

Prepare yourself, you are about to be guided around a flying lap of this iconic and world famous circuit; the circuit where Johnny Herbert, Jenson Button and Lewis Hamilton learnt their trade as youngsters. With the help of my text, you are about to be let into the secrets of driving a fast lap of the International Circuit and the sheer adrenaline buzz that is Buckmore Park...Alan Wood Senior ARKS instructor.

Conways: Starting from the start/finish line, and assuming that you are already at speed on a racing lap, aim to turn into Conways from the far left of the track by marshal post 1.

Conways has high grip on the entry and it is sometimes possible to take this corner flat out (assuming you have the skill to do so); however, a slight dab on the brake whilst travelling in a straight line is recommended in order to prevent the kart running too deep between the two turns. Check that no one is on your inside, turn in and aim to get as close to the apex kerbing as you can.

Conways is a perfect overtaking opportunity but this should always be done by taking the inside line and out-braking your competitor into the corner, ensuring that you are alongside them as you brake - do not lunge at them as they turn in! Never try to overtake on the outside as the driver in front will be moving over to take the racing line and you will be left with nowhere to go but the grass and ultimately, the tyre barrier.

Hairpin One: You are now on the back straight and fast approaching the hardest braking point on the circuit: Hairpin One. Take a diagonal line from the apex of Turn Two so that you are approaching the hairpin in a straight line on the far left of the track. Brake hard but avoid turning in until you reach the point where the tarmac changes colour. Come off the brakes and turn in, gradually feeding in the power as you take a late apex. Use the full width of the track on the exit and allow the kart to flow right out to the rumble strip on the left.

Hairpin Two: Exiting from Hairpin One you should take a diagonal line towards marshal post 3. Avoid turning in early for Hairpin Two as this will lead to a deep exit and loss of speed. Instead, stay on the right until you reach a small square patch of darker tarmac about three metres past the marshal post and use this as your reference point for the turn-in. The best apex clipping point is about three-quarters round, so turn in late and under control. Taking this corner correctly is absolutely vital as it determines the amount of speed that you carry into the Esses and down the hill. A successful passing move is almost guaranteed if you spot the driver in front turning in too early as he will almost inevitably run wide on the exit.

The Esses: Out of Hairpin Two now and your speed is quickly increasing as you approach the Esses. In dry conditions this is a complex that can be taken flat out, but be very careful in the wet. Approach from the right and aim to straighten your line as much as possible. Avoid the left-hand kerb on the entry as this will upset the kart. The second kerb is also very disturbing and damaging to the kart, but a fast and flowing line will take you round both corners avoiding the curbs with no loss of speed. Stay off the grass on the exit (left) as the plastic 'geo-block' is very slippery.

Symes Sweep: You are now approaching Symes Sweep at very high speed and are about to accelerate downhill. From the extreme left of the track you should begin to turn in somewhere in the region of marshal post 5. The exact turn-in point varies with conditions, but as a general rule the change in tarmac colour is a good guide. Clip the right-hand apex rumble-strip (but definitely not the curb) and without slowing down, let the kart flow out to the centre of the track. Everything happens very quickly here so be very smooth and let the kart find its own exit line.

Pullmans: As with Conways, this corner can, in the right conditions, be taken flat out; however, a slight dab on the brake just before you turn in is recommended in order to prevent the kart running too deep on the exit. Follow the left kerb around the bend and stay as far left as you can on your approach to Paddock. Slowing sufficiently to put you on the left-hand side will allow you to carry a greater exit speed through Paddock.

Paddock: At this point you are still travelling very fast as you approach Paddock. Stay left until you reach the lamppost on the left and use this as your turn-in point. This allows you to carry maximum speed through the corner and sets you up well for an overtaking opportunity. Any driver who is on your right is very likely to run wide through Paddock (unless they are very experienced) and you are then perfectly set up for a pass on their right up the hill. Allow the kart to feed to the left-hand side on your exit.

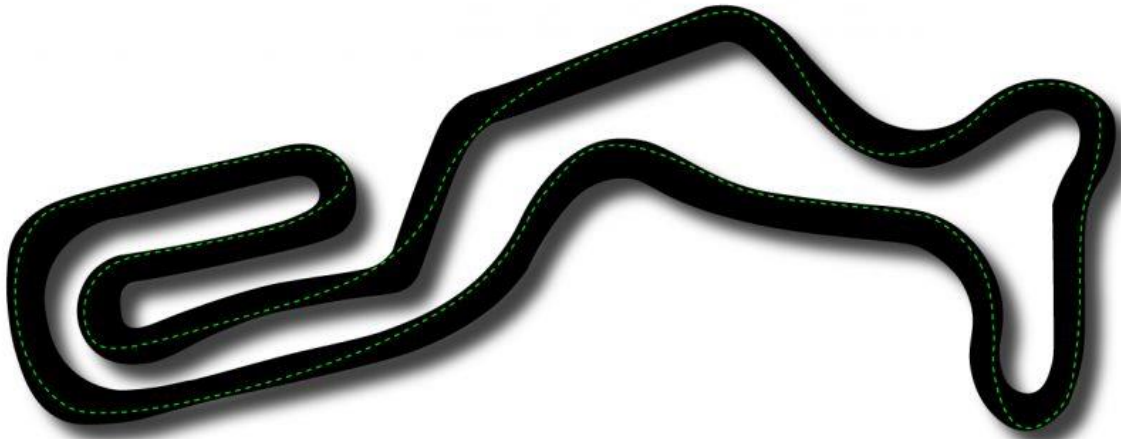
Damon Hill: The run up Damon Hill is very important as Garda is one of the best overtaking points on the circuit, so a good entry and exit to the Pullman's/Paddock complex is vital to give yourself maximum advantage. Don't be tempted to turn in too early as you approach Garda!

Garda: The biggest mistake made by drivers unfamiliar with the circuit is to turn in too early for Garda and then inevitably run wide on the exit and off-camber area. Stay left as you come up Damon Hill and don't even think about turning in when you first spot the kerb to your right. A late turn-in lines you up with the last two sections of the apex kerbing on the far side and allows a more-or-less straight line exit as you head down towards Senna Chicane. Get Garda right and you will carry speed all the way to Conways. Get it wrong and you will be helpless as others pass you during the next few sections.

Senna Chicane: Take Senna Chicane smoothly and use the whole track as the harder you turn the wheel, the more the tyres stress and the less speed you will carry up the hill. Clip the apex kerb at Senna Chicane and allow the kart to run wide on the exit. This gives a perfect straight line approach up Herbert Rise and sets the kart up nicely for the final turn of the lap. Move to the right as you ascend Herbert Rise on your approach to Café Curve.

Café Curve: Turn in for Café Curve when you reach the centre of an eyebrow shaped rumble strip on your right. You shouldn't need to lift or brake but be aware that Café is a blind exit corner and spinners on the exit are a frequently encountered hazard. As this corner is very close to the viewing area it is easy to become distracted by spectators and/or pit signals but this should be avoided. Maximum concentration is needed so that you are prepared to avoid any unseen hazard on the exit of this fast flowing corner.

Sisley Straight: Take a straight line from the apex kerb at Café to the kerb preceding marshal post 4 on your right and focus your attention on the exit of the corporate pit lane in case a kart is about to emerge. If not, head straight for marshal post 1 and prepare yourself for another exciting lap of Buckmore Park.



But what if it's wet?

The normal racing line might not be your best bet in the rain. When it's dry, a considerable amount of rubber can get laid down on the racing line. Rain can't permeate this rubber and tends to remain on top of it, thus making the dry line the most slippery part of the track!

So how do you deal with this? First, you will need to be much smoother on both pedals – brake much earlier and more progressively so as not to lock up. You must also remember to be totally off the brakes before you turn in or a spin is guaranteed. As to the line, generally go in to bends a bit deeper, run a bit wider on the exits and generally avoid areas of high rubber. BPKDC driver Dave Waters provided the graphic above to illustrate this.

Often you will find that better lap times are achieved in full rain than on days when the track is merely damp. The actual lines will vary according to the conditions and a good driver will know when it's time to switch to or from the wet line. The best advice I can give is to get as much wet/damp/frosty practice as you can and you will improve massively. I do hope that helps.