

# B-Spec turns us all into racers

**ON TRACK:** New designation for subcompact cars makes sport much more affordable



**Alexandra Straub**

SHIFTING GEARS

What do the following vehicles have in common: the Honda Fit, Mazda2, Fiat 500, Toyota Yaris, Ford Fiesta, MINI Cooper, Hyundai Accent, Chevrolet Sonic, Nissan Versa and the Kia Rio5?

If you said they're affordable, fuel-efficient subcompact cars that compete against each other in the Canadian marketplace, you'd be right on all counts.

But you'd also be correct if you answered that they are all currently eligible to compete against one another in the B-Spec racing class here in British Columbia and elsewhere in North America.

For those not familiar with the series, you're not alone. The B-Spec class designation was recently introduced by the SCCA (Sports Car Club of America) to facilitate a relatively affordable way to race new vehicles. The required modifications are kept to a minimum, therefore avoiding the traditionally large racing budget, in favour of one that is more attainable for a broader range of racers.

In this class, vehicles being raced are essentially in 'stock' configuration, meaning you can't touch the engine, transmission, drivetrain or engine management electronics. But such tweaks as a Coil Over non-adjustable suspension, brake lines and racing brake pads, 15X7 wheels with 205/50-15 R Compound tires and a (Catalytic Converter) Cat-back exhaust will need to be added.

Furthermore, one will need to strip the interior and install a roll cage, a fire suppression system, a racing seat with a 6-point safety harness, a removable steering wheel and a 2-way radio system.

The cost? Approximately \$10,000 on top of the purchase price of one of the base model subcompacts listed above, plus any spare parts. Keep in mind that costs will vary depending if you do the work yourself or have a shop do it, or a combination of both. It would be realistic to say that one could have a race-ready B-Spec car in your garage for under \$30k. That's significantly less than the Porsche GT3 Cup Car that costs upwards of \$200k!

Together, local racers Lisa Chen and Tony Morris Jr. teamed up to



**This Ford Fiesta B-Spec Race Car, seen here on the track at the Mission Raceway Park Roadcourse, was built in just under three weeks by mechanics at Brown Bros Ford/Lincoln.** CARSON AU — FOR THE PROVINCE

build the first B-Spec vehicle in Canada, which will be hitting the circuit this year. I had the opportunity to talk with them about the building process and why this new race series is generating a lot of buzz.

After selecting the vehicle (Lisa decided on the Ford Fiesta because of its durability, reliably, along with its dashing good looks!), it was shipped over to the talented mechanics at Brown Bros Ford/Lincoln to have the interior stripped and then sent out for the roll cage installation. Once that was completed, the car was returned to the Brown Bros team for completion.

"You could build a B-Spec race car in approximately three weeks to a month," said Tony Morris Jr., adding that any mechanic is able to do the modifications as long as they are doing it according to the SCCA B-Spec regulations.

So, once the build is complete, where can you race? B-Spec is a recognized CACC Class (Confederation of Autosport Car Clubs, www.caccautosport.org) and can be raced locally at Mission Raceway Park Roadcourse. Furthermore, B-Spec cars can be raced on tracks all over North America under a variety of sanctioning bodies, both Pro and Amateur Series, including SCCA (Sports Car Club of America: www.scca.com) NASA (North America Sports Car



**The Fiesta, campaigned by B.C.'s Lisa Chen and Tony Morris Jr., is the first B-Spec race car built in Canada** ALEXANDRA STRAUB — FOR THE PROVINCE

Association: www.nasaproracing.com) and Castrol Canadian Touring Car Championship (www.touringcar.ca).

Depending on how often and in which racing sanctioning body one participates, associated costs will inevitably vary. And, because the vehicles are near stock in nature, one doesn't necessarily need a mechanical entourage to follow.

Said Morris Jr.: "Depending on the driver's mechanical skills, one

person could operate a B-Spec car solo, if they choose, but a small crew would definitely be suggested."

In the veteran racer's opinion, what makes this class so buzz-worthy is "B-Spec will offer many drivers, young and old, new and experienced, the opportunity to compete at a variety of levels both amateur and professional at a very reasonable cost."

Making the B-Spec class not only



**B-Spec is a new race class for subcompact vehicles.**

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fun for drivers but spectators, Lisa observes: "Since building a B-Spec is more financially viable there will likely be more cars on the track. That equals a more exciting race! Plus, there is the potential for more excitement from the crowd because they can really identify with the cars that are competing."

Those looking to get into racing now have a more accessible avenue than before without having to find sponsorship or win the lottery to do so. Although that would be nice!

For more information on B-Spec vehicles visit [www.bspeccars.com](http://www.bspeccars.com) or go to [www.morrisport.com](http://www.morrisport.com) and fill out the contact page to receive B-Spec updates and local event announcements.

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