



ON-TRACK CONDUCT

Driving Guide and Definitions

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On-Track Conduct

This guide is written to describe and define a set of standards for maneuvers that represent driving offenses common to racing karts on sprint tracks.. It is intended to narrow the gray area of judgment with driver violation, and improve the safety of racing. Drivers, Corner-workers, and Flag-persons should be familiar with these definitions.

The offenses may be unintended or intended. With an unintended offense, the judgment for violation is based on what happens after the offense. With an intended offense, the judgment is usually immediate.

It is the Drivers responsibility to comply with these rules. It is the Corner-worker and Flag-persons responsibility to report violations, and if necessary, monitor the offending competitors for repeated violation.

These standards were composed as a public service and are freely available to any club, organization, track, event, or promoter for utilization as they see fit. The author accepts no responsibility for any damages, injuries or death that some twisted lawyer may try to conjure up in the future as a result of using these standards. Any conditions deemed omitted or neglected are the responsibility of the users to add in.

Summary of drivers offenses

Offenses on Straights

- Crowding
- Chopping
- Blocking

Offense on Turns

- Stuffing
- Choking

General Offenses

- Bumping
- Brake-Checking
- Careless Track Re-Entry

Penalties

- Warning – Minor offense, first time
- P-X – Loss of one or more positions
- DQ – Limited – removed from race but awarded last place points
- DQ – removed from race with loss of all race points
- Ban – DQ with event ejection

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1.0 Straight Sections and offenses

The Straight is the section between the turn exit point and the turn entry. This includes the braking point prior to the turn entry point on a natural line. The lead Kart does not necessarily control the line on a straight.

Defending is a legal maneuver so long as no contact is made. This is a gradual move off the natural line to the left or right, and may only be made once. In case contact is made, it may become an offense depending on the sequence of events as defined below.

1.1 Crowding (also known as Nerfing)

If contact is made resulting from the lead Kart moving into the passing Kart, the lead Kart is guilty of Crowding. This is usually an unintended offense.

The judgment should be based what happens next;

- If the lead Kart leaves room for the passing Kart, then the offense is dropped.
- If the lead Kart continues to crowd, the offense is sustained and should result in penalty – either Disqualification (DQ) or one position set back.

1.2 Chopping

If contact is made resulting from the passing Kart moving into the lead Kart, the passing Kart is guilty of Chopping. This is usually an intended offense, if it is done on the Straight. As soon as entry into the turn is reached, the entry line belongs to the leading Kart.

1.3 Blocking

If the lead Kart chooses to Defend, they are reminded this is a one-move action. They may shift off-line, but in doing so, they automatically provide right-of-way to the passing Kart to the side opposite they moved. If the defending kart does move back on-line prior to the normal point where the kart would have to move back on-line to make entry into the turn, they may be guilty of Blocking. Blocking is an intended offense, and is sometimes easier to judge when the Blocker looks behind them.

It is the Flag-persons option to call this penalty. It is recommended that the first time is a warning, and the second time a penalty offense.

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2.0 Turn Sections and offenses

Turns begin at the actual turn-in point not the braking point. This point can vary a little depending on the entry line of the Kart – a wide line turns in as much as few feet earlier than a narrow line. This element widens the gray area of judgment considerably. If the passing Kart is on the inside and turns in later, the right-of-way may shift from the outside to the inside Kart dynamically. Either way, the Karts are going to go through side-by-side. This gray area needs to be clear for the Driver and Corner-worker to call. The Drivers must also yield to each other when negotiating a turn side-by-side. This is the most controversial call to make.

The actual change on track from straight to turn should be marked as the last paint stripe between the straight and turn. (It would also be recommended that the paint stripe for each of these “zone separations” be a different color than stripes for start/finish or braking zones). This should be positioned midway between the widest radius entry and the narrowest radius entry to the turn.

Conditions of the layout of each turn at any given track will vary, so the zone stripes may tend to be moved up or back at the discretion of a track official. Reason being that in some turn layouts the correction margin may be longer or shorter. Correction margin is a distance added or subtracted.

Examples of a correction margin;

Added distance may be required on a turn that is a high speed yet narrow width. If the kart making the pass is not quite up to the peripheral view it may take a little more distance to fall back. Adding a correction margin of a kart length or two can make it much easier to call, like when a passer tries to “stuff” their kart underneath a leader.

Subtracted distance may be applied on a turn with a wider exit path or decreasing radius that allows a wider exit path than normally taken. Also in cases where outside passes are often made zone stripe may be moved deeper into a turn.

In any event, a zone stripe should be based on the conditions of the track and turn. Not all track owners are willing to add zone stripes feature, but it certainly makes for cleaner and safer racing.

2.1 Stuffing

If the passing kart tries to “stuff” their kart underneath a leading kart and contact results, the zone stripe can practically eliminate any question of who the offending driver is under normal racing conditions. If the passing driver had not yet reached the lead at the zone, they should not attempt to continue with the pass by gaining the lead at the apex. By the apex they should be no further ahead of the “relative” position they held on reaching the zone stripe.

The above description does not mean the passing driver has to now find a way to back off by the apex when making a charge, it only means that if contact is involved, it is clearly their offense.

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2.2 Choking

Choking is when a passing kart makes the pass at or before the zone stripe and contact results. Choking can be an offense initiated by either driver. Just because the passing driver makes the pass at or before the zone stripe does not mean the former leader now has to yield entirely. It means they must now make room for each other. The inside kart must stay to the inside close to the apex, and the outside kart must stay close to the outside on the exit. Its almost as though there are now two virtual lanes that each driver should be confined to. In the case of contact, if it is clear to the officials which kart was moving beyond their lane, the judgment could be against either kart.

Choking is difficult call of all to make, and often is defined as a “racing incident” the equivalent of joint fault.

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3.0 General Offenses

General offenses can occur on straights or turns.

3.1 Bumping

In a turn, when the trailing Kart enters on the same line as the lead Kart, and the lead Kart is off the brakes, and contact is made from behind, it may be Bumping. This may or may not be an intended offense.

The judgment is based on;

- If the trailing Kart was attempting a pass, but backed off and was at the threshold of braking, this may have been unintentional.
- If the trailing Kart inflicts incident that does not result in a loss of position by the lead Kart, it should result in at least a warning.
- If the Lead Kart is bumped off-track (from behind only), it should result in a penalty.

Bumping on straight is may be unintentional in cases where a leader misses a shift or may have a slower exit speed then the trailing kart anticipated. But it may also be very intentional as a way to intimidate the leading driver, to “hook up” in a draft, ore even as an “improper passing signal”.

Occasional light taps may be tolerated once or twice before a warning is given. Even the lightest tap after a warning should result in DQ.

3.2 Brake-Checking

Brake-Checking is when a lead Kart brakes extraordinarily hard to cause someone close behind to hit them. It is usually intended to discourage a potentially faster Kart from passing on the next lap. If there are no causes such as traffic in front of the lead Kart, or too hot of an entry into a turn, it could be considered Brake-Checking.

Corner-workers are advised to make this call carefully. This is an intentional offense; however this call requires significant judgment in most cases. It is recommended that a warning be issued first, and a stiff penalty be assessed on the second occurrence.

Brake Checking can result in serious injuries if it is applied in certain circumstances. There should have very low tolerance to those who commit a second offense of brake-checking.

3.3 Careless Track Entry

If at anytime a competitor leaves the track surface, it is up to them to re-enter the paved racing surface safely and not cause other competitors to change their line as any sort of “dodging” maneuver.

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4.0 General Considerations Drivers must realize

4.1 Close battles

If you are in the leading position with a closely trailing competitor and you make a mistake, you are likely to be passed. Say you attempt a pass on another competitor in turn 1, but can't quite do it. You are likely to go off of your normal line, and lose speed. If the competitor behind you takes advantage of that, use your head. If they are right behind you, chances are they may be able to overtake you. They may be able to do this in places that they would otherwise not stand a chance to pass.

4.2 Karts with Different Set-ups or Driving Style

Some Karts may be faster than you in areas giving them an advantage. They may brake later in some turns, accelerate faster out of some turns, or be faster through a turn. Likewise, some may be slower. You will get the chance to see both sides through a race weekend of each competitor with the inverted starting orders. Again, use your head. Don't give up the war to win one battle.

4.3 The Race Directors and Corner-workers are the Judges & Juries

The Race Officials are always right, even when they are wrong.

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5.0 Penalties

Penalties for offenses should be weighed against the intent and risk factors.

Some offenses may be unintentional, and if the competitor is given warning it is up to the competitor to on their best behavior during the remainder of the race or even event.

Some offenses may be unavoidable, yet unintentional. Whether it is a simple driving mistake, or a set of unusual conditions that lead to an offense may be considered.

Some offenses may be intentional.

The Race Director is normally the party responsible for identifying the appropriate penalty, but in some cases may not be able to clearly identify the level of intent on behalf of the offending competitor.

Repeated offenses indicate a competitor's disrespect to the organization and their fellow competitors.

Risk factors of an offense should be weighted. As the risk of injury rises with a potential offense so to should the penalty as both a deterrent and if necessary, as a reason to remove the competitor as the risk warrants.

Generally the following offenses are generally considered unintentional and lower risk that should result in a warning on the first event. Lower risk in this context means some minor contact was made, but not enough to have put a competitor in harm or off-track, or loose a position. *(Note that all offenses can be intentional).*

- Crowding
- Chopping
- Choking
- Bumping

The recommended penalty for the above is a furled black flag for warning, displayed in a manner that the offending competitor should see it. The flag should be pointed at that competitor on a straight section with the flagpole actually pointed at them as they go by. The competitor should be informed in the drivers meeting as the black flag and warning procedures.

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In the event an offending competitor commits an unintentional offense resulting causing another competitor to go off-track, or loosing a position, they may be given an additional penalty at after the race is complete in fairness to the affected competitor. It is recommended that the offending moved back in position(s) as deemed appropriate by the Race Director for the particular offense.

If a competitor repeats an offense after being warned, it can be considered an intentional offense.

All offenses can be considered intentional depending on the situation. Penalties for intentional offenses can range from;

- Warning – Minor offense, first time (*lower risk*)
- P-X – Loss of one or more positions (*affected outcome of other competitor*)
- DQ – Limited – removed from race but awarded last place points *appeared intent with affects to outcome of other competitor*)
- DQ – removed from race with loss of all race points (*clear intent with affects to outcome of other competitor*)
- Ban – DQ with event ejection (*intentional high risk situation*)