

SEBRING

A Track Description

by Bruce MacInnes*

TURN ONE:

Sebring's turn one is one of the most challenging corners at this historic racetrack. It is a fast, fun, bumpy, and blind left hand sweeper where pinpointing a turning point reference is critical. The track recently changed the entry on driver's right, extending the pit wall to increase the length of pit lane. This has made finding the perfect turning point easier. Brake mostly in a straight line & turn in just beyond the end of the new pit wall with minimal trail braking (unless your car has a high speed push). Add power early to settle the car over the bumps and clip the apex next to the wall. Halfway to the apex there is a painted line that arcs toward the inside wall on driver's left. This is a helpful reference point to stay @ car-width wide, ½ way in to inside, then cross over it to clip the wall at the apex. We have placed an apex reference point on top of the chain link fence on the inside wall. This is an extremely helpful reference on this blind corner. Track all the way out to the curbing on the exit and drive through the kink at turn two on the right side of the road.

URNS THREE, FOUR, AND FIVE: The first Rhythm Section...

These corners are the first of three rhythm sections at Sebring. In turn three, the apex is the end of the inside curbing. Try to add throttle at this point to help the car transition through these esses. Done correctly, this will lead you through turn four (a right-hand kink) and still give you time to transition to the extreme outside of the carousel (turn five). If you look closely, there is a dot referencing the turning point. (Reminder - Artificial references, while helpful, are never a substitute for high eyes and looking through corners). Brush the brake gently to balance the car through the turning point, and trail brake smoothly to point the car at the late apex on an important exit speed turn. The right turning point will enable your right front wheel to cross the right corner of a very visible pavement patch just after turn-in. Check in-car videos to identify this reference. Use the apron at the track-out to maximize exit speed (Watch the big bump on the outside curb).

GURNEY BEND AND TURN SEVEN:

Use all of the road on the left at the exit of Gurney bend approaching the very technical braking zone for the hairpin Turn Seven). Keep the car perfectly straight on the entry to this turn while threshold braking, turn with the brake on and trail brake smoothly. (Remember - The release of the brakes creates rotation - Good drivers control the rotation with their brake release & cars never spin with brakes on unless they have rear brake bias/the driver mis-matches a downshift/ has one side in the grass/or gets hit). As always, footwork is important for all threshold-braking corners. Turn, just past the middle of the

curbing on driver's left, and run over the inside curbs on the kinks leading to the Fangio Chicane (Turns Eight and Nine). These turns are flat out in almost any car.

URNS TEN, ELEVEN, AND TWELVE: The Second Rhythm Section...

Approaching the braking zone for Cunningham Corner (Turn Ten), threshold brake on the left side of the road, and turn just before the beginning of the curbing on driver's left. THIS IS NOT A COMPROMISE CORNER... You can track out early and drive around the curbing at Collier Curve (turn eleven) to a wide track out at the exit to the Indycar test track pit out. This will bring you to the diagonal braking zone for the Tower Turn (Turn Thirteen). Lots of time can be lost here if you don't track out and mistakenly compromise the exit of turn ten - If you think about it, it's not as confusing as it looks.

TURN THIRTEEN:

Stay a bit wide of the apex of Turn Twelve & brake on a diagonal to the outside curbing at Thirteen. Turn @ halfway down the outside curbing so that your right front wheel crosses the pavement change in the middle of the racetrack, one third of the way into the corner. This is delineated by a seam in the road that crosses the track and by a second seam that intersects it in the middle: (It looks like the top of an upside-down "T"). Again - Check out in car video to identify this reference & Eyes Up... This turn is slightly uphill just beyond the apex & is faster than it appears. Track out all the way and watch the big drop off at the exit.

TURN FOURTEEN – BISHOP BEND:

This turn is taken flat out in most cars. If a speed adjustment is necessary, do it in a straight line and preload the suspension with power at the turning point. Turn just before the end of the curbing on driver's right, clip the inside curb, and track out two-thirds of the way on the exit. Get back to the left side of the road for the braking zone for turn fifteen.

TURN FIFTEEN AND SIXTEEN: The Third Rhythm Section...

Gendebien Bend (Turn Fifteen) approaching Le Mans Curve (Turn Sixteen) is also not a compromise corner. Again, add power early to settle the car through the apex curbing and let the car track out early near the inside curbing approaching turn sixteen. Just as power helped the car transition the esses of turns three and four, throttle will help the car transition to the turning point for the most important exit speed corner at Sebring (Turn Sixteen). The good part is that drivers can bail out over the outside curbing if they get in trouble. You never will spin on the exit of Fifteen if you use this option. (Lots of concrete outside the exit curbing approaching Turn Sixteen).

Le Mans Curve (Turn Sixteen) leads on to the longest straightaway and **exit speed is critical**. It is important to drive the car to the left, across the pavement transition to the concrete on the outside before the turning point. I love to clip the end of the last curb on driver's left before Sixteen. Note: The entire racecar will then be on the concrete, at least one and one-half car widths off the asphalt entering this turn. Brush the brakes, and squeeze power through the apex. You can use the exit apron curbing, but **Absolutely do not drop a wheel**. Most cars hook to the inside barrier if they go off on the exit of this turn. If you drop your outside tires, turn a bit left, and go to even throttle ; If you spin with TTO (trailing throttle oversteer), instantly lock up the brakes. Statistically, 9 out of 10 drivers who drop wheels on the exit of most any turn will spin to the inside - Seven will get to the barrier with late lock up...

TURN SEVENTEEN A & B – "SUNSET BEND":

Turn seventeen is a double apex corner where braking and downshifting are done through and beyond the first apex. This, as well as turn one, are the two most challenging corners at Sebring. During late afternoon, be sure to wear a dark visor on sunny days and tape it at the top to avoid the Glare at sunset...

Turn early, ignoring the last countdown reference cones on driver's left. Most people turn just before the second set of reference cones on driver's left. Looking closely near the turning point, you will see a red clay reference that some smart driver put to mark it. (This might be slightly early.) Many drivers turn in flat out (in lower HP cars), apex the wall while brake-turning and downshifting with good footwork. Trail brake one and one-half car widths outside of the dark patch (which is really dark blue paint that Terry Earwood and I have been repainting for decades) between the apex at Seventeen A and the bridge at Seventeen B. It is very bumpy at the apex just before the bridge so stay a car-width wide at this point. I painted a black dot and placed a large pylon on the bridge to pass under. (On big weekends, banners cover the dot). No need to apex the grass beyond the bridge. Squeeze full throttle and let the car track out all the way over the apron to tire wall on the straightaway leading to Start/Finish.

YOU CAN NOW DRIVE A PERFECT LAP ON ONE OF THE GREATEST RACE TRACKS IN THE WORLD. HAVE FUN AND I HOPE YOU HAVE A GREAT TIME!!!!

Helpful Hint - RAIN DRIVING:

- As always, sidestep the braking zones and drive around the outside of most corners.
- Change brake bias, if possible, away from the front.
- Soften (or remove) sway bars. Test in the wet to see what works on your car- Leaving the rear swaybar on full soft on my Lola 333 Can-Am car & unhooking the front bar (even in the dry) was the ideal setup for wet conditions.

- Retaining the ability to see is the most challenging problem – Use a Yellow Visor & Test In The Wet!!!

****Bruce MacInnes has been a Senior Instructor at the Skip Barber Racing School for over 37 years. He is a two time Pro-Formula Ford Champion, raced a wide variety of Prototypes & Production cars, setting 18 lap records, and was voted Formula Magazine's "Driver of the Year" twice. He currently spends much of his time teaching Skip Barber Programs, Coaching, and (with his wife, Vikki) flying their homebuilt aircraft. Bruce spends Winter in Sebring and Summers near Lime Rock. He may be contacted for Private Coaching at over 20 tracks at: 1-413-329-0995...***