

MICHELIN INFLUENCERS TIRE SCHOOL
March 13-15, 2012

I was invited, by Kimbrelly Kegler, the NCCC Michelin contact, to attend a tire school facilitated by Michelin North America that was designed to provide information about the tire, the tire brand and the company. The school was held at the Michelin Sales Training Center in Greenville, South Carolina. Individuals that were invited were key individuals from Porsche Club of America, the BMW club, Tire Center, Inc. (a wholesale company for Michelin tires), Skip Barber School Driving School, Detroit Racing, Corvette Forum, and a few from the Michelin 25th Hour Program.

My information will be presented as a diary of what the “young” lady understood about “tars” (that’s Texanese for tires) and Michelin North America. The basic agenda was as follows: arrival on Tuesday, March 13 for preliminary program, Wednesday included our findings from a preconference assignment, a Tire Essentials presentation, a tour of the US1 plant, Product Presentation 1 and on Thursday, we started the day with a driving experience at the BMW Performance Center and ended with Product Presentation 2. Our primary instructor for the program was Johnny Valencia, a super guy with a wealth of knowledge about tires and does an excellent job with his presentation. Doug Brown, one of their Chief Engineers, was also on hand for part of the training and he, likewise is a great guy, fun to talk with and of course, knows his tires. Kimbrelly Kegler who sponsored the program, took part as the overseer and also ran a great 3 day school. So, let’s start at the beginning...

We arrived on Tuesday, March 13, and had dinner at a unique location where we had the opportunity to visit with some key personnel from Michelin as well as experience and learn from some new and innovative education modules that Michelin is developing for the consumer and the sales person. We were also briefed on the basics for the next few days. The excitement builds for what to expect next!!

Wednesday, Day 2, begins with another brief meet and greet and then we get started with the preconference assignment. We were all asked to visit several types of tire dealerships in our area (major tire retailer, all purpose store such as Wal Mart, and an automotive store) to gather information about the store appearance, knowledge of the personnel, promotion of a particular tire, offer to inspect car, did they promote the lowest priced tire, the benefits of the tire, or what was available, appearance of the store personnel, and did they try to sell the benefits of their store. This information was to be gathered on a tire for a car that you were not driving at the time. Since I have never purchased tires in my life, this was a very interesting and eye opening experience for me. I was asking for information on a tire to fit my Cadillac CTS and I had Michelin Pilot HX MXM4 tires on the car as OE. Overall, everyone had basically the same findings, The tire salespeople (to be referred to as professionals) at a major tire retailer tried to sell Michelin tires more than others in general but they also were interested in what the customer wanted. I think they assumed that since I was pleased with the Michelin tires I had on my car, I wanted to stay with those tires. The individuals at the Walmart type stores and automotive stores

wanted to sell what they had available, no matter what it was, just to make a sale. The professional knew all about the Michelin Promise and rebates and also tried to sell the benefits of their store and quality of service. This experience was a great eye opener for those in the group who work in the tire business as well.

Tire Essentials- What did I learn?

- 1) The Michelin DNA is obsessed with quality, overall superiority and no compromises on product. That is why each tire is hand inspected before it leaves the plant.
- 2) Their history includes the first detachable tire on a bicycle in 1891, the first radial ply tire in 1946, the natural tire was white and that is why the Michelin man is white, they launched the “green tire” concept in 1990, and won their 10th straight LeMans race in 2007
- 3) Winner of the JD Power Award for customer satisfaction and are rated #1 in quality by tire dealers. “If you want to fix a tire problem, put a set of Michelins on the vehicle.”
- 4) Michelin is celebrating the one year anniversary of the Michelin Promise Plan that includes a 30 day warranty on the tire if you don’t like it, a 24/7 towing warranty for 3 years, and a mileage warranty (variable for type of tire)
- 5) Contact patch is a major concept. When you are driving, that is the only thing touching the ground and that “thing” is a quarter of an 8.5” x 11” piece of paper. So those four little patches are what is touching the ground and keeping you safe!
- 6) The contact patch is affected by air pressure.
- 7) Load and inflation is a big deal! A tire at speed- 225/45R17 91W-Standard load-rolls 835 times every mile. At 30 mph, it rolls at 7 times per second, 70mph at 16 times per second, and 150mph at 35 times peer second. Without the correct tire pressure, all sorts of problems can occur!
- 8) The tires have over 200 types of materials in the construction of the tire.
- 9) Michelin High Performance Tires have the C3M patented Michelin technology which is an inner lining in the tire that is smooth and shiny. This allows for more roundness continuity in the tire and prevents heaviness in one area so they require less balancing weights.
- 10) Twaron belt technology is unique to the Michelin Performance Tires (Pilot Super Sport). This allows for more even grip from the shoulders through the center of the tire tread to improve stability and handling at a higher speed.
- 11) Inflation pressure helps determine footprint/tread contact
- 12) Heat is the greatest enemy of your tire.
- 13) Normal air loss is 1 psi per month and for each 10 degree change in ambient temperature, there is a 1 psi change in tire pressure so check your tire pressures regularly.
- 14) Tire pressure is determined by the car manufacturer and placed on the door of the car. Same can be said for the load recommendation. It is determined by the car manufacturer
- 15) When replacing tires, you must consider the load carrying capacity of the tire.
- 16) It is suggested to have your tires checked annually by a professional.

- 17) Tire dressings, such as Armorall, are not recommended as they increase the aging of the tire. They can cause white wall bleed through.
- 18) If only replacing 2 tires, they should always be placed on the rear.

We had the opportunity to take a tour of the tire manufacturing plant which was most interesting and very aromatic! A variety of tires were being manufactured there with big machinery and surprisingly few employees. Much automation! However, each tire is hand inspected before it leaves the plant and also goes through an x-ray inspection as well. Preventive maintenance is done every other day and special engineered tires for testing are also produced completely in one central area of the plant. That was a lot to learn in one day- or at least for me, it was!

Thursday, Day 3, we are off to the BMW Performance Center for the driving experience. The BMW M5 is produced in Greenville and they have a delivery program at the Performance Center similar to the Corvette Museum Delivery Program in Bowling Green. We were involved in 3 different exercises- one was a comparison of the Pilot Sport A/S Tire and the PS2 on a wet surface driving a BMW 355, a short autocross with PS2 tires driving a BMW M5, and an obstacle course drive with a BMW X5 that demonstrated the off road capabilities of the Latitude Tour tire. What did I learn?

- 1) The PS2 performed better in the wet than the All Season tire. There was more control and better drift.
- 2) Rain is a condition, not a season
- 3) A/S tire is consistent- jack of all trades but master of none. Good for areas that have all four seasons but not necessarily for just rainy climates.
- 4) Temperature makes a difference on the performance of the tire. PS2 does not like temperatures 40 degrees or less.
- 5) PS2 costs more, the A/S lasts longer
- 6) The PS2 was fun to drive in the autocross. There were timed runs and I finished in the middle of the pack of 18 people. I did not feel too bad since I have not raced in many years, I beat the other Corvette person there who does race and those who beat me race regularly in PCA, SCCA, BMW and NASA. AND, I was only .7 seconds behind first place.
- 7) The off road obstacle course driving was over steep rugged uneven hills, in trenches of water, chug holes, and over a steep descent and the tires performed well.
- 8) The Defender Tire- Michelin's new everyday driving tire for the S and T Series tires, has a 90,000 mile warranty, 820 treadwear rating and is available April 1. This tire will take the place of several variety of tires that Michelin now offers as they try to condense the number of tires being produced.

This 3 day training was a wonderful experience for me. I am overwhelmed with all of the facts and am still trying to put it all together in my mind. I was sent home with many materials to use as a reference so I have no excuse not to be more knowledgeable about tires in general. I want to thank Kimbrelly Kegler for inviting me as a representative of NCCC and a big thank you to Johnny Valencia and Doug Brown for their expertise in teaching on tires in general and on the Michelin North America brand.