

## **When It All Goes Wrong**

We continue a series looking at a typical track session. This month: trouble. It happens to us all. You spin and stall. You make contact and cannot continue. Another car crashes, and you start seeing flags. Here are three commonsense rules for dealing with a bad situation.

### **Don't Make It Worse**

The day has gone bad. What to do? First, don't make the situation any worse. Accept the fact that your lap, or session, or weekend, is ruined, and work from there.

If you're spinning, know when to give it up. Put both feet in (clutch and brake), continue off, and avoid hooking it back into traffic. Following drivers can avoid you better if you maintain a constant trajectory.

When you come to rest, give the flaggers a thumbs-up. If you appear non-responsive (even if you are just talking with your crew over the radio), Race Control may decide that you are unconscious or injured and dispatch emergency vehicles, adding to the danger on the track.

If you continue, reenter the track under control. If possible, get a point from a corner worker; otherwise, try to make sure that you have a gap in traffic. In any case, be aware of your speed and the differing grip levels as you leave the grass and come back on the pavement.

If your engine blows, or you lose oil pressure (you *are* checking your gauges, aren't you?), pull off as soon as you safely can. Don't try to get back to the pits, oiling the track as you go.

### **Obey the Flaggers and Emergency Workers**

If you can't continue, your next decision is whether to get out of the car. A flagger may motion you to get out or to stay put. A "Stay Put" signal usually means that a tow truck is coming to move you.

If you cannot see a flagger, evaluate the situation. If you are well off-track, or can smell gas or smoke, consider getting out. Try to exit keeping the car between you and traffic. Don't hang around trying to fix your car; get to shelter.

On the other hand, if you are in an impact zone, consider staying put, particularly if you spun there because of surface conditions. If another car spins and hits yours, you are probably safer belted down inside a crash structure than you are halfway out of the car. Race Control will likely be dispatching emergency vehicles to pull your car.

When in doubt, my practice is to stay put.

Once out of the car, try to get to the corner station. Undoubtedly, you will be hot - physically and emotionally. Don't vent your frustration on the corner workers. They are just trying to keep you and other participants safe. Obey their instructions. It's a GCR requirement, and they probably have a better idea of what is best for you at that moment.

Many regions 'bury' cars for a session or two in order to save time. Stay at the corner station, ready to go. The emergency team will make a decision on how best to bring your car back to the paddock. If they tow you, you will need your helmet and gloves on and at least your lap belt done up.

Depending on the damage to your car, the Tech folks may inspect it and make logbook notations for critical damage. In case of significant impact, the medical team will check you. This is not optional. The Safety Steward will interview you after the medical team has finished examining you.

### **Obey the Flags**

Depending on the incident, you will see a variety of flags. Please respect and obey them. Flaggers and/or emergency workers are responding to the incident. They will be in exposed positions. The team in Race Control will try to clear the incident as quickly as possible, and with as little impact on your racing as possible. You will help by moderating your pace in the incident zone.

When I am an operating steward, I listen closely to the responders. If they tell me that they don't feel safe, I quickly escalate the local Yellow, ordering a Full Course Yellow, a Black Flag All, or a Red Flag according to the conditions.

We are working to clear the incident as quickly and safely as possible. Help us by respecting the flags.