

INSTRUCTOR'S CORNER

Issue 1 Feb. 10, 2014

For many years, Tarheel instructors and students had the opportunity to visit the “Instructors Corner” where they would find great discourses on a variety of topics of interest. Many of those articles can be found on the Tarheel website, in the “Track” section. The concepts and descriptions found there are just as valid now as they were when first written. We hope to revive that tradition here.

In the future, in advance of an upcoming HPDS, we will be in touch with some tips on instructing and other topics. We hope that you will be participants in this, and we welcome comments, suggestions, and yes, even rants.

INSTRUCTING TIP

So who in the world is this person in the left seat?

You have never met this person before; you know nothing about them, nothing about their vehicle. The car you are in is capable of amazing speed at any time (just a simple push from the right foot), and it has some electronic driving systems about which you may or may not know anything.

And yet, you plan to get in their car and have them drive you around a track with many corners, many elevation changes, many guard rails and some trees. Oh, and there are other cars on the track driven by other strangers.

THE PRE TRACK INTERVIEW

This is where the pre track interview begins to help you to work out how to help the driver become a more skilled participant.

Of all the things we do on a typical weekend, the pre track interview is probably the most important. The more you ask, the more information you will have, the more likely it is that you can form a partnership with the driver. This will help you and the driver get to a more successful conclusion.

About a week prior to the event we're going to send student pairings and email info to you. We encourage, no, we ***implore*** you to take advantage of this pre-event meet-and-greet opportunity to get all your pre-track info to (and from) your student.

The students rave about this. Instructors who have done this love it too. Please do it. It's a virtually unlimited opportunity to get the equivalent of at least two track sessions back from the necessary tedium and distractions that come from doing some of this while in the car. Done right, you'll be getting in the car Saturday morning 1st session with someone you already know and have a plan for.

How do you make the first on-track situation as helpful as possible, a session from which you and the driver both learn how to work together to help the driver be as safe as possible, to learn something, and to have fun doing it?

During your pre-event meet-and-greet emails, ask questions about the car and the driver. Ask questions about any driver assist systems on this car. Does the driver really understand them? Ask questions about the driver's experience and when they most recently were on track. Ask questions about the driver's goals for that day or weekend.

Basically, you cannot ask too many questions

Here is how I know this. Years ago I did not ask the driver if his car had ever had massive failure of one side of the ABS system. It had, and did again that day. It was only after we were pulled out of the ditch that I asked.

Next time, we'll give you some specifics on personality types you may encounter.

TECHNICAL TOPIC

It's an unusual day at VIR. It is cold (around 38-40 deg) and rainy. The track has a little standing water in the typical places. Well, maybe it is not such an unusual day, but stick with me here.

You have an advanced student. It is the first session on Saturday, so you have just met your student, and he/she asks you "what should I do about tire pressures" They are running radial, low aspect ratio, DOT street tires. Of course, you ask them what pressures they normally run in the dry, and they say "I follow Tarheel website recommendations, and use 2 pounds more than the recommended pressure as shown on the door jamb"

Nice to hear they actually read that stuff-right?

Question #1: Do you say:

“I have no idea, just work it out”

“I think you should add an additional two pounds to minimize hydroplaning by making the tire tread more rounded in cross section”

“I think you should take 4 pounds out of the tires to soften the car and to make the tire deform and build up some heat in the tread”

Question # 2-same scenario but this time the student is a first time D student

Send us your answers/comments/suggestions, and we will have the results in the next issue.

SUGGESTED READING MATERIAL

Ross Bentley recently published “The HPDE Instructor Manifesto” You can find it free by going to <http://hpde-instructor-tips.com>

This is one of the best articles ever written about instructing at a High Performance Driving School. Every Instructor, no matter how many years they have been instructing, will have something to take away from this material.

CONTACT US

Please do, we want to hear what you want to say on the subject of instructing. For now, let us know what you think by email.

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