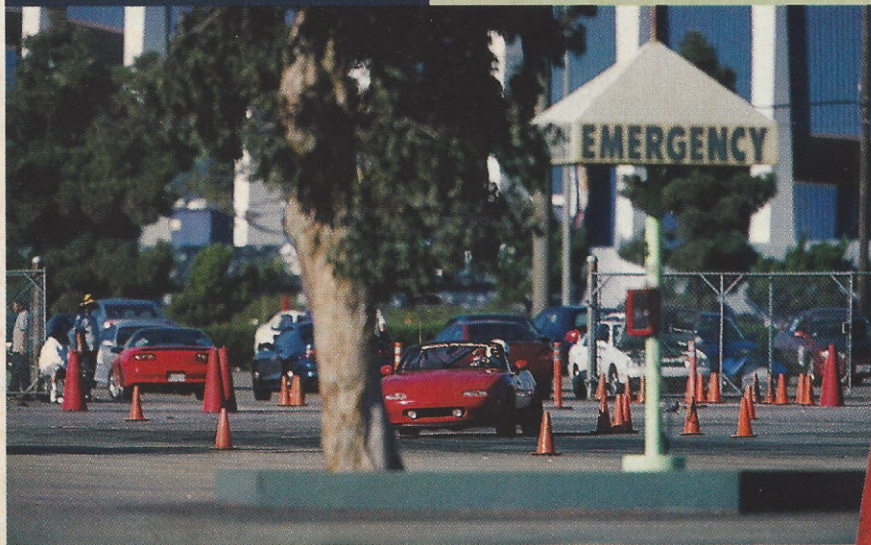




**"I REALLY LIKE A COURSE THAT HAS SUBTLE SECRETS, WHICH YOU TRY TO UNLOCK, RUN BY RUN."**

Danielle Engstrom

(ABOVE) Although this section of the course at the 2002 San Diego National Tour is made up of gates, the end result is a slightly offset slalom; there's more than one way to create a maneuver. (BELOW) When designing a course, the obstacles present on the site must be taken into consideration. Not only is the distance between course and obstacle important, but so is the way the cars pass near it.



## THE FEELING OF SPEED

Johnson also tries to create a feeling of speed, so when you finish, "You feel that you just set the land speed record—all without exceeding our speed guidelines. You don't have to go fast to feel like you are going fast," he explains. "No need for actual straights. Good flow allows full acceleration through certain maneuvers. This provides the feel of a straight while dissipating lateral gees so the end speed is lower."

To illustrate the point, picture yourself driving down the interstate at 70mph. Pretty dull, right? Now picture yourself careening through a bank drive-through lane at 50. Does that get your heart beating faster? Being able to accelerate through obstacles is a lot more exciting than not having any obstacles to avoid.

Babb, who has long emphasized slaloms in her designs, agrees good flow is important, but she also likes the "technical" maneuvers where accurate car placement is essential. "A technical course tends to give the driver more diversity of interesting and challenging things to do; a Yeehaw course often consists of little more than sweepers and straights. Fun, but not much of a test of one's spectrum of talents. A Yeehaw course will often be characterized by more than a usual proportion of newer drivers beating more experienced ones."

Drivers, you can keep that in mind for the day the new kid beats you. Maybe the course was just too simple to reward your talents!

While some courses might tend to be characterized as "Corvette courses" or "horsepower courses," the top designers strive to produce courses that have something for everyone. As a competitor, Engstrom believes, "A truly great course will be wonderful in any car and that's part of what makes it great."

At the opposite end of the automotive spectrum from Engstrom and her A Modified rocket, Jeff Cashmore guided his low-powered Toyota Celica to championships in H Stock, then E Stock. He also has experience in an F Stock Firebird and a Formula 125 shifter kart, and recognizes that what you drive does affect your outlook.

"A course with lots of straights connected by 180-degree turns might be a fun course in a FS Camaro, but fairly boring to an underpowered four-cylinder driver," observes Cashmore. "A course with lots of slaloms or Chicago boxes may not be fun in a Camaro, but it's a lot more interesting to the HS driver. You need a mix to make everyone happy."

Sharron Shields, who won a couple of National titles in H Stock Ladies, now drives a Porsche 944 S2. She points out another aspect of course design, often ►

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