

LET'S GO RACING

A Guide to Driving Safety and On-Course
and Starting Procedures for those
foolish enough to want to drive sprint
races with the VSCCA.



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— EDITORIAL —

FROM THE PRESIDENT:

At the risk of being repetitive, I think this is an appropriate place and time to restate what I have always thought obvious: the primary purpose of the VSCCA, set forth by its founders in the by-laws and printed clearly on each membership application, is "to encourage the acquisition, preservation, and restoration of vintage sports cars." Clearly, the emphasis is on the cars; not on the competition and not on the drivers. We give no trophies to winners; we are institutionally indifferent to who wins. The aim is to enjoy driving the cars in their element, with as much safety as we can humanly provide. For nearly twenty-two years the officers and members have tried to run our events in accord with these principles. By and large we have succeeded.

In recent years, however, the other officers and I have become seriously concerned with incidents on the race course which reflect an intensely competitive attitude on the part of a few members. Such an attitude is incompatible with the spirit of the VSCCA. Further, from a pragmatic viewpoint, if allowed to go unchecked it can create a situation which jeopardizes the club's ability to continue holding races in the future.

Let me be blunt. I believe that any VSCCA member who is unable to control his competitive fever so that he can be reasonably sure of avoiding potentially dangerous incidents has chosen the wrong club to race with. My intent here is to state, publicly and unequivocally, that your Board of Directors and I are determined to see that the club's traditional low pressure spirit is preserved for the great majority of members who want it that way.

Happy motoring!

— Bill O'Donnell

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PREFACE

VSOCA racing involves high speed wheel-to-wheel driving. So, in that sense, it can be called racing.

But one fact to keep constantly in mind is that while it's racing, it's not competition. In any given session, the capabilities of our cars vary tremendously. So vastly, in fact, that the question of who will be first to take the checkered flag -- and who will be last -- is pretty much fore-ordained even before the green flag is waved.

There are no awards for "winners". Since we're out there for enjoyment rather than competition, on a clear, safe day there are no losers. Everyone wins.

But a day marred by unsafe driving and accidents is not one we can enjoy.

And on an unenjoyable day, not only are there no winners; everyone loses.

Racing folk are a strange breed. And of all the racing folk extent, few are stranger than those who drive vintage competition cars.

The point is, conventional racing drivers -- amateur and pro, alike -- enjoy a lot of protection when they drive. Their cars are equipped with roll bars, wide tires, on-board fire extinguishing systems, suspensions that are likely to remain corner-safe because they're engineered for today's speeds, fuel cells rather than fuel tanks, scatter shields, emergency cut-off switches and the like. What's more, these drivers are trained for competition driving (although, we must admit, to widely varying degrees.) But if nothing else, they know the rules of the road. They're familiar with the meaning of the various flags and signals -- and they know (for the most part, at least) the techniques of defensive driving.

On the other hand, vintage car owners aren't about to defile their precious machinery with the protective devices mandatory on contemporary racing iron. And to top it off, only a few have previously held competition licenses or attended drivers' schools. So, as a whole, we're relatively untrained.

Despite this, we tend to fling our cars around Lime Rock and other courses with the fierce abandon of Grand Prix veterans. Which is all great fun and games. But let's face it, bent or broken machinery of the ilk represented in our collections is costly and difficult to refurbish. And a bent or broken driver? He can require some particularly complicated repairs. Plus which, it's hard for a human to find replacement parts.

Nonetheless, we do want to race.

So as long as that's the case, our best bet is to do it safely.

How to go about it?

Mainly through sensible car handling. Combined with a thorough knowledge of the rules of the road.

That's what this manual (if you'll go along with so dignified a term) is for. It covers:

1. Driving tips
2. On course-flagging procedures
3. Starting procedures

If you read each section carefully and allow its wisdom to burn deeply into your grey cells, you'll be better able to enjoy a day of racing comfortably (assuming good weather) and in relative safety. (No manual can guarantee complete safety. That's up to your driving, that of your friends and the condition of your vehicle).

So enough of this preamble. Let's get down to business.

I. DRIVING TIPS

In this section, we'll cover a few random tips that can help keep you out of trouble. No way can we cover the entire roster of driving techniques; there's simply too much. Your best bet, if you're really serious about the whole thing, is to go to a drivers school. There are a number of them around -- some better than others, some costlier than others. The most economical available is an SCCA school. But entry there means that your car has to be fully equipped according to SCCA tech standards -- which brings us back to the original problem of not wanting to defeat the authenticity of our cars.

Since the private drivers schools have their own competition equipped cars, they're probably the best bet.

But going on from there, here are some tips worth your serious consideration:

1. Drive quick -- but keep the speed of your car within the limits of your control capability. We're not driving for glory or money or, ordinarily, even hardware. We're driving for the fun of it. And somehow we leave the fun behind once we get that "Gotta win!" syndrome and start driving over our heads.

The other guy is quicker? Okay, let him by. Let him be the one to blow his engine or bend his car. Just stay safely out of his way.

That's not to say that you shouldn't dice. Racing is at its best when you run in direct competition with someone else. But make sure the other guy is someone in your class -- in terms of car as well as driving ability. That way, you stand a better chance of staying out of trouble.

2. When a faster or more powerful car wants to pass you, let him. Keep an eye on your rear-view mirror. If you see a guy hot-dogging up behind you, don't block him, let him by. Unless you're setting up to go into a turn, give him freeway by moving to the side of the course. And use your hand and arm to signal the side on which you want him to pass. Important: when you signal, make sure you tell him where he's to go. Don't try to point where you're going.

Equally important: just so everyone knows what everyone else is doing, if you're the driver who's about to pass a slower car, the direction the other driver is pointing is the side on which he wants you to pass.

One thing: avoid drafting. That's fine for the Richard Pettys and Calè Yarboroughs and Jackie Ickxx's (God knows how to pluralize that name) but it takes a lot of know how. And part of it is knowing how confident you can be that the guy you're drafting knows what he's doing.

3. If you go off course into the sand or grass, don't wrench your wheel around, trying to get back to the pavement. That's one of the surest ways to wind up in a flip. Cut your speed and edge back to the course smoothly. Of course, if you go off near a flag station, the "re-entry" man will help guide you back on. More about that later in the section on on-course flagging procedures.
4. If you spin on course, don't fight it. Spin, already. If you get into a spin condition, lock your brakes right away. That will help you wind up tangent to your direction of motion. However, test your brakes before doing this. It's possible that a full brake lock may not be practical or possible with some of the older cars. If you do a 360°, just keep going (assuming that you've avoided a nerf or a T-bone in the process.) But if you wind up headed in the wrong direction, stay in that position until all traffic has passed. To show your friends that all is well, to mark your position so that it doesn't become a target area, and to prove that you have no other plans for the moment to move away from your position, raise both hands well over your head. After traffic has passed, don't try to make a U-turn; drive off the course and re-enter when it's clear to do so. Again, the flagging re-entry man will help you.
5. If you're (God forbid) in the process of flipping (back when vintage cars were new it was called an overturn) do not put your arm out to hold the car up. A lot of guys have wound up with very short arms as the result of such an attempt. Your best bet is to grasp the steering column with both hands (that'll keep your arms inside) and lean or crouch over (away from the steering wheel) so that your head is as far below cockpit level as you can make it. Don't tense up (hah!) but, rather, keep yourself as relaxed as you can. Once a flip starts, there's nothing you can do to stop it. So place your emphasis on keeping yourself intact.

Note: If you've flipped, once you've caught your breath -- and before you've stopped shaking -- shut off your switches! This is particularly important for cars equipped with electric fuel pumps. Continued pumping of gas only increases the risk of fire. And fire...hurts...!

Of course, the best approach to the whole problem is to avoid flipping. Which brings us back to Driving tip #1: keep the car within the limits of your control capability.

6. Before going out on the course for race or practice, void. A full bladder can, in the case of an accident, result in a burst bladder. Which can be a very painful -- and oftentimes inconvenient -- matter. So go to the john before you leave the paddock for the course!

7. Yes, Virginia, there is such a thing as a line. Most of us know that. If you're unsure of the definition of "line", it's the route a driver should take through a turn. Taking a proper line minimizes the amount of time and distance needed to negotiate a turn and, additionally, assures maximum control of a car through the turn. Take the turn properly and you're doing your bit, just fine. Take it too wide and not only do you lose time, the "G" forces involved can send you spinning off the course. Take it too close and, well, there are a dozen other problems you can run into.

The line for each different type of car can be different. Power, weight, tires and suspension each have their influence. Still the differences, at less than top speeds are minor. Practice will show you your best line, but if you aren't sure of it, your best bet is to watch the road surface ahead of you as you enter the turn. On most courses, the line through a turn is darker than the rest of the road. That's because so many cars have gone through that they've laid down enough rubber to mark the path. So follow that darkened area and you can be confident you're close to correct.

Speaking of turns, it's power-down in, power-up and strong traction out. Commit the chassis to the corner under power, then brake early. Don't set up for the turn as you enter it; set up before that. Pre-load your rear suspension with power to settle weight on the rear end and thereby balance your chassis. If you have to brake, do so before you reach the corner -- and certainly, before you reach the apex. Then as you come through, put your foot into it and m-o-v-e! That way, you're pouring it on at the right spot.

One final point while we're still on the subject of corners. If you're overtaking another car and he's already set up for the turn, it can be bad business for you to try to pass him there. First of all, he has the line -- and he has the right of way. And second of all, if he drifts while you're passing, you stand a good chance of running into one of two things: him or the boondocks!

So much for driving. Now, let's take a gander at ...

II. ON-COURSE FLAGGING PROCEDURES

Every road course has "Flag Stations" located at intervals around the circuit. The Stations normally are located at points on the circuit which are particularly vulnerable to accidents, are manned by a strange and uniquely masochistic branch of humanity called "Corner Workers." Clad in white garments, these workers

spend day after day operating in clement (which is rare) and inclement (mostly) weather. These are the people who handle the flags which are shown on the course, who handle the communications, and who deal with emergency situations when they occur.

Their only compensation: the pleasure they derive from participation in racing. Their camaraderie with others of their unusual ilk. And a cold beer at the end of the day.

As things stand, we see experienced corner crews in volume only when we run in conjunction with another organization's event. With SCCA, IMSA or EMRA, for example. Unfortunately, when the VSCCA holds its own meets, we have far fewer workers; a small cadre of experienced souls, supplemented by whatever numbers of crew members, family members, drivers and visitors who are willing to volunteer for the job.

AT THIS POINT, WE INTERRUPT THIS TOME FOR A HELP-WANTED COMMERCIAL:

Wanted: a maximum number of volunteers and volunteered people to work at corners during VSCCA Club meets. Experience desirable but not necessary. For details, contact the Steward/Starter early in the morning before the day's activities begin. An Equal Opportunity Employer.

NOW, WE RETURN YOU TO "LET'S GO RACING."

We'll discuss Flagging procedures under two headings:

1. Operating at another organization's event.
2. Operating during a VSCCA event.

1. OPERATING AT ANOTHER ORGANIZATION'S EVENT.

As pointed out earlier, such events normally draw large numbers of experienced Corner Workers. And for the most part, the corners function according to the procedures set down by the SCCA.

The stations are linked two ways:

1. With a communications system to which all stations are tied.
2. In the majority of cases, there is visual sighting from one station to the next. (Only rarely is one station invisible from the station preceding or succeeding it.)

The Corner Workers who man these flag stations have three distinct responsibilities:

1. Advise drivers of the condition of the course ahead.
2. Help drivers in the case of an emergency or problem situation.
3. Advise the Chief Steward of conditions and problems and possible rule infractions so that he can take whatever action is necessary.

The driver advisory function is performed via flag and hand signals. The emergency help is often performed through courage and brute force. The Chief Steward advisory is achieved via reports on the communications system.

Flag Station personnel are responsible for the area of the track that extends from their station as far as the next station in the direction of your travel (assuming, of course, that you are going around the track in the proper direction.) For example, if you are going around Lime Rock, and spin off just at the start of the Esses, you are in the territory of Station 4; Station 5 is at the end of the Esses. If you're closer to Station 5 than to Station 4, chances are that you'll get your assist from 5. But Station 4 will hang out the proper signal to warn upcoming traffic of trouble ahead. More about that now, as we get into the specific flags.

Each station is equipped with four flags; yellow, red-and yellow striped, white, and a black. (Note: some, but not all, stations will also have a blue flag emblazoned with a diagonal yellow stripe. More about the blue flag in the section titled "Special Flags.")

YELLOW FLAG - This flag will be seen one of two ways: held stationary or waved.

REGARDLESS OF WHICH MANNER IN WHICH IT IS HELD, WHEN YOU SEE THE YELLOW FLAG, PASSING ANOTHER CAR IS ABSOLUTELY PROHIBITED -- UNLESS THE DRIVER OF THAT CAR CLEARLY SIGNALS YOU TO PASS!

The stationary yellow tells you that there is an actual or potential hazard up-road from that station. It could be a car just barely off the track or even edged slightly on the track. It could be an animal on track. It could be a tail pipe or a part from a car, lying on the track. Whatever it

is, the standing yellow tells you to proceed with caution, preferably at a reduced speed -- and that passing is taboo!

The waving yellow flag, on the other hand, is used when the hazard is more serious. A car spun, stalled or flipped on the course for example. The flag handled in this manner warns you that you may have to take evasive action -- or even stop -- in order to avoid an extremely dangerous situation. Again, DO NOT PASS!

On occasion, you may see a standing yellow at one station and then, a waving yellow at the next. The standing yellow, in this case, is called a "back up" signal. It's used largely when the next station (the one with the waving yellow) is out of visual sighting, to slow you down before you reach the "incident."

During practice sessions, we will frequently hold a stationary yellow flag for a lap or two, to hold you at non-competitive speeds in order to allow you to warm up your cars, brakes, and tires -- and to permit you to familiarize yourself with the configuration and surface of the course before you begin to increase your speed. Again, as long as the yellow flag is shown, the no-passing rule must be observed.

RED-AND-YELLOW STRIPED FLAG - This is called the "oil" flag and is always displayed in a stationary position. It warns you that the course ahead may be slippery, due to oil spillage or that there may be an abundance of sand or gravel on course which may cause you to lose adhesion. Some racing organizations also use the red-and-yellow flag to warn of debris on the track (a dropped tail pipe, hood cover or such.)

NOTE: ON MOST OCCASIONS, THE STATIONARY YELLOW OR OIL FLAG WILL BE HELD VISIBLE FOR TWO LAPS. ONCE ALL DRIVERS ARE AWARE OF THE HAZARD, THE FLAG WILL BE "DROPPED." THIS DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN, HOWEVER, THAT THE HAZARD NO LONGER REMAINS: MERELY THAT ONCE YOU KNOW ITS LOCATION, STATION PERSONNEL WANT TO BE READY TO SIGNAL NEW HAZARDS.

WHITE FLAG - This is shown to advise you that a non-race vehicle -- for example, an ambulance, wrecker, or course marshal's car is on the track. The white flag is flown from station to station. If the non-race vehicle is between Station 8 and 9, Section 8 will show the white. If it's between 9 and 10, you'll see the flag at 9. In other words, whenever you see the white flag, you will know that you will come upon the non-race vehicle in that immediate vicinity.

The sole exception to this is that at many courses the white flag is displayed at the Start/Finish line for the entire duration of the non-race vehicle's presence on the course.

NO FLAG AT ALL - If you see no flag at the station, you will know that conditions between that station and the next are "GO". The road is clear, so have fun.

At one time, a green flag was displayed for a "GO" condition. This is no longer the case, although you may still see a green flag at the Start-Finish line.

NOTE: ON OCCASION, YOU MAY SEE TWO FLAGS DISPLAYED AT ONCE (I.E. - YELLOW AND OIL, OR YELLOW AND WHITE.) IN EITHER CASE, CONSIDER THE YELLOW FLAG AS MANDATORY INSTRUCTION AND THE SECOND FLAG AS INFORMATIONAL.

SPECIAL FLAGS

The flags we have just reviewed are to be found at all stations. However, you will see other flags, at times. Some of these will be displayed at specifically designated stations. Two of them will be found at the Start-Finish line, only. The Black Flag, the Mechanical Black Flag (commonly known as the "meatball"), the Blue Flag will be seen on stations. The Checkered Flag and the Red Flag will be seen at Start-Finish, only. You may also see the Black, Mechanical Black and the Blue Flag at Start-Finish, but only on special occasions.

BLACK FLAG - Known as the Steward's Black Flag, it is normally used at one specified station on the course (known as the Black Flag Station) and/or at Start-Finish. This flag is used for two purposes:

1. To call a driver into the pits for a "discussion" with the Chief Steward about a rule infraction or dangerous driving tactics. The Black Flag, when used for this purpose, is pointed directly at the car to be brought in and is used in conjunction with a "number board" on which the car number is shown. Ignoring or missing the Black Flag can call for fairly severe penalties. Ergo, it is a good idea to remember your number. Remember, when you are Black Flagged, come down the pit-lane and stop at Start-Finish until allowed to proceed.

When you are Black-Flagged, signal the flagman an acknowledgement. (Note: the use of an extended middle finger from a clenched fist is not considered an appropriate acknowledgement.)

If you do miss the Black Flag at the B.F. Station, the starter will repeat the action at the Start-Finish line. Miss it enough times, and the Starter, who is required to

take an NRA marksmanship course, will throw the flag directly into your cockpit. That way, you can't misunderstand.

2. At the end of a practice session, the Chief Steward may elect to bring the cars off the course by Black Flagging all cars. In this case, the flag will be held aloft by the Black Flag station, and the number board will read, "ALL". When you see this, come into the pit lane and proceed to your parking spot in the paddock.

Note: the checkered flag will also be waved by the starter, to signify completion of the session.

Starting with the 1982 season, SCCA has adopted an added use for the black flag -- primarily during professional events such as Can Ams, Trans Ams, Grand Prix races and so on. It will be shown at all stations as a warning that the race or practice session has been Red Flagged. (More about the Red Flag a few paragraphs further on.) Until now, the Red Flag warning had been waving yellow flags at all stations. The "waving yellow at all stations" may remain the Red Flag warning procedure for certain organizations and events. As of this writing, SCCA has not yet indicated whether or not the "black-flag-at-all-stations" will be standard for all its events.

The VSCCA chairman at each event will advise all drivers which procedure will be followed at that event.

MECHANICAL BLACK FLAG - This is a black flag with an orange or yellow disc in the center. Fondly known as the "Meatball," it is used to signal a driver that he has a mechanical problem with his car of which he might not be aware: a dragging tail pipe, a wheel wobble, oil spillage, soft tire, etc. This flag, shown at the Black Flag Station, will also be accompanied by the car number on the number board. If you are signaled, slow down and proceed directly to the pits or to the paddock to pinpoint the problem. It's usually better to stop at the pits, by the way and ask why the signal was shown, since the problem could be one of severe tire rub -- which chances are, you could have a tough job spotting.

BLUE FLAG - This flag, which is blue with a diagonal yellow or orange stripe, is known as the "passing" flag. When you see it (it is held up only momentarily) check your rear view mirror, because it tells you that a roaring monster is bearing down on you -- and that you should give way for him. Signal him, of course, to show him the side on which you want him to pass.

RED FLAG - Shown at the Start-Finish line and possibly at one or more other stations, this flag tells you that a serious emergency has arisen and that there is either a complete course blockage, or that too many emergency vehicles are needed to permit the race or practice session to continue. When you see the Red Flag

pull off to the side of the course and stop, making certain to check your rear view mirror to assure yourself that the guy behind won't be climbing up your tail pipes in the process! The reason for pulling off the track: the red is shown only in an extreme emergency. It's essential that fire trucks, ambulances, wreckers and such have a completely clear path to the incident. If you cannot drive entirely off the course, park as close to the edge as you possibly can.

CHECKERED FLAG - Shown at the Start-Finish line, only, this flag is used to signal the end of a race or a practice session. In a race, the first car to get the Checker is the winner, which in a sense is the name of the game. However, all subsequent cars will receive the Checker, as well. Once you've been Checkered, cut your speed, take one cool-off lap around the course and then come into the pit lane and thence into the paddock. PLEASE DO NOT STOP IN THE MIDDLE OF THE PIT LANE FOR THE PLAUDITS OF YOUR FRIENDS. THAT TENDS TO TIE-UP TRAFFIC AND CAUSE CONFUSION. IF YOU WIN AND THERE'S TIME FOR A VICTORY LAP, YOU'LL BE ADVISED.

RE-ENTRY PROCEDURE

If you have spun off-course or, somehow, managed to wander into the boon-docks, there are two ways to get back into the action: a right way and a wrong way.

The wrong way is to simply ignore the risks, put your foot into it and ram your way back onto the course. Trouble with that way is the fact that you chance getting mixed up in traffic -- in which case you're likely to wind up back off the course again. Only, this time, with a couple of other cars on top of you.

The right way is to wait for the "Re-entry Man" at the nearest flag station to signal you aboard. You can identify him readily; he wears a pair of fluorescent orange gloves. Here's how the re-entry procedure works:

1. The re-entry man will approach your car and hold up one arm. He's asking if your engine is going and whether you're ready to move.
2. If all is copacetic, you respond by raising your arm in reply. If it isn't, raise both arms. He'll wait, while you play around getting your car started. When you're ready, then raise your arm and the procedure begins.
3. The re-entry man will motion you to follow him to a spot from which you can safely take off. Move slowly. It's not considered good taste to run the re-entry man down.
4. When he gets you where he wants you, he'll hold up both arms and move off to the side. In the meantime, if there's traffic, he'll be watching for a hole in it into which you can safely re-enter. If there's no traffic, he'll wave you on course without delay.

5. Assuming traffic, he will point at the car after which he wants you to enter. As soon as that car is past, he'll wave you onto the track. If he sees another car coming too quickly, he'll throw up his arms again to hold you in position. Watch him -- have faith in him. He can see a lot that you can't see. And he's interested in your welfare. So do as he says, with patience and fortitude, and you may yet win that day.
6. If you cannot restart your car you and the re-entry man must push it well out of the way into a safe position. Remember, where you went off someone else could go off, too. Cars are like hound dogs in heat. Unless they're well off course, they're sure to attract other cars. With unfortunate results.

And by the way, once your car is out of the way, get out of the way yourself. Walk over to the flag station. They have positive protection. And what's more, they can report your problem -- and your needs -- to the control operator.

If there is no re-entry man available where you go off course, re-entering is up to you. But make sure that when you do re-enter on your own, move your car to a position where your tires will bite rather than simply spin. And keep your head on a swivel, to make sure that the course is clear enough behind you -- and ahead -- to allow for safe re-entry.

Okay. So much for flagging procedures while operating at another club's event. Now, for the way we do it when we're on our own.

2. OPERATING AT A VSCCA - ONLY EVENT

Because of the paucity of the Corner Worker crew at our own events, we have to follow a slightly different procedure.

The flags and their meanings remain the same. However, we're rarely in a position to man all stations, so as a rule we concentrate our person-power at those locations where they are most likely to be needed.

As a rule, the Black Flag station will remain unmanned; all Black Flagging will be done at the Start/Finish line. Same thing applies to the Blue and Red flags, so it clearly becomes more important than ever for you to cock a glance at the Starter each time you come within eyeshot of the Starter.

Also, because our Flag Stations are so lightly crewed, it's difficult for the Corner Workers to handle an emergency without an assist. For that reason, in the event of a serious emergency at our of our own events, it may be necessary to Red Flag the practice or race so that we can shift personnel to the scene.

SINCE OUR COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM (LARGELY COMPRISED OF CB UNITS) IS SOMEWHAT LESS THAN EFFECTIVE, WE MAY NOT BE ABLE TO SHOW A WAVING YELLOW OR BLACK AT ALL STATIONS AS A RED FLAG WARNING.

NOTE: IF THE EMERGENCY OCCURS BEYOND THE VIEW OF A MANNED STATION, THE FIRST DRIVER TO PASS THE INCIDENT SHOULD NOT STOP TO ASSIST. HE OR SHE SHOULD CONTINUE AT SPEED TO START/FINISH AND REPORT IT TO THE STARTER SO THAT EMERGENCY PROCEDURES CAN BE MOUNTED WITHOUT DELAY. IMPORTANTLY, CONTINUING "AT SPEED" DOES NOT IMPLY THAT THE SPEED SHOULD BE SO GREAT THAT THE DRIVER WINDS UP IN HIS OR HER OWN EMERGENCY.

If you elect to stop at the incident, to help, PLEASE keep two things in mind.

1. Park well off the course, at some distance from the incident. Otherwise you may block emergency vehicles from access to the driver and vehicle.
2. Unless the vehicle is afire, DO NOT TOUCH THE DRIVER! Skilled help will be there quickly, and many an injury has been severely compounded by inexperienced efforts to extricate a driver from an impacted car.

III. STARTING PROCEDURES

For the most part, all VSCCA sprint races will begin with "rolling" starts, where competitors, in two ranks, drive a slow parade lap around the course before receiving the green starting flag. (NOTE: that's a rolling start, not a flying start. Speed-down is the word -- until you're given a start.) If a pace car is available, the pack will follow the pace car. If there isn't one on tap, the cars on the pole and #2 position will pace the field.

Some drivers prefer a standing start, where the competitors, standing at the Start-Finish line and gridded in a 3-2-3-2 configuration, are given the starting flag and take off from a stock-still position. This is pulse-pounding, to be sure, what with the sudden ear-splitting roar of the gunned engines, the shriek of tires (somewhat reminiscent of a parking garage car jockey taking off for the nether regions of his storage area) and the smoke. But experience has shown that all too often, once the smoke has cleared, one discovers several cars still standing on the grid, sandwiched together like a Reuben's Special.

Someone, it seems, has stalled. And the cars behind simply won't take "no" for an answer.

So we go the rolling start method. SCCA, IMSA, USAC and most other racing organizations have proved it to be safer.

And, anyhow, it's more exciting to the spectators.

Here, then, is the starting procedure for sprint races.

1. The cars are gridded in starting order either on the "False Grid" or at the Start/Finish line. If it's at the False Grid, the cars may be in single file. If on the Start/Finish, they'll be in double files, with the fastest cars in front and the slower cars behind.

If the course is clear for an immediate start, drivers; once gridded, will keep their engines idling. If the course is not clear and a delay is anticipated, the Starter will signal the drivers to shut down engines by drawing his hand horizontally across his throat.

2. When the course is clear, the Starter will signal you to fire up your engine by rotating a furled yellow flag above head. He will then raise one arm. The fact that his fist is clenched is significant only of his tension. What he's doing is asking, "Are you ready to roll?"
3. When your engine is started you, too, are to hold up one arm. This signals the Starter that you're prepared to move out. Before doing so, however, make sure that you are ready to move out: that your helmet is on, with face shield in position, that your gloves are on, that your harness is secure, that your driver's suit is all buttoned up, that you have enough gas and that your engine isn't about to stall out.
4. Once all drivers have raised their arms, the starter will bring his or her arm down. At this point, drivers should also bring their arms down. (Note: please do not drive off with your arm still in the raised position.)
5. If you are the False Grid when you undertake the above exercise, you will be signaled to move out to the True Grid (the rumors that this phase was derived from the title of a popular John Wayne film of the '70's have not been verified).
6. The Starter will be standing at the Start/Finish line, with the Pace Car (if there is one) positioned some 20 or so feet beyond. As you emerge from the False Grid, a Grid Steward will signal which file you are to follow. The pole car and the #2 car will drive slowly up to the starting line and stop. All other cars will follow and, on reaching the grid will stop about two or three feet behind the car ahead. DO NOT SHUT OFF YOUR ENGINE UNLESS SIGNALLED TO DO SO BY THE STARTER. (If the start is to be delayed for any reason, the Starter will signal a shut down by drawing a hand horizontally across his or her throat.)

7. If you've been required to shut down, once the situation is again "Go," the Start-up procedures covered in points 1 thru 4 will be duplicated at the Start/Finish line.
8. Once the Grid is prepared to move out, the Starter will turn to the pace car and signal it to move off. COMPETITORS WILL STILL HOLD THEIR POSITIONS, IMMOBILE.
9. Once the pace car is well on its way, the Starter will turn back to you and motion you off. If there is no pace car, the Starter will not turn away from the Grid, but will simply signal you to move off. One point: the Starter stands between the two files of cars as they move out. Please do not begin scrubbing-in before you pass him -- and make every effort to avoid hitting him as you move by.
10. Following the pace car, you will make a parade lap around the course. Speed on this pace lap is to be maintained at a level fast enough to keep the cars from overheating or fouling -- but slow enough that the lower powered cars can keep up with the pack. The two lead cars, the "pole" car and the car adjacent will serve as a guide for the field. 50 mph is usually the normal pace.
11. As you enter the main straight, the pace car will pull ahead and turn off into the pit lane, leaving you on your own. REMAIN ON THE COURSE. DO NOT FOLLOW THE PACE CAR INTO THE PITS!
12. As you approach the Start-Finish line, keep an eye on the Starter, who will now be on the bridge. As you near the bridge, the Starter will watch to see that certain requirements are met:
 - a) The pack must be grouped well, without stragglers.
 - b) Speed of the pack must be maintained at the pace lap level.
 - c) All cars must remain in their files, without beginning to "jockey" into passing positions.
13. If all requirements are met, the Starter will whip up a green flag and enthusiastically wave you on your way.
14. IF THE REQUIREMENTS ARE NOT MET ... if speed is increased before the green flag falls, if the pack is too strung out, or if cars are already setting up for passing, THE GREEN FLAG WILL NOT BE SHOWN. The starter will either shake his head or raise his arm -- or do both and the pack will be required to make another pace lap -- this time without the pace car.

In this event, the pole car and the car adjacent will be fully responsible for maintaining the pace lap at the proper low speed. Should a no-start occur several times, the pack may be shown a black flag. When this happens, the cars should not pull into the pit lane but, rather, remain on the course, proceeding to the Start-Finish line and stop, awaiting re-gridding (and, chances are, something of a lacing by the Chief Steward.) The pace car will then be brought out again, and we'll all try the whole bit over again.

NOTE: AS YOU CAN SEE, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT ALL DRIVERS WATCH STARTER ON THE BRIDGE AS YOU APPROACH IT FOR THE START.

RESTARTING AFTER RED FLAG

If a Red Flag has been thrown during a race and the race is to be continued, the procedure for the restart is as follows:

1. Cars will be lined up in single file in the order in which they passed the Start/Finish line on the lap immediately preceding the showing of the Red Flag. In other words, you will not be lined up according to your racing position. The leaders may well be located somewhere in the middle or even at the end of the file.
2. Engine starting and arm-raising procedures (items numbers 1 thru 4 in the starting procedures) will be followed.
3. The Starter will then signal the cars off. They will proceed in single file for a slow parade lap around the course. NOTE: as in any pace lap, this lap is to be slow moving. Cars must remain in single file entirely around the course. The leader must also keep an eye on the rear-view mirror to be certain that no gaps occur. If the file opens up, the leader should slow down.
4. Once the cars come onto the straight which leads to the Start/Finish line, if the Starter is satisfied that the formation is correct, he will wave the green flag, and racing will be resumed.

PRACTICE-TO-START SESSIONS

There may be occasions where the start of a sprint race will take place immediately after the end of a practice session. This is most likely to take place when our race is part of an overall program, such as at the U.S. Grand Prix or an IMSA or SCCA race.

When the program calls for such scheduling, the Starter will show a Black Flag at the Start-Finish line as a signal that the practice session is over. All cars should then make a complete circuit of the course -- at reduced speed -- and, on returning to the Start/Finish line, remain on the course. However, they should pull

off to the side to allow proper and uncomplicated gridding of the cars, preparatory for the race.

DO NOT, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES, STOP WHEN YOU SEE THE BLACK FLAG. JUST CONTINUE AROUND THE COURSE AND STOP WHEN YOU GET BACK TO HOME BASE.

As a final point: Over the course of the season, you will be started by many different Starters, but you will encounter one Starter who has an extra flagging component in his kit of equipment -- a hangman's noose. When he displays the noose, the message should be loud and clear. "Hang in there. You have one lap to go!"

* * * * *

This, then, is your VSCCA Guide to sprint racing.

Some of what we have covered here may be "old hat" to you; some of it may be new. But, fact is, ALL of it is important and, since we have no way of separating the familiar from the unfamiliar, we have covered all the bases.

It is our earnest hope that what you find in this manual will be useful to you. It is also our earnest hope that some of it will even help keep you out of trouble -- or give you an assist if you do get into difficulty.

Important thing is, there is no desire on anyone's part to set up rules which will diminish the enjoyment of membership in the VSCCA -- or the pleasures of racing. But we must all remember that racing involves an inherent risk.

Our wish, in the application and enforcement of the procedures and rules written here is to help keep that risk to a minimum -- and to enable you to maintain your fun at its highest, safest level.

Have fun, fellow VSCCA members.

And lots and lots of luck!