

RACING ROOM

CLUB RACING BY JOHN NESBITT

HOW WE ENFORCE THE RULES

Let me begin with a confession. Before I became a steward, I didn't read the GCR. Like most drivers, I knew not to pass under yellow or punt another car off the track, but not a lot more. I had very little notion of how things worked. This is not a good thing. Many competitors forfeit their GCR rights by not understanding the Club's rules and processes.

In particular, many drivers do not understand how the SCCA "judicial" process works – the role of the Chief Steward, the Stewards of the Meeting and protests and appeals.

SCCA has a simple, three-tier system, committed to providing due process and review to all participants. Over the next three articles, I shall cover stewards' actions, protests and appeals in detail.

STEWARDS' ACTIONS

We enforce rules and resolve disputes in two ways: stewards' actions and protests. Section 8 of the GCR is devoted to these.

The GCR makes it clear that there is a shared responsibility among the stewards and the drivers/entrants for enforcing the rules. Stewards will act upon matters they observe or on which they receive official reports; we expect drivers to protest rules violations that they suffer.

The most common stewards' actions are the Chief Steward's Action (CSA) and the Request for Action (RFA). The Chief Steward (or an Assistant Chief Steward to whom he or she has delegated authority) files these.

TYPES OF STEWARDS

At every event, there are two different groups of stewards. The Chief Steward (CS) and the Assistant Chief Stewards are responsible for executing the event. We usually refer to Assistants simply by their function (e.g. Safety Steward, Tech Steward, Steward of the Course or Operating Steward). For simplicity, I shall simply refer to the

CS, but remember that this includes Assistants also.

The Stewards of the Meeting (SOM) fulfill a judicial function and cannot take part in running the event.

Stewards rotate through the various assignments in the course of a year, so you will see the same person in different roles at different events.

CHIEF STEWARD'S ACTION (CSA)

A CSA describes "a breach of the GCR or the supplemental regulations and the corresponding action taken." Think of it as "summary justice." The process is as follows:

- The CS either observes an infraction (e.g., a pass under yellow) or receives a report from an event official, and decides to deal with it in summary fashion.
- The CS completes a Chief Steward's Action form, describing the infraction with reference to the GCR and/or supps, and the penalty imposed.
- The offender (you) will be summoned to meet the CS, either by being stopped at the Black Flag station in the pits as you leave the course or by a call over the track PA system.
- The CS will typically discuss the incident with you before imposing the penalty. The CS does this as a courtesy; the GCR does not require it.
- The CS will file the CSA with the SOM.
- You have the right to protest the CSA (see the articles on protests). You must file your protest within 30 minutes of receiving the penalty notification.

REQUEST FOR ACTION (RFA)

The CS files an RFA with the SOM "describing a suspected breach of the GCR or the Supplemental Regulations." The CS simply identifies an infraction; the SOM investigate and judge it, and impose any applicable penalties. The process is as follows:

- The CS observes an infraction (e.g., a pass under yellow), and decides to deal with it by RFA.
- The CS completes a Request for Action form, describing the infraction with reference to the GCR and/or supps, and files it with the SOM.
- An RFA hearing is the same as a protest hearing. The CS is the "protestor."
- If the SOM impose a penalty on you, you have the right to appeal their decision.

CSA OR RFA?

The CS can deal with most situations by either CSA or RFA, and has complete discretion in deciding which. Typically, the CS will use a CSA for less serious offenses, or very clear-cut cases (e.g., under weight). For more serious, complex or time-consuming cases, the CS will file an RFA.

CSA penalties can be less severe than RFA penalties. In addition, a CSA does not accrue penalty points against your license. If the SOM penalizes you for an RFA or a protest, penalty points accrue automatically. If you protest a CSA, and the SOM uphold the CSA, they have the option of assigning penalty points in addition to the CSA penalty. (Read GCR section 7.4 for a discussion of penalty points.)

Often, the CS will use a CSA because it provides two levels of review (protest and appeal), where an RFA permits only one level of review (appeal).

Next month, we'll cover protests and appeals.

A competitor passing under any yellow condition can result in a number of actions from the Chief Steward.

