



Driving Standards Guide

Andrew Smith July 2019

This Document is intended purely as an advice note to new and existing Classic Formula Ford Drivers concerning Driving Standards

It is to be considered as purely advisory and supplementary to the sections in the MSA Blue Book that cover this subject and those Sections of the Blue Book ALWAYS take total priority over the contents of this Document.

Statement of Non Liability

"The Price of Man in Motion is the occasional Collision"
(The late Carroll Smith – from his excellent book "Drive to Win")

The Author of this document and the Classic Formula Ford Club accept no liability for any Accident or Injury to anyone who has read these notes.

MOTOR RACING IS DANGEROUS

Introduction

Classic Formula Ford Racing Cars are spaceframe single seaters in which the Drivers are unfortunately more exposed to potential harm in the event of an accident compared to more modern single seater or sports/saloon cars.

These cars relative lack of aerodynamic influences, their small size and manoeuvrability, and their very similar performance and handling characteristics mean that the racing is often extremely close.

The Great Majority of the Drivers are Amateur Weekend Enthusiast Drivers although some are vastly experienced and a very small proportion may even have some background in more Professional Racing Series. At any meeting there is likely to be a wide range of Drivers of varying age, experience and ability levels competing together.

It is essential that, while we can never achieve a situation where incidents are unknown, we do everything to keep problems to a minimum to avoid physical and financial damage. We cannot afford for our Championship to gain a reputation as being accident prone and the great majority of our Drivers cannot afford regular repair bills and obviously no one wants to suffer injury which affects their lives outside racing.

Before the Race Meeting

Apart from the obvious need to pay the best possible attention to car preparation in areas of safety it is advisable if racing at a Circuit you have not raced at before or if it has been altered to walk the circuit the evening before the race to understand the sequence of bends, the location of marshals posts, pit lane entry/exit, potential escape routes and the racing line around the circuit. If you can do this with a "Circuit Expert" all the better.

"Testing is Cheaper than Crashing" particularly for Novice Drivers if it is possible although of course we accept it is an expensive and time consuming activity and opportunities to test can be limited at some Circuits.

"Lay off the Booze and get an early Night" - surely this is obvious.

Qualifying

Warm your tyres and brakes before trying too hard. An experienced Driver can get up to speed very quickly but if you are a Novice build up your speed more progressively. There is always more time than you think to get a lap in towards the end of the session. You only need one good lap. There is no point in "racing" other Drivers in qualifying as lap times will suffer - try and find space to work in. Although following a quicker Driver may help you improve your own driving and lap times be sure you that in doing so you are not exceeding your own limits by so high a margin that you become a hazard.

Racing

We will try and keep this simple by considering Racing in two parts – straights and corners and we will discuss two evenly matched Car/Driver combinations running in close company such that the lead Driver is anticipating an attempt by the Driver behind to overtake.

Straights

Leaving a corner and entering the straight one car will usually be ahead of the other car.

The lead car gets to choose his line towards the next corner and this might mean he moves laterally across the track. ***This is acceptable as long as while doing so he does not impede the other Driver such that he has to swerve sharply or lift off the throttle or (worse) hit the brakes to avoid a collision.***

If the Opposing Driver has a speed advantage and has managed to draw alongside or partly alongside such that the lead Driver cannot move laterally without breaking the above principle then the lead Driver will have to stick to his current line or at least compromise and not move so much as to obstruct his opponent unfairly or dangerously as described.

The "Tow"

One tactic used extensively in FF1600 is of course the "Aerodynamic Tow" particularly at fast Circuits like Thruxton and Snetterton where there are long straights. It is perfectly OK to move laterally to try and "break the tow" but again to repeat - ***what is not acceptable is a situation where by moving laterally across the circuit the lead Driver impedes the other Driver such that he has to swerve sharply or lift off the throttle or (worse) hit the brakes to avoid a collision.***

In all cases avoid very sudden sharp lateral movements of the car on the straight. Keep it smooth and avoid excessive weaving on straights in general.

Kinks

Occasionally a "straight" will not in fact actually be geometrically "straight" even though it can be driven flat out on full throttle in dry or maybe even damp/wet conditions. We will call this a Kink.

Some examples:

- 1) Silverstone – Woodcote immediately before/over the finish line
- 2) Oulton Park – The Avenue approaching Cascades
- 3) Oulton Park again – Clay Hill
- 4) Castle Combe – the entry to Avon Rise towards the turn in point for Quarry.

Extra care should be taken in these types of locations as a direction change is necessary at high speed on what is effectively a straight with a kink! It is easy to misjudge these high speed kinks with bad consequences if wheels interlock etc.

Corner Entry

We will discuss this assuming a Right Hand Corner is imminent. As described above exiting the previous corner the lead Driver has selected his preferred line - without fouling the opposing Driver as highlighted in bold italics above. In the simplest terms this line would be either

- 1) A defensive inside line such that the pursuing Driver should he draw partly alongside, alongside, or even ahead will be on the outside line. Approaching a Right Hand Corner the lead Driver is on the Right Hand side of the track and the pursuing Driver is on the left hand side when viewed from behind. The lead Driver cannot take the ideal racing line starting from the left hand edge of the track because his opponent is occupying some or all of that space but equally the opposing Driver cannot take the ideal line because the lead Driver has placed his car on the inside probably obstructing his view of and approach to the apex of the corner.
- 2) A non defensive racing line where the lead Driver approaches the Right Hand corner on the left hand side of the road intending to take the ideal line through the corner because he has checked his mirrors and judged that the opposing Driver is not close enough to prevent this by placing his car between the leader and the corner apex by "outbraking" him. He may of course be wrong.

How/When can the pursuing Driver overtake ?

- 1) Outside pass on a Driver taking the Defensive line. In case 1 above where lead Driver has "gone defensive" the pursuing Driver is faced with passing on the outside. This type of overtake is rarer than passing on the inside, it is usually more difficult and more impressive when done successfully. It has one advantage as the Driver trying it can "bail out" if it is not going to work without affecting the other car by running wide. What happens to him next depends on the particular location and how far wide he has to go. Knowledge gained during a circuit walk the previous evening (mentioned above) may help in choosing any escape route.

To pass on the outside the overtaking Driver will need to be fully ahead of the opposing car. He will need to be very aware of the need to give the other Driver room to negotiate the corner as the other Driver will not be able to simply disappear. The overtaking Driver will usually need to adopt a wide line that misses the apex to give the other car space. The need to be fully ahead to turn in ahead of the other car is what makes the outside pass harder and rarer.

- 2) Inside Pass on a Driver taking the non defensive Racing Line. This is the more common situation where the overtaking Driver is able to get to the apex of the corner first to "win" the corner, by braking later and taking an shorter inside line which allows him to intercept the intended line of the opposing car.

To achieve this feat the overtaking Driver needs to have placed his car **fully alongside** the other car. If the two cars are overlapping to some extent then the two Drivers must both accept that neither can take the ideal line and **each must then compromise and give the other space.**

When planning an overtaking move ask yourself

- Does the Other Driver know I am there?
- Is there space?
- What options are there if it goes wrong to escape the situation?

Of course in reality a lot of the above is an instinctive subconscious process - particularly with "Top Drivers". If the thought process takes too long the opportunity has probably gone if it was ever there.

One more thing on Corner entry if you are defending

You are the lead Driver and you have taken the inside defensive line. As you approach the point where you want to turn in to the corner resist the temptation having arrived on the inside line to switch back across to the outside to try and take a faster line - where is the Driver on the outside line supposed to go in that situation if a car suddenly moves across into the space required for him to slow down and turn in?

Corner Exit

If you are exiting a corner while overlapping with another car do not attempt to crowd or push/lean/move the other car over the edge of the circuit and certainly not beyond Track Limits.

Mirrors

Obviously constantly watch your Mirrors and look left and right where possible when you know other cars are close. An experienced multiple Champion once said to me that his standard response to "sorry I did not see you" is "are you fool or knave?".

Check your mirrors before every direction change – always. In a close situation if you can look left or right over your shoulder to any extent (*in many cases visibility is restricted by belts, HANS Devices, Car Design etc*) then do so if it helps you understand the situation.

Track Limits

The rules on track limits have tightened up considerably in recent years and this is a good thing as exceeding track limits is a) unsporting and b) sometimes followed by a spin that puts following cars at risk.

The Blue Book is clear and at MSV Circuits they have installed cameras to enforce the rules. A raised hand to acknowledge your error might help if you do exceed the limit?

Brake Testing and other Intimidation Tactics

If you ever find you can get sufficiently angry with another Driver that you find want to brake test them or otherwise feel the need to drive in an intimidating manner then please do yourself and everyone else a favour. Stop racing for a while and go and get some Anger Management Therapy. If that fails become a Spectator.

Fortunately this type of behaviour is incredibly unfeasibly rare in Classic FF1600 and has been mentioned only for document completeness. If you are new to Classic FF1600 be assured we really are very friendly.

Getting Lapped by the Leaders

Novice Drivers can expect to be lapped by the Leaders early in their careers when they are still gaining in experience and pace. We have all been there. If in doubt when you see the Leaders bearing down on you stick the racing line as this is predictable and they will find a way around you.

Correct Use of the Brain when Racing

It is unsafe to be in a situation where 100% of your concentration is focused just on controlling the car and merely keeping it on the track.

It is vital to look around and in the mirrors. Also check oil pressure and water temperature. You can save a repair bill and avoid pouring fluids on the track to the detriment of following Drivers if you can spot a problem early enough.

Anticipate !! Look up the road at what is coming – look for Marshalls Signals and other signs of hazards - like bodywork in the middle of the road etc!

Serious Car problem? Raise a hand to warn those behind and vacate the circuit as quickly as you can as long as you do so safely.

Reacting to Warning Flags and Incidents on track.

We think it is a really good idea, if it is possible, practical and safe to do so, to acknowledge Warning flags with a raised hand or similar. This demonstrates to the Marshalls and Observers that you are working with them to achieve safe racing and can warn Drivers behind who may have their vision obscured.

If you see an incident immediately ahead then again a raised hand warning those following you may be a good idea.

Be careful about how your reaction to an incident may affect those close behind. Don't lose control or have some kind of an incident of your own while trying to be helpful.

A favourite story – back in 1950 the great Juan Manuel Fangio was leading the Monaco GP. There was a multi car accident out of his sight on the far side of the corner he was approaching (Tabac). He approached seemingly headed for disaster but then raised his hand to warn the following car, drew the car to a near halt and managed to avoid the wreckage (pushing a car out of the way by leaning out of his car and shoving it with his hand). He then continued on to victory.

Did the Maestro have some kind of supernatural sixth sense? Almost! He had seen a photo of a similar incident from the 1936 race and approaching the corner had noticed something he recalled from looking at the photo. This was the crowd looking not in the direction of the car leading the race but at the exit of the corner beyond his vision. He correctly reasoned that something very significant had occurred and reacted accordingly. Match that if you can!

I have encountered poor Driving and/or have had an Accident/Near Miss – now what ?

Remember Adrenalin can severely affect your emotions and response to and perception of a situation. Try and let the Adrenalin subside and take enough time to consider the situation. We accept this is easier said than done and that in reality it can even take days or even longer to see things really clearly especially if the incident has been very upsetting!

If the incident is being dealt with by the Race Officials then let them do their job. If however it is not something that has been picked up by them then it may be a good idea to have a conversation with the other Driver involved. Do this in private and discretely. Even consider a phone call during the following week. **Do not let things fester and have a Feud develop as this can become very unhealthy for those concerned and the wider Club Membership.**

This Sport is supposed to be fun and no one goes out looking to cause a problem right? Classic FF1600 is just CLUB Racing.

The Classic FF1600 Club has two Driver Representatives – at the time of writing they are **Steve Pearce in Class A** and **Mike Saunders in Class B**. Ask one or both of them or another experienced Driver/Observer to get involved in any discussion with the other Driver if it would help to have an independent person in the conversation.