

Hot Lapping Virginia International Raceway's North Course

Coming down the Pit Straight, the longest straight of the 2.26-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. Allow the car to drift out to the left at the exit of the "kink" in preparation for lining up the left hand side of the car, parallel to the left side of the road on the left. Waiting until the last possible moment, use the gentle uphill entry of Turn 1 to help compress the car and shorten the braking distance, getting the car slowed down to a point that will allow the car to begin one arc when you turn the wheel to the right. Turn-in should be directly across from the beginning of the inside curbing. An increasing radius complex, the Turn 1 has a single apex 7/8 of the way around the inside curbing in order to track out all the way to the left hand curbing on exit. 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, making the small adjustments required to draw the largest possible arc, coming out of Turn 2 with the right side of the car parallel to the right side of the track well beyond the end of the inside curbing. 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 on the left, focus only on letting the car track out to the right in order to get the car straight enough and deep enough into Turn 3, "NASCAR Bend," that this tricky, decreasing radius left hand corner doesn't catch you out. NASCAR greats Richard Petty, Curtis Turner, local hero Wendell Scott and David Pearson in the Trans-Am® race of April 1966 christened this turn by falling off here repeatedly! Aiming just left of the Tech Barn, drive DEEP into the corner with the car almost to the edge near the grass and decisively turn in, being very careful with the throttle lest the back end of the car come around. Turn-in should be before the point on the outside of the corner entrance directly across from the beginning of the inside curbing. Apex on the inside curb at least two-thirds of the way around; open the wheel and track out to the right side of the track in preparation for doing the same thing at the slowest corner of the track, the treacherous Turn 4. The goal is to conduct the car through Turn 4 by apexing late and *driving* across the crowned center of the road to the apex curb at Turn 5. Be careful to judge your turn-in point for Turn 4, brake harder and turn in later in order to maintain control and establish a rhythm that can be continued through the "Snake", Turns 5 and 5A. Crossing the centerline to the right because of an early apex will put you off or make you "late" for the entire following complex. Entering Turn 5, the "early" apex is the protruding curbing on the inside, tracking out to the curbing on the left and staying there. Turn 5A must be negotiated with a touch more turning radius than the first by pausing momentarily in the short straight between the two. Vision is limited so familiarity with the course configuration is vital before trying to "attack" this section of the course. Use the "dip" in the road to rotate the car right to "point" your way out of the "Esses." A flick left, then right, then left again leads you onto the straight going under the "Drive Over Bridge." Stay to the left, lining up the car parallel with the left side of the road in preparation for braking and turn in to the right for Turn 7, the super-elevated (banked), steeply uphill and deceptively quick entry onto the North Course "cut-through." Ideally, the sensitive transition from braking to acceleration should take place **before** turn-in. Enter the "throat", or the infield paving, at least a car width and a half from the right side of the road, with the goal of tightening the radius as the car squashes into the pavement as it climbs quickly up the hill. The turn is more than 90 degrees, so make certain to place the right front wheel against the curbing for some time near the end of the curbing, at which point you can unwind the wheel and track out precisely when the car becomes less weighted at the crest. Track out to the curbing on the left and follow the gentle bend to the left through Turn 8. Turn in for the right should occur so that you can line the right side of the car parallel with the right side of the track after the curbing ends on the right through Turn 9. Make a decisive, slightly early turn to the left to go over the blind crest left ("Stevie Wonder" or Turn 10) keeping the left front wheel against the curbing for some time. Drive straight after you can see where you are going and delay your turn to the right until the road comes back up to meet you. Stay closer to the first curbing on the right as you crest. The more important curbing is the second

curbing, the apex of this constant radius pair of right hand bends, Turn 12. Your goal is to line up the car to drive straight out of the “esses” and align the left side of the car parallel with the left side of the track as you climb the last incline into Turn 14 before turning right into “Roller Coaster”. Form a straight line braking zone while looking to the worker station (Station 14) just to the left and slow the car near the grass after the curbing on the left. Trailing off the brakes, get back on mild “station-keeping” power and decisively turn in to the right to go through the right hand Turn 14A, the beginning of the daunting “Downhill Esses.” Turning the car to the right as the world drops away, place at least a car width and a half between the right side of the car at *the beginning* of the right hand, inside curbing before placing the right front tire against the inside curbing 2/3 of the way around. Under no circumstances should you be left of center before having to turn left at 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 halfway to 2/3 from the end, a great deal of time can be made here, placing the car all the way to the left at the first apex (as the road comes up to meet you), tracking out all the way to the right at the end of the exit curbing. Pausing for a moment, brake and bend the car to the left, Turn 16, by allowing the left side of the car to touch the middle 2/3 of the left side curbing, back on mild power to get the car transitioned for the beginning of the double apex, constant radius, right hand downhill “Hog Pen Corner”, Turn 17 and 17A. As “Hog Pen” leads on to potentially the quickest straight, it is imperative to negotiate it successfully. After selecting entry speed for Turn 16, get back on the power, more aggressively only after turning back to the right for Turn 17 as the car compresses and the road comes up to meet you. Drawing a perfectly symmetrical arc through both right hand corners, use the elevation changes to “buy” grip and position the car. Get the right front ON the first part of the curbing, track out to the first 1/3 of the length of the outside curbing, swooping back to the right and touching with the right front the end of the second right hand, inside curbing, Turn 17A. Track out all the way to the left curbing at the dip and begin your climb back up the first part of the Pit Straight. Take a breath, relax your grip on the wheel and get ready to do another lap of the North Course at the historic Virginia International Raceway!

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