



“ THE FUN FACTOR DEPENDS ON WHAT LEVEL OF DRIVING SKILL YOU ARE. SOME FOLKS LIKE TO FIND THE ‘CARROT,’ OR THE SECRET FAST LINE. ”

Roger H. Johnson

(TOP) Roger H. Johnson calls maneuvers that require some thought to drive quickly “brainers.” In these examples, the blue dotted line is the ideal path; the red line is the slower path that more inexperienced autocrossers will traverse. (ABOVE MIDDLE) Three ways to make a three-cone slalom—overlaid on top of each other, they’re basically the same—but add variety. (ABOVE) The first diagram is the wrong way; the second is better, but the last is most dear. (BELOW) The course at the San Diego Tour was wide open in places, allowing for a variety of lines.



- 1) Be a Commercial Artist
- 2) Use Creativity
- 3) No Hidden Agendas
- 4) Be Familiar with the Solo II Course Design Rules
- 5) Make the Course Flow
- 6) Use Elements that Favor Horsepower and Elements that Favor Handling
- 7) Use Pointers and Directionals Correctly and Sparingly
- 8) Line the Course, When Possible
- 9) Place Gates to Avoid Visual Confusion
- 10) Walk/Drive Your Course with the Intent of Improvement

Johnson’s complete course design handbook is available free over the Internet at www.ghg.net/cmjfs1/, and is highly recommended for anyone involved in course layout. It also makes pretty interesting reading for Solo drivers.

Those who create autocross courses are unique in the world of creative people. Throughout history, artistry has been recognized and preserved. The great painters have works hanging in museums. Architects leave buildings that could stand for generations or even centuries. Autocross course designers leave no such monuments.

Actually, autocross course designers have a mission similar to that of golf course designers. Both strive to create courses people will love to play. But again, while golf courses become permanent additions to the landscape, their designers immortalized for future generations, autocross courses are dismantled at the end of the day, never to be utilized again. Like sand castles on the beach, swept away by the incoming tide, they remain only in the memories of those who drove them. Their designers are rewarded only with the occasional comment from a driver, and the satisfaction one derives from seeing their ideas applied, however briefly.

So why do these people invest the enormous amount of time and effort required to produce a great course for everyone else’s enjoyment?

“I enjoy experiencing my own designs, and I enjoy experiencing others’ designs as well,” admits Johnson. “I love it when I find a concept someone else creates that I have not thought of. Of course, I pirate those ideas for future designs!”

Babb sums up the attraction. “Given the immense challenge of doing layouts on a tough site like Topeka, if a course somehow does a good job of providing a quality test of skill, a fun driving experience, and of making the most of what the site has to offer, at the end of the event you feel like you have really accomplished something.” ●

Roger H. Johnson describes one of his favorite Nationals courses on page 30.

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RICHARD S. JAMES

