

## **Beginners guide to Short Track Series – your first event**

If this is your first event, you are probably not sure what to expect.

This document should answer some of your questions:



Author at speed demonstrating how an 20-year-old Porsche is still faster than an inferior brand!

### **Where is the event?**

The POC STS series is a single-venue championship held at the Streets-of-Willow track in Rosamond ([www.willowsspringsraceway.com](http://www.willowsspringsraceway.com)). It is about 6 miles west on the Rosamond Blvd exit from I-14. The exact address is *3500 75th Street West, Rosamond, CA 93560* if you want to mapquest it.

When you get off the freeway, you might want to stop at one of the gas stations and fill up your tank. If you do, odds are you can make it the entire day at the track without having to fill up again. Don't worry about the extra weight...setting track records is **not** your goal. Having a full tank of gas gives you one less thing to worry about at the track.

Coming from I-14 you will see a large sign announcing the right turn to the entrance gate for the Streets, the Willow Springs oval tracks and the new Horse-thief bike track. On the morning of the event that entry is the one to use, however this entrance is usually closed on Friday night. So if you plan on arriving the night before and camping in the paddock (which is free unless you use the RV hookups), then drive past the Streets entrance, take the next right turn to the "big" track, and then ask for directions from the big track to the streets track.

Whichever entry gate you take, you will have to stop at the security gate to sign a waiver and buy an attractive \$10 paper bracelet which shows you have paid your track dues! Put the bracelet on as soon as you get it, otherwise you might loose it in the excitement and will have to buy another attractive paper bracelet if you leave the track for lunch or fuel during the day. Usually the person who takes your money and signature will put the wristband on for you.

NOTE: If you are doing both days of a weekend, do not cut the wristband off at the end of Saturday, otherwise you'll have to pay again on Sunday. Don't worry, you can shower with it (and you'll need to after a long day at the track.

Also, the first (east) gate often is not open even on the morning or afternoon of an event. It seems to be rather random. The main gate is always available for access, so if you can't tell if the first gate is open, just use the main one. Streets is located north of the main track via the access road. You drive (slowly) through the paddock area of the main track (make a right after coming through the main gate) and wind your way up to the Streets. You'll drive past the driving school lot (lots of Toyotas) and the RV parking slots.

When you get to the paddock area for Streets, find a space to park and unload your car. People generally park along the brick wall between the paddock and hot pit, or in a row west of that in the paddock. Odds are there will be cars, trucks and trailers already staked out in various places, so find a free spot and park. If you stick close to the wall you likely won't be in anyone's "space." People who trailer their cars to the track take up more room (that's why they don't park near the wall), and often they might have their car somewhere else, so it can be a little tougher to figure out where the "free" space is. When in doubt, just ask.

### **When should I be there?**

The morning of the event you will need to a) find a spot to call your own in the paddock, b) sign in, c) empty out and prepare your car, d) get tech inspected (if you did not get it done ahead of time, which is strongly recommended), AND be all done for the mandatory drivers meeting at 8:00am! Phew!

The motto of this story is to be there early, preferably between 7:00 and 7:30am would be good. If you live some distance away, or like me you have an aversion to waking up while it is still dark, then make a reservation at a local hotel and drive up Friday night. Check the event information for a recommended hotel close to the track.

NOTE: Don't be surprised by highway work early in the morning. It is not uncommon for Caltrans to close sections of the 14 freeway and reroute traffic. This will add some time to your drive. Plan to leave a little earlier than you might think. Being in a rush to get there is frustrating and possibly expensive...don't get a ticket!

### **How should I prepare before the event, and what should I bring?**

Before anything else, you must contact our chief driving instructor well before the event so that he can arrange an instructor for you. If you've not already done that as you read this then stop reading, DO IT NOW, and then come back to read the rest of this when that's done... Done it? Ok, let's proceed.

If you really think you are the next Michael Schumacher, then to prepare for this event you may wish to read up extensively, get your car tuned by a professional team, analyze the track map, go away to fitness camp, carbo-load on Thursday and Friday etc. If you are a normal person like the rest of us, forget all that! You are permitted however to get excited about your upcoming experience.

Most people have extensive checklists of what they should bring, but the minimum is drinking water, masking tape (or white sneaker shampoo) to put numbers on your car and also masking tape to cover the lights and sensitive body parts (?!@?!) to avoid chipping, zip ties (you'd be amazed what they can be used for), a camp chair to sit in while you exchange racing tales, extra drinking water, a hat (large and floppy with a cinch to keep it from blowing off), and sun-screen. There is plenty more you could bring, but other people will probably loan you anything else you might need. Regarding lunch, you can either bring a packed lunch, or visit the local fast food outlets in Rosamond, or sometimes there is a burger bar open at the track during lunch. You probably should bring some snacks though, as you'd be amazed at how hungry you can get between sessions once the butterflies settle a bit.

What you should NOT bring is a car full of junk, furry dice dangling from the interior mirror, grass-skirted hula-girls stuck to the dash, a stack of CD's, plush toys etc. In fact now is a good time to turn out that trunk you've been ignoring for years! You are going to have to empty out all the junk in a pile in the paddock before you hit the track, which might be quite entertaining for the rest of us to watch! If you plan on bringing a "close friend" to the track then now would not be a good time to discover anything left behind by a previous "close friend", if you understand my meaning!

**What should I wear on the day?**

Standard wear is something comfortable that covers your arms and legs. Sneakers, socks, full-length pants and a tee shirt with long sleeves are all the fashion at the moment. Unlike almost any other California sport, we frown on naked feet, legs, arms and other bits – so cover 'em up please.

You will also need a racing helmet, which is certified to Snell SA 2005 standard. Bike helmets (M 2005) are not designed for in-car use, and are not allowed. It has to be SA 2005. If you don't have a helmet to this standard we do have a pool of donated pre-owned helmets that you may borrow on the day, but numbers are limited so we cannot guarantee that you will get one.

**All about tech inspection?**

The purpose of tech inspection is purely to check that your car is safe. The inspector will look to see that your brakes, wheels, tires, wheel bearings etc. are in good shape, that everything is secure, brake lights work etc. We STRONGLY recommend that you look at the list of tech inspection stations on our web site, select one near you and visit them before the event. A tech inspection doesn't take long, is usually free, and can usually be done while you wait. Also take the opportunity to ask the tech inspector any questions you may have.

If there is no tech inspection station near where you live or work, then it is possible to get tech inspected at the track on the day, but get there early and expect long lines. At-track tech inspection is usually located on the skid-pad behind the wall, first thing in the morning. If in doubt ask where you should line up. You have to have your tech inspection formed stamped before you can register.

**What will happen on the day?**

On the day all the drivers will be divided into four or five run groups identified by color stickers, with red the fastest, through orange, blue (sometimes), white and yellow. We try to keep a run group to not more than 20-25 cars. When you sign in then you will get a sticker to put on the top passenger corner of your windshield. It will likely be white or yellow denoting the run group you have been put in.

Each run group will have five track sessions throughout the day, with each track session lasting approximately 15-25 minutes. In order to make sure you know when you should be on-track, a printed schedule will be available at sign-in, a set of flags will also display the current run group on-track throughout the day, and announcements will be made calling the next run group up throughout the day. Usually we are all done by 4:00pm.

**What will the instructor do?**

Our instructors have been hand-selected to enhance your driving pleasure! Once you have been allocated an instructor, which will happen at the mandatory 8:00am drivers meeting, he or she will look after you for the day, help you with any car preparation questions, introduce you to the track and the run sessions, and teach you how to build your speed during the day. But most importantly he or she will help teach you HOW TO BE SAFE!

Your instructor will probably start by asking you your objectives for the day, which really comes down to how serious you are about the sport. If you see this as a first step to a regular hobby then your instructor will probably go into some of the theory and practice of high-speed driving. If you just want to do it this once to experience it, then your instructor will focus on fun and less on the details. Either way is fine.

He or she will likely want to start your on-track experience by driving your car around the track for a couple of laps to teach you the "line" and demonstrate smooth car control. Experience shows that this is by far the most efficient way for beginners to learn the track. After a few laps you will exit the track, and swap seats so you can have your first experience behind the wheel. If you are not comfortable with someone else driving your car, just say so. The instructor will not take it personally.



Let your instructor control your pace – don't try to impress him or her with your out-of-the-box speed. They have seen it all before, and but they can scare easily! Speed will come throughout the day. Remember, your instructor is a volunteer. They also have been in your shoes before. So listen, listen, and listen some more.

#### **What is a transponder and do I need one?**

A transponder is a small electrical device attached to your car, which a sensor in the track detects every time your car passes over it. By this method we can record the laps you have done and your times. You attach the transponder securely to your car with a cable tie and/or tape. Make sure it is secure because these little devils are very expensive, hard to find in the dirt, and you will have to pay for it if you loose it (\$350). Bottom line: don't lose it. Zip ties and tape are your friends.

A transponder is not mandatory, but you will need one if you want to monitor your progress in lap times. You can rent one for the day at sign-in, but you will have to leave a credit card as deposit during the day. All but the first and last run sessions will be timed. Don't forget to hand the transponder back at the end of the day so our organizers don't get chance to exercise your credit card on Monday!

#### **What about fuel and tire pressures?**

You cannot purchase gas at the Streets track. The gas station at the big track is usually open if there is an event on there, but that is not guaranteed, and the at-track gas is very expensive. You will have just about have time to leave the track between run sessions and make a run to the gas stations around the freeway exit. However, we would recommend that you put at least half a tank of gas in before arriving at the track so it's one less thing to think about on the day.

Tire pressures should checked, and should at least be what the manufacturer recommends as a starting point. Your instructor may suggest some adjustment during the day. It should go without saying that you should also check all fluid levels before the event. You tire pressure will climb during a session, so you might have to bleed some air. The track is very different from the street. When in doubt, ask your instructor or someone else with a car/tire like yours for some advice.