FSAE Michigan

FSAE Michigan takes place at the famous Michigan International Speedway in May. Close to a 100 teams, most of which are from the US, participate in this competition every year. Since its the oldest of all Formula Student / SAE challenges, over the years, FSAE Michigan has commanded considerable respect from all teams. Consequentially, the competition here is cut-throat and there is barely room for any mistakes.

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*The build up:*

We commenced working on our first car with the hopes of participating at FSAE Michigan 2011. Technically and financially, it was an unprecedented challenge . While we had about four years of experience in building cars (working for Baja), we had never actually built a Formula race car. To raise money for a project of this magnitude with mere CAD models as proof of what we were capable of, was a tricky test of skills. Even as we look back now, those were some of the toughest times we faced.   
  
Despite those gruelling times, we treaded ahead steadily and were able to complete our first Formula race car right on time. In honour of our then Title Sponsor, we christened the car as *C&C Alpha NR-XI*.

*The Event:*

FSAE Michigan 2011 saw over a 100 teams participate that year. We were overjoyed to qualify for the event - the only Indian team that year - and excited about participating in the competition.

However, disaster struck us when our car couldn’t make it to the competition. A logistics error prohibited the car’s passage at UK, while it was en-route to USA. Understandably, this was a huge blow to the team - efforts of an entire year were made void.

The competition organizers, fully aware that overseas participants are often troubled by such problems, allow teams to participate at the static events (which do not require the car’s presence), should such a mishap occur. While much of the team’s morale was down, this window of opportunity was just the buoy needed to remain afloat. It allowed for a small yet definite mental victory through those gloomy times. We managed a credible, 60th spot in the cost report and 79th in the Business Presentation event.

On the brighter side, the experience we gained was invaluable. First-hand experience of competing in the static events was going to be vital for our preparations for the nest year’s competition. The logistics fiasco made us more alert and responsible. Definitely, the experience at FSAE Michigan serves as a spring board for our future endeavours. We owe it all to the team of 2011, who built our first car, overcame the most daunting hurdles, faced the most cruel of mishaps and yet were - are - extremely helpful whenever we need their expertise /experience to guide us.