

## **Sidecar Orientation for New Racers -- A Typical Race Day**

### **1. Registration:**

You must register before you will be allowed to do anything else. This is where you indicate which classes you wish to enter (sidecar obviously), pay any registration fees required and most importantly, sign all the required forms and waivers. Note that both driver and passenger must sign all the forms and there are even waivers to be signed by your pit crew. You will be required to produce, or purchase, a valid race license (both driver and passenger). For 2001, in addition to a SRA Competition License, the only other license required is a R.A.C.E. License. Upon completion of registering, you will receive a registration sticker, which must be affixed to your rig (near the front number plate) before proceeding to step 2.

### **2. Tech Inspection:**

Before being allowed to venture onto the track, all bikes must pass a technical inspection. This inspection is carried out by the race officials to establish that your rig is in a safe condition to be raced. Another sticker placed on or around your registration sticker indicates successful completion of this inspection. It is also necessary to have your helmets inspected so bring them along to tech. For 2002 you will require a SNELL 2000 helmet. Also, inspected at your first race is all your riding gear (leathers, gloves, boots etc). At your first event of each year, your rig must be inspected by one of the SRA Technical Inspectors. This inspection covers a little more of the sidecar specific items that a regular race inspection might miss.

### **3. Rider's Meeting:**

Attendance at any scheduled Rider's Meeting is mandatory for all competitors (drivers and passengers) and penalties can be assessed for being absent. The meetings are usually held first thing in the morning, before any racing or practice begins, often as early as 8 a.m. Issues such as safety, procedures, flags, schedule changes, etc are discussed. At the conclusion of the Rider's Meeting, there is often a sidecar specific meeting to discuss points relating only to the SRA.

### **4. Practice:**

On a race day there will be a least one scheduled practice for the sidecars. Check the posted schedule carefully and figure out what time you should start getting ready. A good idea is to keep an eye on the other sidecar teams, if you see them starting to get ready, maybe you should also. Until that time comes, sit down and try to relax, or madly finish

assembling your bike, which ever applies. If you want as much practice as possible, make your way to the pre-grid area a few minutes early, that way you will be ready as soon as they track is 'green' for the sidecars.

## **5. Race:**

See Step 4!! Before heading out onto the track, the teams will gather on the 'pre-grid'. This is an area where teams can line up as if they were on the track. Be sure to check on your allocated grid space and pull into the proper spot. Look around to see what teams are in front of or beside you. This will help you when getting into position on the start grid. It is important to know where you are supposed to line up on the grid, as a quick start will help to prevent engines and clutches from overheating. A race will have a warm up and cool down lap. The warm up lap is for warming up your tires and to take note of any changes in track conditions (oil, rubber, cement dust, moved brake markers, etc). Do NOT crash on the warm up lap, as this is very embarrassing! When pulling onto the start grid, there will be a race official with a red flag standing on the start/finish line. Other officials will be present to point you to your assigned grid spot. Once everyone is in position, the official with the red flag will move off the track. The field is now under 'starter's orders' and will race once the flag is dropped or the lights go green. The specific starting procedures are discussed at the rider's meeting. The cool down lap is just that, a cool down lap, and should be taken at slower than a racing lap. You should be careful not to pass any rigs in front of you as they may actually still be racing.

### **Flags**

Flags are displayed for your benefit, learn their meanings and react appropriately. Flags may be displayed in the corners, at the start/finish line and from the pit exit. At different tracks or with different racing organizations, flags may have subtly different meanings and these differences will be explained at the rider's meeting. If the marshals are very busy, they may plant a flag (stick it in the ground at the edge of the track) in which case the flag usually takes on its stationary meaning.

#### **A white flag**

can be used at the start/finish line to start a race. More and more often, a green flag, a National flag or lights are being used in place of the white flag. A stationary white flag displayed during a race or practice means there is a service vehicle (ambulance, tow-truck, etc) somewhere on the track. A waving white flag indicates you are coming up to the service vehicle, which is between the waving flag and the next corner or flagging station. There is no passing allowed from the time you sight the waving flag until you have passed the service vehicle(s). If you are unable to avoid passing someone, let them pass you back as soon as safely possible. Note that it is the marshal's discretion as to whether a pass was made within sight of a waved flag.

#### **A red flag**

is used to stop the race or practice session. When you see a red flag you should put your arm up (to notify teams behind you) and come to a controlled stop at the side of the track. You can then proceed very slowly to the next marshaling station and wait there for further instructions. Note that the red flag is displayed in the case of a very serious incident. It will initially be waved, in order to get everyone's attention and then held stationary. Be careful not to really 'jump on the binders' when you see a red flag. If there is someone right behind you, they may not see the flag at the same instant you do and may run into the back of you.

### **The yellow flag**

indicates that you should exercise caution. A stationary yellow flag indicates a minor problem that is off the racing line in the next part of the track or a serious incident more than one flagging station ahead. A waving yellow flag indicates a problem that is on the racing line or a serious incident in the section of the track immediately following the flag. There is no passing allowed from the time you sight the waving flag until you have passed the incident(s). If you are unable to avoid passing someone, let them pass you back as soon as safely possible. Note that it is the marshal's discretion as to whether a pass was made within sight of a waved flag. If a marshal has taken the time to pick up and wave two yellow flags, or is waving one flag rather vigorously, you can take it that there is a very serious incident ahead. In cases such as this you should also be on the look out for a red flag within the next few corners. The yellow flag is also used when a passenger becomes 'dislodged' from his/her sidecar. The handling of the sidecar is dependent upon the passenger being in the proper position. This is especially true when it comes to cornering. If a passenger is in the wrong location, or is not on the rig when it enters a corner, the driver could lose control and possibly even have the rig flip over. To prevent this, the driver must be informed as soon as possible if they have lost their passenger. Since the flagging marshal will already have the yellow flag in their hands, this is used as the indication of a lost passenger. While the yellow flag is usually displayed either stationary or waved, when used to indicate a lost passenger, it will be held over the head with both hands and shaken back and forth vigorously. To assist with notifying the correct rig, the flag can also be pointed at the particular driver and then shaken again.

### **The yellow and red striped flag**

indicates slippery conditions. The marshal will attempt to point to the slippery section of the track DO NOT GO THERE! Slippery conditions can be caused by oil, gravel, straw, mud little bits of fairings, etc. If the marshal is pointing to the sky it probably means it is starting to rain. If the slippery condition is going to persist (e.g. rain) the marshal will often plant the flag to free up their hands for other activities. Note that if on a later lap the flag is again being waved it may indicate a worsening or additional slippery condition.

### **The black flag**

indicates there is something wrong with you or your rig. Pull off the racing line and check to see if you are losing fluids or any other major pieces of your rig. If you are, then

pull off the track. Otherwise, continue on around the track, staying off the racing line as much as possible, and report to where the black flag was displayed. Often the officials will display the number of the bike they are trying to give the black flag to, just to prevent any confusion as to whether or not they meant YOU.

### **The blue and green flags,**

rolled up and crossed at the start/finish line indicate the race is half over.

**The blue flag** with a diagonal white stripe, when waved at the start/finish line indicates last lap of the race. Sometimes a white flag can be used for this.

**The checkered flag** when waved at the start finish line means the race is over, take your cool down lap.

### **A Word on Marshals**

Marshals are volunteers! They volunteer their time to try and help you to be able to race and from doing something stupid (like piling into an existing accident). Marshals are human, just like you and not perfect, so please show them a little understanding.

At each track, the marshals have established stands or stations in each corner. During practice and warm ups, take note of these locations. Often, the flagging marshal will display the yellow flag on warm up laps or the first laps of a practice to let riders know where the flagging stations are. Then when entering a corner during a race, it only takes a glance to pick up any information the marshals are trying to communicate to you. Soon this will be second nature and you will see and react to all the signals without having to look around for them.

Additional information about a situation can be gained simply by observing the behavior of the marshals. For instance a flag being waved very vigorously can indicate a more serious situation than if the flag was being waved slowly. A marshal will often indicate which side of the track you should head to with hand signals. A pushing away motion indicates the opposite side, while a pulling motion means the same side. A marshal standing at the edge of the track with a broom in hand indicates there recently was or still is debris on the track surface.

In general fire extinguishers are located at the marshal stations. If you notice a minor fire, it may be wise to proceed to the next marshal station (getting as close as is safely possible). However, that is a call you will have to make at the time.

### **On Track Etiquette**

An alternate title to this section might be "Rules of Thumb and Right of Way and Safety". The first rule is NOBODY WINS PRACTICE! During a race it is acceptable to take a

calculated risk to improve your finishing position. Race speeds, passing and even dicing are acceptable during practice, as long as you keep it within your known abilities.

### **Going into a corner,**

a competitor's rig, which is abreast or nearly abreast (i.e. within the driver's peripheral vision) and has the inside line, should be given the right of way. This does not mean you necessarily have to back off. If there is room, you may wish to continue around the corner beside the other team or you may be able to accelerate away. This rule of thumb is primarily designed to minimize the wrecked paint job, serious crashes and injuries which would occur were you to turn into the other rig.

### **When back-markers are being lapped,**

it is the responsibility of the overtaking driver to make a clean pass. It is also the duty of the back-marker to drive in a predictable manner. For example, if you start a straightaway on the left side and you wish to be on the right side at the end, try moving over gradually, rather than swerving sharply at some random point. The best thing for a back-marker to do is to follow their normal racing line and not worry about what is behind you.

**If you encounter some sort of problem on the track which causes you to be moving at a significantly lower speed,** you should warn teams behind you by holding up your arm (driver-passenger..or both). You are also required to raise your arm several corners before (and as often as possible) prior to entering the pits. In the last corner before the pit exit, you should move to the side of the track on which the pit exit is. Also, if you have a problem at the start of a race, you should get your arm up immediately.

### **OOPS!! (Or what to do when things go wrong)**

There are two types of problems, minor and major. A minor problem is one you can drive away from. In this case you should first determine that both driver and passenger have not sustained any injuries. Next, quickly check the bike for any damage which would make driving it dangerous and if you find anything amiss, park the bike. If this is in a practice, carefully drive to the pits for a closer inspection. If you are in a race you may continue cautiously. Once back in the pits, carefully inspect the bike and repair and damage. Any bike that has been damaged, must be re-inspected at tech before going back out onto the track.

A major problem is one you cannot drive away from. Again the first priority is the health of the driver and passenger. Assuming you both were not hurt, you should make your way back to the pits. If you have to leave the bike, make sure it is in a safe a location as

possible. You will have to consult the schedule and/or race officials to find out when you will be allowed to go collect it. Often, time is scheduled for the retrieval of disabled bikes and you should be ready and waiting with your tow vehicle when given the word. If you plan to race again that weekend, safe repairs must be made and the rig put through tech again, before being allowed back on the track.

If you part company with your rig (fall off), try to relax as much as possible. Avoid trying to brace yourself for the impact, as this tends to lead towards broken bones. Try to attain a sliding condition (usually this comes after flying and tumbling). Once sliding, continue to relax and try to maximize your stability and friction by spreading out your arms and legs. If parts of you start getting warm, gently roll onto other parts. If you are headed for a solid obstacle, try to avoid it by rolling to one side. You will probably find sliding much more preferable to tumbling, especially on pavement. Back protectors can provide the wearer with a more comfortable and less damaging slide. Once you think you have stopped, it is a good idea to count to 3 before trying to get up as quite often you may still be moving. If you find yourself lying in the middle of the track, do not panic! If you are surrounded by moving rigs, don't move. Once things have quieted down look for any stragglers and then get clear of the track. Remember that any driver is going to do everything they can to avoid hitting you, but if you start dancing back and forth all bets are off.

A lot of times an incident will happen and be over before you know it. With little or no time to react, you have to just go with the flow and deal with the outcome. Remember that the track marshals are there to help you. If their assistance is required, please listen to them. They saw the incident and how hard you may have hit and have the experience necessary to deal with it.