



Future ITA racer Luke Perry reviews Fat Cat Motorsports rebuilt Bilsteins, including a Watkins Glen Porsche track event!

After spending countless hours reading and talking to people about what shocks are best (and within my budget!) I decided to go with FCM-tuned Bilsteins. I was subjecting them to some stiff springs 700 rate springs in front and 350 rate springs in the rear. My car is a '96 and you can see the build-up here: <http://www.cardomain.com/ride/529805>

This setup was focused primarily on track driving and I thought the 1,000 mile round trip (Boston to all over upstate NY and back) to visit friends and test the car at Watkins Glen would leave me pretty beat up. I have also removed foam from the seat so it fits me better but is less cushy. While the car is very responsive, it is far from harsh no need to visit the chiropractor! Another less than scientific measure, the CD player didn't skip.

Before I took it to the track, I wanted to see how it would respond to large uneven bumps. I wanted to know what it would do when I clipped curbs on the track so I took a few speed bumps at speed and the car behaved flawlessly even at WOT in 3rd (40mph) it soaked them up and didn't continue to bounce or make weird weight transfers. The next step on the abusive testing agenda was railroad tracks. With the Konis I would crawl over them. I took the first crossing slow to see what a double jolt felt like with the new shocks. While it communicated with me, it was not uncomfortable at all and didn't feel like the car was going to lose grip or get unsettled. At higher speeds, it smoothed out even more. Even with the high spring rates, the car is not crashy, ever.

On the track, the car was flawless. The only 2 things I could ask for are MORE POWER and a little more rotation. I am working on the latter by changing spring rates and sway bars the former unfortunately is expensive as I want to stay ITA legal. The car was unflappable, the set-up let me get cocky while reeling in 911's I was trail braking downhill into turn 1 and the boot, the tail would just start to rotate being very controllable.

The highlights of the event were:

I had some great cars to play with too (the green yellow group was small and people were for the most part good at giving passes, although with my limited power it sometimes meant passing at the end of the braking zone. I was safe and never black-flagged).

A guy in a 993 with RA-1's was great fun to play with he was obviously faster in the straights but I got enough on him that he just couldn't get on my tail till the end of the straight. He came up to my friend who was at my car and exclaimed



that had been the best driving session of his life and wanted to try and chase me down again.

My friend Kevin in a 964 on PS cups was at the same event last year I was faster then him when I was driving the Boxster but not lapping him, (I turned a 2:26 last year and knew I got faster on the second day). I was also able to get around him in the Mata it was more of a challenge but a lot of fun.

The one car I could play with but just couldn't get around was a 1984 911 with a 993 3.6l engine, full suspension, gutted, caged, RA-1's and a racing past. This car was fast and would pull away in the straights but just couldn't lose me. I definitely got faster trying to keep up; I had to drive a perfect line. I talked to the owner and this was his 3rd car of the season (already!) he did not like how the other 2 drove and found this car to be perfect, this was his first or second event with this car.

I also had an instructor come up to me, his student was in a black 996 TT with 500 HP R-comps and some other work done. This car obviously FLEW past me on the straight but in the corners leading up to the next straight I kept him in my sights (barely). Once we got to that upcoming straight, he promptly disappeared for the rest of the run. The instructor said it was rare to see such a well-driven car in the green and yellow run group.

I did have one witty comment. One of the drivers asked me what had I done to the motor to have such a fast Mata, I told him not much just put about 80,000 miles on it before running the event!

I like to think I am a good driver; I am working on my driving skills and advancing appropriately. The joy of this set up is how confidence-inspiring it is. The car is not harsh. It lets you know what its going to do and is very easy to drive fast.

My dad has a Boxster that he has been playing around with. His last set-up was ROW M030 Bilsteins, sways and H&R race springs. It was great to drive but got a little more unsettled then the Mata when clipping curbs. It was easy to drive and anyone could get in it and go fast the car was super forgiving even when the tail came way out. He has moved on to a JIC cross coilover set up mono-balls and camber plates in the suspension. The car is faster now but it is harder to drive. The best way I can try to describe it is the speed is less accessible and it feels more on the edge even when not at 10/10'ths.

Having driven the Mata with a few different setups and the Boxster with a few setups I have to say the FCM-tuned Bilsteins make the Miata. It is one of the few cars I know that is fun to drive on the street and track-able with just changing tires and pads.

-Luke Perry, user 'ldp82pz96' on Miataforum.net