

# TRACK LIMITS

## Dear Competitor,

I am writing to you as a current Race Licence holder on the subject of track limits.

Track limits has been the subject of considerable debate over the past few months, and it is important to understand why they matter and the rules managing them. The changes from 1st June are in fact minimal and are explained below.

## Background

The process began in 2021 with discussion at the Motorsport UK Race Committee following concerns that had been raised of deterioration in driving standards in circuit racing. Whilst this had been largely based on anecdotal evidence, it prompted a survey of all our circuit racing licence holders. The results were very clear, revealing that a very large proportion of our race licence holders had experienced a decline in driving standards; reporting more negative incidents such as being forced off the track, racing being compromised, damage being incurred to vehicles and overall, a deterioration in their enjoyment of the sport. This gave us great cause for concern and sparked the beginning of a wide-ranging 'Driving Standards' review by Race Committee and Motorsport UK.

## The response

Over the past 18 months Motorsport UK has implemented the Race with Respect programme, that I hope you have seen in action. The feedback has been very positive with people welcoming this direct intervention to remove antisocial behaviour and to encourage a collective approach to make the sport more enjoyable for all.

In parallel the Driving Standards project embraces a whole host of different initiatives and will include ongoing learning and development in the community to ensure that rules and regulations are clearly understood, as well as the reasons behind them, so that everybody can compete in a safe, fair, and fun environment. More information will become available in the coming months.

## Definition of track limits

Very early on in the process of the discussion about driving standards, officials fed back that small transgressions going unchecked were felt to lead to a general deterioration in the attitude towards rules and regulations. Prime amongst these was the subject of track limits.

It appears there is less than a universal understanding of where the limit of the track lies. At a racing circuit it is defined by the white line that runs around both sides of the track, interspersed with the kerbs on the apex and outside of corners, which at those parts, serve as the track limit. Feedback shows that there is further misunderstanding as to what is and isn't allowed in terms of the placement of the car on these track limits.

The principle of track limits is best visualised when one thinks of a street circuit, with hard barriers immediately adjacent to that white line around the track. Suffice to say no driver at such a circuit intentionally goes beyond the white line as they know the consequences would be one of significant damage to the vehicle, with the resulting costs and failure to continue in the race. That same core concept must be borne in mind when you go to the open sweeps of Silverstone or Donington Park.

The track limit is there for very good reasons, safety and fairness. In regard to safety, the track licence that is

provided by Motorsport UK considers all of the safety measures in place at a track and in particular the run-off areas on any part of the circuit including the physical interventions that are in place to minimise any impact. Without track limits regulations and enforcement, the circuit owners are in an impossible situation. In the interests of minimising damage to vehicles (and even more important fallen motorcycle riders) the governing bodies of both car and bike racing have reduced permissible physical deterrents to going beyond track limits – and the circuits understand this. But without any deterrents, the grass and earth beyond the kerbs just gets abused and deeply rutted in no time. This simply cannot be repaired fast enough and presents a real physical hazard for any vehicle that leaves the track through incident or error. And if the circuit owners add concrete beyond the kerb, many competitors will just use this, to the limit of its extent, and beyond.

It is therefore imperative that vehicles should be contained within the limits of the track in order to conform to those precise safety measures that have been installed. When cars go beyond the track limits, they may bring debris back onto the track that can present a safety hazard to competitors as well as gouging the run-off areas and creating hazards for cars that, due to incident or error, leave the circuit.

In addition to safety, the limits of the track are there to ensure that racing is fair and that all the competitors compete by lapping as swiftly as possible on the same pieces of tarmac. Transgressing beyond the track limits may provide an advantage in speed and lap time, which as stated, is achieved by venturing beyond the field of play.

### **Changes to the Rules from 1st June**

The existing rules, that have been in place since 2014, require that the inner edge of any tyre of the vehicle must not go beyond the outer edge of the white line or kerb denoting the track limit. The challenge with this rule is that it is very difficult to visually identify when the inner edge of the outer tyre has gone beyond the line; and more fundamentally the driver is naturally tempted to continue to exceed the limit as the line or kerb is underneath the car and difficult to judge. In practice this is what happens all too often, leading to the safety issues and damage to car and the track.

The changes to the rules that are being implemented from 1st June 2023 will make it simpler for everyone, in that no part of the contact patch of any tyre of the vehicle may transgress beyond the limit of the track. These rules are outlined in the appendix to this letter.

This will make it easier to see the position relative to the line, which was very difficult under the car, especially with a GT or Touring Car. This rule is simpler for everybody, whether driving or officiating, to both understand and to police.

### **Policing the Rules**

For track limits there are two systems of measurement, track sensors and judges of fact. The sensors are used on five of the seventeen licenced circuits in the UK and have proven to be a valuable tool. They automatically log a hit and supply race control with images of the cars passing at that point, and a visual identity of the offending car or cars is made.

There is certainly scope for increasing use of technology to be developed, but as even F1's continuing issues demonstrate, it is not easy. The cost of installing and particularly maintaining and operating track limits technology is significant, and race entry fees would likely increase if all circuits had complete coverage – which quite naturally, we all want to resist. Motorsport UK is committed to work with the circuit owners and together develop affordable track limits technology, but this will take time.

In the absence of track limit sensors, the reporting of breaches is conducted by judges of fact, appointed by the organiser and nominated in the Final Instructions for Events and who report breaches to race control. That is how the system works at present and will continue with the new regulation. As with any sporting decision by an official or referee, there is the opportunity for human error, and it will not be universally accurate, in exactly the way it has been until now. However, the change from 1st June is designed to make it easier to spot transgressions, nevertheless the reality is that no system will be entirely capable of penalising every breach.

Whilst it is true to say that this does present challenges both for the observers and the officials, it does not undermine the principle that we need to have a clear rule. There are many instances, in life where laws are

in place but do not have universal capture, but the deterrent is there nonetheless, and the majority conform. Those that transgress stand the risk of suffering penalties.

In practical terms, at any circuit there are only a few points where there are consistent breaches of track limits, and that is where officials will focus their attention, and which will be made clear in driver briefings.

I am sure there will be a need for a period of adjustment whilst everybody understands the new regulation, but it will be swiftly understood and adopted as part of the racing protocol.

We listened to everyone's feedback on the consultation, with concerns expressed about the proposed penalty system, and therefore have confirmed that fundamentally the existing structure remains, with the only change being in qualifying. With the new regulation, the lap time on which the infringement occurs will be cancelled, rather than only if that lap is faster than any previous lap in the session.

I just want to thank everybody for their patience in this regard and encourage everybody to work together to ensure that this new evolution of the rules is practically adopted and adhered to as it is of real importance to ensure that the sport is safe and enjoyable for all.

Please do not hesitate to contact our Sporting Team on [race@motorsportuk.org](mailto:race@motorsportuk.org) should you have any questions or comments on these amended regulations.

We wish you a safe and successful remainder of the season and look forward to seeing you at a circuit soon.



**HUGH CHAMBERS** CEO



## APPENDIX 1: VISUAL EXAMPLES



## APPENDIX 2: RULE CHANGES

### 1

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**Q.12.21.2.** Drivers must use the track at all times and may not leave the track without a justifiable reason. For the avoidance of doubt:

**(a)** The white lines defining the track edges are considered to be part of the track.

**(b)** A driver will be judged to have left the track if any **part of the contact patch of the tyre** ~~wheel of the car~~ goes ~~completely~~ beyond either the outer edge of any kerb or the white line where there is no kerb.

### 2

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**Q.12.22.1.** Breaches of **12.21.2** may be penalised ~~using the following~~ **as follows:**

**(a)** In qualifying if the lap on which the breach occurred ~~is faster than any previous lap then that lap time should be~~ **disallowed** ~~disqualified~~. Note should be made on the result sheet of any times **disallowed** ~~disqualified~~.

**(b)** During races the following scale of penalties ~~should~~ **will** be applied:

**1st breach** – no penalty

**2nd breach** – warning flag

**3rd breach** – 5 second penalty added to race time

**4th breach** – **a further 10 seconds** penalty added to race time

**5th breach** – drive through penalty (12.26.(h)) **in addition to the preceding time penalties**

**6th breach** – black flag

Care should be taken to ensure that all signals (flag and board) must have been displayed to the driver concerned before moving up the penalty scale. All penalties applied should be noted upon the result sheet.