INSTRUCTOR'S CORNER
REVISED ISSUE #9. Oct. 2021

Safety must always be the primary concern.
In the early days, the high performance cars were modified 2002s, E21 and E30 series, with a few 5 and 6 series sedans. Most of these were on street tires.
Then the e36 M3 showed up and all hell broke loose. At the first event I attended where there were e36M3s, 5 of them left the gray surface and contacted tires, guard rails and other immoveable objects. Concern followed.
"What are we going to do with these insanely quick cars"?
Eventually we figured it out. The answer was "We need to adapt our Command abilities to be able to achieve both safety and learning with these cars."
Now we are faced with GT3s, GTRs, Corvettes, and newer versions of M cars some of which can easily hit speeds in excess of 150mph on the back straight at VIR.
"What are we going to do with these insanely quick cars"?
Same answer as before-Adapt.

While we are never really in control, we must always maintain command. That feeling of helplessness and exposure we may feel in a really fast car is in part an acknowledgement we are not in control and may not have full command of the situation. Let's take a moment to explore the difference between command and control.

COMMAND AND CONTROL
How many times have you heard "The Instructor is in control" during a High Performance Driving School?
In Reality?, We are not.
A definition of Control: " to exercise restraint or direction over; dominate; command:
The driver (Student in this case) has hands or feet on or near all the systems that control the behavior of the vehicle, Brakes, Clutch, Accelerator, Steering Wheel, Shifting system.
This is the "Student in Control"
A definition of Command: (From the US Air Force)"We suggest a different and more dynamic view of command and control which sees command as the exercise of authority and control as feedback about the effects of the action taken".
The Instructor has feet on the floor and hands holding onto something to help them brace against the forces they are subject to. The only control devices we have are our voice, and if needed, actions to change behaviors.
This is the "Instructor in Command".

So what tools do we have to work with that can help us achieve "Command"?

Pre Track Interview. This is the most important tool we have. Taking the time before you get in the car and go on track is critical in learning as much as you can about your student and about the vehicle you are about to enter. You cannot ask enough questions, but you can try.
Vehicle Inspection: Our chapter does not directly involve the Instructor in the pre-track inspection

process, but we encourage Instructors to look carefully at the vehicle they will be riding in. Please take the time to look at the safety gear in the car. At some point you will be glad you did.
Hand Signals: Before you go out for the first session, be sure that you and your student have a set of hand signals that you both understand. Cars are sometimes really loud, and communicators can fail. You must have a fall back to maintain Command.
Goals: Encourage your student to articulate a set of goals for every session. Hold them to it!
There is a common thread to these first four tools-they help you establish a relationship with your student that puts you in the "command" position before you begin on track.
All of these tools work with any vehicle, as they are all about the relationship between you and the student.
But what about the really quick cars? How do we adapt, how do we cope with "Insanely Quick Cars"?
It is pretty well accepted that a student does not learn much at top speed on the straight, other than braking at the end. Bad things can happen on straights, not just in corners, and if they happen, the consequences can be severe.
As you are in Command, if you feel the need to establish a speed limit at any point in time, or at any point on the course, you have every right to do so.
Your Student may want to experience the full capability of the car, and if and when you feel comfortable, you may let them do so. Your tolerance or limits for this should take into consideration the safety equipment in the vehicle, as well as the attitude and composure of the Student.

It's easier than you'd think to convince your student that excessively high speeds on the straights without appropriate safety gear (HANS and a roll cage safety cell for starters) can be a recipe for a very bad day.
Remind them that mechanicals or varmints crossing the track can create unrecoverable situations. As nothing but temptation of fate and excessive wear and tear on the drivetrain and brakes is accomplished, most easily agree to getting the speed out of their system with a couple of early runs and capping the straights at 120-130 the rest of the weekend.
Remember, the goal is to have a fun, safe, learning experience.
Be safe out there.
As always, your comments and suggestions are welcome. Please send to:
scottmeyer400@gmail.com