th place ranking. Though endurance started well, after the first lap the car began pouring out smoke as oil spewed out the catch can. It has now been determined that a pre-ignition event melted a hole in the side of the piston and damaged the cylinder wall. The team is currently working hard to rebuild the engine so we can prepare for the Michigan competition, which starts on May 14th.
The experience of competition was a great benefit for the team – we not only learned a great deal about engineering in general from the judges, but we gained a valuable team building experience. This experience will be an immense advantage for the next competition in 2 weeks and even further in the future.

Thank you for your past and continued support. Generous sponsors and supporters like you are what makes this project possible.

Check us out on youtube.com for competition videos:

http://www.youtube.com/user/UBMotorsports

Thanks again!

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