

# JALOPNIK



## B-Spec Racing Is The Cheap Hatchback Showdown Of My Dreams



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• [B-SPEC](#)

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Now that spring is here, I can go to almost any race track in America and watch fast cars duke it out. Sports cars. Supercars. Prototypes. NASCAR. Even Formula One later this year. But where do I go if I want to watch a bunch of cheap economy cars drive their little engines out in some epic track battle?



The answer is Pirelli World Challenge's B-Spec class, which I got to witness for the first time at Circuit of the Americas this weekend. [We've written about B-Spec](#) before, but actually seeing it in person is something amazing.<sup>2</sup>

Usually, cheap hatchback racing battles only happen in old episodes of *Best Motoring* or the early parts of *Gran Turismo* when you don't have any money and you're forced to race hatches because you can't afford anything else.



In real life, it makes for some delightfully fun racing, even if they can't match the incredible speeds of most other race cars out there. But I love racing where the cars extremely close to production vehicles, even more so if they're affordable ones that normal people drive every day.

It also helps that almost half of the B-Spec grid in Austin this weekend was made up of Mini Coopers. I'm a little biased when I get to see stuff like that, especially when they go up on three wheels in some of the corners. The day my Mini craps out on me for good, it's getting an engine swap and suiting up for duty as a B-Spec car.

Look at 'em go! Come on, why watch McLarens and Porsches race when you can watch Minis battle against Yarises, Mazda2s, and Chevrolet Sonics? It's incomprehensibly great.

And more than the spectacle, B-Spec is designed to be just like those opening challenges in *Gran Turismo*: cheap, and therefore accessible. The cars are all naturally aspirated and restricted to 125 horsepower. Besides the roll cage and racing harnesses, modifications are limited to manufacturer-spec performance springs and shocks. That's it, man. These aren't that far off from ordinary cars.



Shit gets real out there.

They ran the B-Spec car in the same outing as the Touring and Touring Car A classes, two other PWC categories designed for relatively minimal cost and easy entry. Those are faster and more powerful cars, but still nothing too high-level: Miatas, Caymans, V6 Mustangs, Honda Civics, Nissan Altimas, and in one case the meanest damn Mazda RX-8 I've heard in a long time.

This guy, right here.

But my heart was with the B-Spec class, even when they lagged behind the more powerful cars by the end of the wet 15-lap, chaos-filled race.

B-Spec racing is good stuff, and if you ever get the chance to check it out at a race near you, I highly recommend it. Besides Lemons, Chump Car and budget rallying, it's gotta be one of the most Jalop forms of racing out there right now.

