



Just follow the car in front

Derek Wilson

Most of us remember our first race meeting. I do, partly because it wasn't that long ago, at Ruapuna. There seemed to be heaps of things to do, such as entering etc. I was using one of Andy Neale's cars and Andy was preoccupied organising me and doing a few introductions. All well and good except we managed to miss the drivers briefing. Normally this is a good opportunity to check out who is wearing the flashiest driving suit, as well as listening to the officials expectations of driver's behaviour, which are usually forgotten on lap one! Well we missed all that and the fact that we would use the *Dipper* and leave out the infield. By sheer chance we found out just before I left. Andy's instructions were abbreviated to "follow the car in front" which at least was easy to remember. Drivers meetings may have a place ...

The warm-up lap can be an interesting experience for newbies. In my case I was under the impression that this was when tyres and brakes were carefully warmed up in a very considered way. I was somewhat shocked to see the rest of the field tear off into the distance, seemingly missing each other by inches as they weaved and braked with gay abandon. By the time I arrived at the starting grid I was firmly of the opinion that I was the only sensible person amongst a bunch of lunatics. That, of course, hasn't changed as time has gone by. Just the same, warmup laps cannot be taken lightly.

Leave your helmet on

My first trip to Levels coincided with an endurance meeting, so practise consisted of the Porsches, Ferrari, Corvette and others, going out for their 20 minute practices session. The next category going out to practice was single seaters ... me. After a couple of hours of this I was starting to feel a bit conspicuous, when a certain James Dicey turned up with the Spectrum he had just bought. Wonderful, two Formula Fords. However I couldn't help noticing that James didn't warm his tyres up (or didn't know to). I told him next time to follow me and on the basis of a couple of meetings experience I would show him what to do. We were half way down the back straight and I was giving the Swift the big weave just to get the message across, when all of a sudden the bloody thing spun around, shot off the track and threw itself into the tyre wall opposite the start-finish line, all of this just metres in front of an incredulous J. Dicey. The moral of the story is two-fold. Firstly there is a happy medium with warmup laps, and secondly, when you are sitting on the back of the tow truck and your car is swinging from the crane, as you pass the Porsches, Ferrari, Corvette et al in pit lane, leave your helmet on; they may think it is someone else!

The smell of burning rubber

Starts can be an interesting experience for the beginner. My first was less than auspicious. For whatever reason Ruapuna has large box numbers as well as small ones. In effect each box has two numbers, and they are not the same. Grid positions are based on the large ones. Unfortunately, as we trundled up to take our positions, I started reading the little ones. I realised the error of my ways as I was virtually alongside the box I was supposed to be in. A quick flick of the wheel and sudden stop didn't provide the solution I was hoping for. The Swift ended up at a mighty strange angle forward of the box. Needless to say the *Starter* balked at letting the field go until I was straight, a process that wasn't helped by the fact that I couldn't find reverse! Eventually a couple of official types climbed over the pit wall and sorted things out. I did get the distinct impression that if I was to start a charity at that moment, they wouldn't be contributors.



Choosing the right revs can be in the lap of the Gods. Obviously the rev's are built up as the red lights come on one by one but the last thing anyone needs to do is have a quick glance at the rev counter when the fifth one is on. I tend to follow the advice given to me early on by Steve Heffernan, "Rev the.....out of it". Those of you who know Heff will appreciate the missing word isn't "daylights". Starts done this way can be fun. Stalling never happens, and those rear tyres heat up real fast. Another side effect reminds me of a TV matchmaking show where the young man was asked what he would do if his date incinerated her bra. He replied that he wouldn't mind because he loved the smell of burning rubber!! What a guy, we need him in our Club!



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