

## Hot Lapping Virginia International Raceway

Coming down the Pit Straight, the second longest straight of the 3.27 mile course, begin by bending the car gently to the right to negotiate the “kink” in the Pit Straight. Turn-in should be before the survey marker on driver’s left just before the Start/Finish line. Apex at the tree on drivers right after the starter’s stand. Allow the car to drift out to the left at the exit of the “kink.” Use the gentle uphill entry of Turn 1 to compress the car and brake enough to allow the car to begin one arc when you turn the wheel to the right. Turn-in is just after a point directly across from the beginning of the inside curbing. An increasing radius complex, Turn 1 and Turn 2 have a single apex near the end of the inside curbing. The goal is to not have to come out of the throttle or tighten the arc of the steering wheel after initial turn-in. Control the radius of the car’s path with the throttle, entering Turn 2 with the left side of the car close to the curbing on the left side of the track as the road begins to rise and continuing the arc to the right. The key is to fully accelerate at the earliest possible opportunity, as the “kink” to the left is not significant enough to have a turn number assigned to it. Moving through the fast left sweep to the left, focus only on letting the car track out to the right in order to get the car straight for entry into the decreasing radius Turn 3, or “NASCAR Bend”. Richard Petty, Curtis Turner, local hero Wendell Scott and David Pearson in the Trans-Am® race of April 1966 all christened this turn by falling off here repeatedly! Aiming for the corner of the green mesh fence, drive DEEP into the corner with the car all the way on the right and decisively turn in, being careful with the throttle. Turn-in is just before a point directly across from the beginning of the inside curbing. Apex on the inside curb at least two-thirds of the way around; opening the wheel and tracking out in preparation for the second slowest corner of the track, the treacherous Turn 4. The goal is to draw an “S” where, in the middle of the complex, the car ends up left of center between the end of Turn 4 and the entrance to Turn 5. Be careful to judge correctly your turn-in point for Turn 4, slow more and turn in later in order to maintain control and establish a rhythm that can be continued through the “Lower Esses”, Turns 5 and 5A. The road in the short straight at the exit of Turn 4 is severely crowned; try not to cross the centerline towards drivers right. Only then, turn to the right into Turn 5 and place the right front wheel against the curbing that projects furthest. Track out to the curbing on the left. Stay against the curbing on the left and delay turn-in for the second right, Turn 5A, by pausing momentarily in the short straight between the two turns. Use the “dip” after turn-in to breath the throttle and rotate the car to the right for a tidy exit. Vision is limited so familiarity with the course configuration is vital before trying to “attack” this section of the course. A flick left, then right, then left again leads you onto the straight going under the “Cross Over Bridge.” Stay to the right against the curb at track out and begin to think about negotiating the tricky and unforgiving “Uphill Esses.” These “bends in the road” are deceiving in their approach. Because of the elevation changes, cars easily become unsettled at the precise moment that the driver wishes to change direction, mandating precise car placement critical for success. Begin by bending the car to the left before the pavement ends on the right for the North Course cut-through, touching the curbing on the left at mid-point, then begin a more decisive turn-in to the right, apexing the curb at Turn 7 at the end of the curb. Cross the center seam to the right at the beginning of the inside curbing at Turn 7. The car is very light here and if the car is not pointed straight as it gets unweighted, it is possible to understeer off to the left, or TTO off to the right. Followed by another left, build speed while preserving a “shallow” exit from each of the Esses by touching the curbs later and later. Being aware of the small jump immediately after the last right hand apex, Turn 9, continue the arc to get the car back to the right side in preparation for Turn 10, “South Bend”. Entering all the way on the

right, pick a point for a centrally located apex on the curbing on the left, turning in just before you see the beginning of the curbing and being ready to open the wheel as the road drops away. Be under power when going over the crest of the "Uphill Esses". Tracking out to the curb going downhill, fight the tendency to place one or two wheels off on the right. Driving straight, move across the track from the right to the left in preparation for Turn 11, the uphill, on-camber right leading into the slowest corner of the track. Braking for Turn 11, place the left front wheel very close to the edge of the road in preparation for a slightly early apex on the curbing to the right, aided by the uphill and on-camber nature of the corner. Conceptually similar to the Turn 6-7 complex at Road Atlanta and predating it by over a dozen years, it is critical to remain in control of the car to attain an effective "launch" off "Oak Tree Turn" onto the back straight. After negotiating Turn 11, aim for the middle of the curbing on the left side of the track, coming into "Oak Tree" under COMPLETE control. When the left front tire is at the middle of the curbing on the left, decisively turn in more than you think you have to being careful with the throttle lest the downhill, off camber exit catch you out. As the steering wheel unwinds, preferably before reaching the apex most of the way around the corner, apply throttle progressively. Passing the South Course pit lane on the left, move gently to the right, taking the first crest (after the Madison Avenue testing section on the left) on the right against the curb and align the right side of the car parallel with the right side of the road. Bend the car to the left before the beginning of the pavement marking the return of the North Course cut-through on the right. Using the compression of going uphill, get the car slowed enough to easily bend the car left, with the goal being to align the left side of the car parallel with the left side of the road after the end of the left side curb at Turn 14. Touching the end of the curb with the left front wheel, unwind the wheel after following the road around to the left, brush the brakes and be ready! Trailing off the brakes, get back on mild "station-keeping" power and decisively turn in to the right to go through the right hand "Roller Coaster," the beginning of the daunting "Downhill Esses." Turning the car to the right through Turn 14A as the world drops away, place at least a car width between the right side of the car and *the beginning* of the right hand, inside curbing before placing the right front tire against the inside curbing  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way around. The car should not be left of center before having to turn left into Turn 15, the first of two left hand corners going down the hill. Use the leveling out of elevation to "buy" grip and touching the left front wheel to the left side curb  $\frac{2}{3}$  from the end, a great deal of time can be made here, tracking out all the way to the end of the exit curbing. Pausing for a moment, like the short straight between the two right handers in the "Lower Esses," delay your second apex on the left, Turn 16, to allow the left side of the car to touch the last third of the left side curbing to get the car transitioned for the beginning of the double apex, constant radius, right hand "Hog Pen Corner", Turns 17 and 17A. As "Hog Pen" leads on to potentially the quickest straight (for many cars), it is imperative to negotiate it successfully. After lining up the right hand side of the car at the exit of Turn 15, brush the brakes, bend the car left and get back on mild power, more aggressively only after turning back to the right as the car settles where the road comes up to meet you. Drawing a perfectly symmetrical arc through both Turn 17 and 17A, use the elevation changes to "buy" grip and position the car. Get the right front ON the first part of the curbing at Turn 17, track out all the way left just before halfway through the length of the outside curbing, swooping back to the right and touching with the right front tire the end of the second right hand inside curbing, the apex for 17A. Track out to the curbing at the lowest part of the curbing and begin another lap of Virginia International Raceway!

