

Tired of Dressage!

(posted 10-26-10)

I'm not the only person who over-schedules himself. I bet most of you do too. Between lessons and clinics, judging and traveling, I don't leave myself very much time for the mechanical details of living. So it probably isn't surprising that one Tuesday when I discovered a tire on my little roller skate-like Scion was a bit low, I did the obvious. I spent 75 cents at the Qwick King and put some air in it. And again on Thursday. And again on Saturday. Not enough of a leak to expect to be stranded on the Interstate, but also not worth canceling a lesson to sit around Bob's Tire for an hour and a half.



After about a month of this and still with no time to get the tire repaired, I decided to bite the munition, take the tire off the car myself, replace it with that precious little "donut" spare, and leave the semi-flaccid one at the shop to be fixed.

Ritual: pop the wheel cover, loosen the lugs, jack up the car, open the hatchback, lift the rear deck, and remove the—IT'S GONE! Where's my spare? The cavity is empty. Sometime over my car's last 170 thousand miles, somebody fixed a flat and forgot to put the spare away. It has, no doubt, languished against a repair shop back wall till my chalked name drizzled off it, and the weeds began to sprout.

But now I *really* do need to deal with this. Traveling up I-75 at two in the morning with a limp tire and no spare is, as they say, not just tempting fate but giving it a lap dance! So I forego a teaching op, the tire gets fixed (at a net cost of \$110), but I still have no spare.

From experience, I know that anything I get from the dealer will cost 300 bucks—whatever size, shape, or material it may be—unless it costs \$1200. That just seems to be standard, and who wants to lay out that much cash for something you'll probably never need? Unless you don't buy one. So next stop is all the junkyards and used tire dealers in the yellow pages and on line. "An '06 Scion? Naw, sorry buddy, you ain't gonna find one o' them!" Against all odds, eventually I do—well, not really, but I do find a scuzzy, open air "used equipment shop" that claims it can find me my donut on the internet and have it delivered in a few days. And for only 80 dollars.

The deal is made. The days are accomplished, and I acquire my "new" spare, but as usual, there are lessons to be taught, etc., and really no time to put it away where it belongs. So it sits in the back of the car, waiting for my further attentions. When finally I do have a chance, I lift the deck, place the donut in its spot, and discover—another OH, NO—it's too thick! The deck won't lock in to its slot and it now balances

precariously on the seemingly oversized spare. Something else I'll just have to get to when I can.

Meanwhile, I'm concluding that the wretched, pardon the expression, grease monkey who sold me this thing, knowingly foisted off the wrong tire on me. And, as I recall, he didn't look like his "customer service department" would be too impressed with my attempt to return it.

Maybe, I thought, it *will* fit my car; maybe it's just *not quite the same* as the original. So, a plan: I'll take the wheel cover off the car again, I'll hold a sheet of copy paper over the lugs, punch some holes through it to make a template, and see if the holes will match up with my irksome spare.

They DO, so now Plan B: I'll keep the damn thing. Maybe I can put the rest of the detritus that inhabits the back of my car under the deck and just let the spare sit up on top alone. As I set about raising the deck, I notice that the fuzzy fiber-glassed molding that the tire should sit on is loose. If I remove it, I can probably fit more stuff in there. Or maybe even wedge the spare down below against the bare metal. So I give that plastic filler a yank and beneath it sits—yes, a spare tire! One that's been sitting there all along just waiting for its owner/mechanical genius to discover it.

So now I own two spares—one more than any normal mortal could use in the car's entire lifetime. However, I've arrived at one viable solution—a second career. I'll put both donuts on the two front wheels and enter my 'rod in the Gator Nationals next spring. And with my winnings I can pay myself back for not looking under that plastic cover in the first place.

