

Chicago Indoor Racing Event

By Molly Heyen and Barnet Fagel

Editor's Note: If you missed the fun when CNCC visited Chicago Indoor Racing, here is a chance to relive it. Molly Heyen, one of the drivers that night, shares her perspective from on the track while Barnet Fagel tells us about the action he saw as a spectator.

Barnet Fagel: It's a cold Saturday evening, February 21st, as I arrive at the Chicago Indoor Racing (CIR) complex in Buffalo Grove to join a group of CNCC members inside. Even with snow abounding outside, drivers race around and around the track with no worries about the winter weather, or cops, because neither is inside.

I follow signs that lead to a second-floor observation lounge while racers find their way to the track. The track soon becomes covered with half-a-dozen club members — Glenn Blum, Tim Heyen, Molly Heyen, John Makris, Karen Makris, Ken Windisch — festooned with CIR's red racing jump suits and helmets.

Molly Heyen: A referee signals that it's time to start. Stepping into the car I think, Ok. I've done this before. I know I can be good. I bet I can do this just fine — it's just a go-kart. After all, I'm used to my Corvette. Why do they always start me at



CNCC racing enthusiasts are Karen Makris, John Makris, Ken Windisch, Tim Heyen, Molly Heyen, and Glenn Blum.



—Barnet Fagel

the back of the line, anyway?

Barnet: I join the other CNCC members relaxing in an upstairs restaurant/bar appointed with comfortable club chairs and tables strategically placed with a great view through floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the tracks. It's fabulous!

Molly: The track light flashes yellow, and we start the first tour around the track. Keep an eye on the lights and grip the wheel, I tell myself. Wait for it to turn green. DON'T HIT ANYONE!

The start light turns green and off we go. The engine of my go-kart roars to life, even louder than my Corvette's! Coming up to the first turn I feel nervous. My hands tense even more, but I must be doing all right; I didn't spin out or tap anyone else.

Barnet: Excitement in the lounge is palpable as the karts fly around the track. It's nearly impossible to tell who is in which go-kart, but the action is thrilling. Other observers in the lounge sip their favorite brew, keeping a watchful eye on the CNCC drivers.

Molly: Halfway around the track I find myself approaching the dreaded hairpin curve everyone warned me about in the driver's meeting. Oh, why didn't you play more Grand Turismo girl? The next curve would be nothing compared to the hairpin! Take a deep breath, don't forget to exhale, and make a break for the straightaway; hang on tight to the inside of the curve.

Barnet: It's a cinch to critique each driver's style from the overhead vantage

point. I can pick out the experienced kart drivers by the way they enter a turn and their higher exit speed. As the newer drivers gain confidence, it shows in their improved lap times.

Molly: Here's my opportunity. Pass that car! Don't let him get the best of this situation! Whew! Only three more laps to go.

The checkered flag, already? Wow! The first race is over. I'm not sure how I rank, but I know I'm not in last place. Whew, again. Time to regroup.

Barnet: The excitement subsides as the drivers relax for a minute before the second race. We see a man put Molly at the front of the line.

Molly: My mind races. What do I do now? Everybody will want to pass me because I'm the pace car at least for the first lap! What if I go too fast? Will I get a ticket?

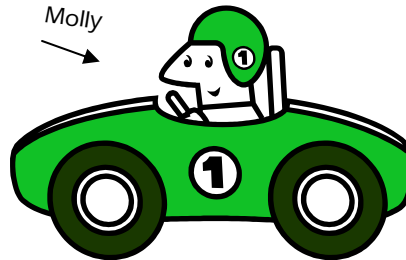
Oh, thank you for giving me the green flag so soon! Now I just have to keep everyone behind me, especially my husband Timothy. Why does he keep taking these turns so wide? Does he think I will actually let him get around me?

Oof, who hit me? No time to look — I've got to keep my eyes on the track. Focus! It's ok. That driver spun out, but I'm still ahead!

Barnet: Look at the close passing. Yikes! CIR's referees can assess warnings and violations to be sure everyone is safe and has a good time. Cutting somebody off intentionally and causing a collision is a violation. These in-turn affect

the amount of points a driver accumulates. Judging of the drivers is based on this as well as elapsed times.

Molly: The third and final qualifying race is about to start and my sweater suddenly becomes far too warm for this sport; nothing I can do about it now. I'm not doing too badly so far. I actually beat Tim once; he'll never live it down!



This time I am starting in the middle of the pack, and I'm getting tired. How on earth did I manage to fall behind in the caution lap? All right Molly, get with the game; don't lose your momentum now. Fine, let Tim pass you.

At least it gives you the feeling of having the track to yourself. There is no way I am going to win this one, but I'll keep trying.

Barnet: As I watch Molly maneuver that kart, the names of legendary drivers Danica Patrick and Shirley Muldowney go through my mind and how they showed that women don't take a back seat to anyone on the track. I'm not at all surprised. No doubt Tim is proud of his wife.

Molly: The man in the booth announces the third and final, 30-lap race. "Attention, Chicagoland North Corvette Club drivers, your rankings for the final race are as follows. In sixth place is... in second place Molly Heyen, and in pole position Tim Heyen."

I can't believe I'm in second place! I may not be able to beat Tim, but I can keep this second place spot, easy.

Barnet: I'm not at all surprised to hear the announcement. If not by sheer guts and skill, Molly's lighter weight for both braking and acceleration adds to her advantage.

Molly: I feel a burst of energy come over me. This will be nothing. If I kept Tim behind me in the other races, no one else should be a problem. Just stay ahead, Molly; don't slide.

Shoot! I'm in third place. My one mistake; darn it! On the other hand — wow — talk about a rush! I have never done this well in my life. I can't wait to find out Tim's secret for staying in the lead for the entire race.

Barnet: Everyone is bubbling over with enthusiasm as the drivers come up to the restaurant to join us for dinner with their official track print-outs. With the final standings listed, thankfully there are no dinged fenders or egos.

The one ingredient everyone shares is fun, pure fun. Whether as a racer or a spectator more members should try this! ●