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quick shifts

National Motorists Association's top speed trap cities: Detroit, DC, Orlando, Colorado Springs, and Houston. Visit speedtrap.org for more.

Safest drivers in US live in Sioux Falls, SD, average an accident every 14.3 years. Springfield, MA, ranked worst.

Most stolen car in thefts per vehicle on the road: 2001 BMW M-Series Roadster. Acura Integra models hold five of top ten slots.

Flogging Zs on Nurburgring, Patrols in Death Valley

It was 1998 when tire maker Dunlop first organized the Dunlop Drivers Cup in Germany. The idea was to expose a select group of amateur enthusiasts to a program combining pro-level driving skills

away places as South Africa, Australia, Malaysia, Mexico and Italy.

This year's eighth annual DDC culminated in March with a driving odyssey through a diverse variety of venues in Southern California and,

for the first time, included US teams. Twenty-five thousand applied in Germany (through tire dealers and Dunlop's website), and the most promising trained and tested in 280 hp, 150 mph Nissan 350Zs on custom Cobra alloy wheels wearing Dunlop SP Sport MAXX performance tires at the famed Nurburgring race course. The best of those advanced to an off-road camp in Dieskau, Germany, for competitions on motocross bikes and ATVs and in Nissan Patrols.

Thousands also applied in Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, the Netherlands and the USA, and each country held qualifying events to

determine who would travel to Dieskau for the chance to advance to the California finals. As in Germany, the contestants were not professional drivers but enthusiastic amateurs of all sizes, shapes, ages and backgrounds who shared at least one common value: a searing passion for driving. Based on driving experience, attitude and passion, as demonstrated by questions answered and essays submitted through dunloptires.com, twenty-two men and two women were chosen out of some 1,200 American applicants to compete in the regional rounds.

The first test, which included road racing, off-roading, and a motocross/ATV challenge, was held at Firebird Raceway in Phoenix, AZ. When the dirt and dust finally settled and the bumps, blisters, bruises and aching muscles began being soothed by award-dinner champagne, Brad Sutika, a smooth-driving adman from Farmington Hills, MI, emerged the surprise individual winner. Wallace Hattenhauer, a telephone network engineer from Little Rock, AR, and Mike Hansen, a police officer from Mt. Vernon, WA, took the team competition and the next two of six available trips to the



with safety awareness, adventure, and knowledge of how a vehicle's tires impact its handling. Following a series of rigorous qualifying competitions, the 11 best two-person teams traveled to Patagonia, South America, for the finals in March, 1999.

The next year saw 13 finalist teams in the American West duking it out in a variety of competitions spread across Arizona, Utah and Nevada. Years three through seven produced 15-team finals in such far-



The Nissan Patrol—last sold in the US in 1969—was used on two legs of the Dunlop Driving Cup. The truck, which won the production class of the 2004 Dakar Rally, can climb a 39-degree gradient and wade through 28" of water.

redline

Scratch that. Morton actually said, "Nissan's situation in Los Angeles was not ideal and hadn't been for some time. In fact, the idea of relocating our headquarters had been considered a number of times ... the 35-year-old, sprawling Gardena campus consisted of 13 different buildings on 40 acres, many in need of repairs or updating. Stay or move, there would be considerable costs." He acknowledged downsides, including the distance from Japan and made particular note of the loss of talented employees. But, he says, "some of the positives were very compelling: A

central location would put us closer to more of our customers and dealers—over 70 percent of Nissan's customer base is located within a two-hour flight from Middle Tennessee." Morton also noted the more central location to their supplier base, stronger synergies between departments, and the incentive package put together by the state. And, as many may not know, Nashville has been ranked one of the best cities in the US. The end result: 43 percent of employees made the move (79 percent of those at the executive level). Although the company has received 45,000

resumes and has filled 80 percent of the open positions, it will take years to gauge the success of the move. ... The **aftermarket world is still buzzing about the arrest of Hiroaki Nanahoshi, 33, owner of Motorex.** Nanahoshi, booked into the LA County Jail in March, was being held reportedly on \$1 million



bail for what is being reported as a "litany of charges ranging from financial malfeasance issues to assault

Highest rate of insurance theft claims: Cadillac Escalade, Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution, Dodge Ram 1500 quad cab rate second and third.

Lowest rate of insurance theft claims (or, if you prefer, most lame cars): Ford Taurus, Pontiac Vibe, Buick LaSabre and Park Avenue.

NY Proposal: make breathalyzers mandatory in every new car by 2009.

Distracted drivers involved in 8 out of 10 collisions or near crashes.

Top places for auto theft: Modesto, CA, and Las Vegas, NV. Phoenix, Seattle and Yakima in the top 10 along with other CA cities.

SD law: horse riders and bicyclists exempt from DWI laws. But can still be busted for disorderly conduct.

semi-finals. Other top finishers Jim McCauley of Las Vegas, NV, and Albert Andrade of Rialto, CA, both

their ATV and off-road trials much tougher due to greasy, gooey mud on every hill and curve. Based on

speed tests, a "police car chase" and road-course races. The Golden State locations ranged from sublime

ing in the heat," Sutika wrote at the end of Day Four in his DDC blog at www.autoweek.com, "we are all surprised at how comfortable the 350Z is to drive. Even with minimal 45 and 35 tire sidewalls, its road manners on less-than-perfect roads are very impressive."

The week's highlight for most was the final day of practice and racing on the banked oval and twisty infield turns of California Speedway, where the hot handling Z cars performed like thoroughbreds, despite a few unfortunate encounters. Teams from Germany, the Netherlands and Austria took the first three overall places, while the hard-driving Americans—Hattenhauer/Andrade and Sutika/McCauley—won one event each, competed strongly in most others, and finished 8th and 14th overall.

—Gary Witzenburg

Discount Tire dealers, and Brian Flourhy, a musician and courier from Brooklyn, NY, won the remaining three tickets.

The semifinals in Dieskau, Germany, brought much of the same. The American, Belgian, Dutch, and German teams competing in the first wave of the semis were lucky the rain held off until that night, and the US drivers were especially fortunate to get their motocross runs done in the dry, with just two spills resulting in painful, but not serious, injuries. The next day the Dieskau off-road facility was a mud bog, making

combined two-day scores, the team of McCauley and Sutika narrowly triumphed to represent the US against the best of the Europeans in the California finals, while top individual performers Hattenhauer and Andrade were invited as a second American team.

The final challenge was set. Eighteen revved-up teams set off from San Diego and rallied (in those same German-spec 350Zs) for seven straight days over 1,800 miles to and through ATV and dune buggy competitions, off-road trials (again, in Nissan Patrols), a mountain bike/running relay and average

to exotic: Glamis Imperial Sand Dunes, Joshua Tree Park, Sequoia National Forest, Death Valley, Oceano Dunes, El Mirage Dry Lake, and California Speedway.

"After another long day of driv-

with a deadly weapon and attempted kidnapping." Additionally, it's being reported that Motorex, currently the only US importer of the Nissan Skyline GT-R, has been forced to close due to failure to pay rent. The LA County Sheriff's Department "Inmate Information Center" says Nanahoshi was released June 20 with a scheduled court date of August 14. For more details, visit the nittygrittyfiles.org/hirofiles/ and you'll see every court date of Nanahoshi for years. Seems like all that's missing for the story is an appear-



ance from the famed Japanese gang, the Yakuza. ... **Speaking of the Skyline, the US Department of Transportation has officially rescinded importation eligibility** for both the R32 and R34 Skylines. Only the '96-98 R33 Skylines are eligible to be imported. According to the DOT website: "After granting the petition [to import 1990-1999 Nissan GT-Rs], the agency learned that the modifications identified in the petition were not sufficient to conform certain model and model year vehicles that were covered

by the petition. The agency therefore partially rescinded its grant of eligibility, leaving only R33 model Nissan GTs and GT-R passenger cars manufactured between January 1, 1996 and June 30, 1998 eligible for importation." It is unknown how this ruling will affect current GT-R owners. There is no

