

RACING ROOM

CLUB RACING BY JOHN NESBITT

DIFFICULTIES

We continue a series of articles describing what happens during your track session. This month, we review some areas that cause problems for drivers.

THE RULES OF THE ROAD

The SCCA rules of the road are very simple:

No Contact. All drivers are responsible for avoiding contact. In everyday terms, this means that whatever harebrained, low-percentage, late braking move the other driver makes, you may not hit him or her if you can avoid it. Many driver-to-driver protests for contact end up with the court reprimanding both drivers for not avoiding contact.

Contrary to popular belief, the concept of “incidental contact” does not exist in the GCR. Avoidable contact is never acceptable in Club Racing.

Leave Racing Room. All drivers have a right to racing room on the track. This is defined as, “...sufficient space on the marked racing surface that under racing conditions, a driver can maintain control of his car in close quarters.”

You must always allow your competitor at least a car width, plus a bit, on the racing surface. Any attempt to “impede or affect the path” of a competitor attempting to pass can be interpreted as denying him racing room. Thus, if your competitor comes alongside you as you approach a turn, even if he or she has not completely passed you, you cannot simply turn in and force the other car off the road. You must give racing room. In this example, wait and try to re-pass on exit.

Shared Responsibility. The passing driver is responsible for “...the decision to pass another car and to accomplish it safely.” The overtaken driver is responsible to “...be aware that he or she is being overtaken and not to impede the overtaking car.” A driver who “...fails to make use of the rear view mirror, or who appears to be blocking another car seeking a pass” may be penalized.

PASS UNDER YELLOW

Local yellow flags indicate an incident ahead – on the racing surface for a waving yellow and off for a standing yellow. A yellow can also warn of a worker in an unprotected position. Whenever there is a yellow flag, there will very likely be workers in exposed positions.

In all cases, you are required to moderate your pace sufficiently to safely clear the incident zone. The yellow flag zone begins at the yellow flag and extends past the incident. You do not have to see a green flag to resume racing.

I often see passes under yellow caused by a leading driver waving an arm to indicate the yellow flag, and the following driver taking this as a wave-by.

Remember that you may not pass under a local yellow for any reason. The *only* pass permitted under yellow is a wave-by under full course yellow.

BEING OVERTAKEN

With the Club’s mixed-class race groups, cars frequently are overtaken. This is especially so during qualifying sessions, where cars go on track not necessarily in speed order, and drivers have varying agendas.

You may or may not see a blue flag.

Remember the meaning of the blue flag: “Another competitor is following very closely or is trying to overtake.” The free translation is, “Check your mirrors. Someone is closing on you.” The blue flag is informational. You are not required to move over for the faster car.

In fact, altering your line to let a faster car pass can be very dangerous. The driver of the faster car will have seen you long before you see his or her car, and will likely have made a plan to pass you. Altering your line as the car approaches can easily cause a collision. Be predictable, hold your line and point the faster car by at an appropriate moment.

CLOSED (FURLED) BLACK

The starter shakes a rolled-up flag (like a wagging finger) at the offending driver, and displays the car’s number. It means, “We saw what you did. Stop it.”

You are not required to come into the pits in response to a Closed Black. You are simply required to amend your behavior. Of course, if you ignore the Closed Black and continue whatever triggered it, you will soon see an Open Black, along with your number. For an Open Black, you are required to enter the pits.

If you see a waving yellow flag, that means an incident is on the racing surface or a worker is in an unprotected position. Whether it's waving or standing, a yellow flag requires that you moderate your pace until you pass the incident.

