



# DRIVING UP TO THE NEXT LEVEL

## BRINGING YOUR PERFORMANCE DRIVING UP TO SPEED — NO MATTER YOUR EXPERIENCE LEVEL

**T**he first rule of teaching is that you must begin by making a connection with the student on their level of experience. Failure to do so will handicap the teaching process and frustrate both student and instructor. Having a common ground is easy when all of the students in the classroom are at approximately the same level, but as the span of experience gets broader, the number of students must get lower or the well of information must get deeper.

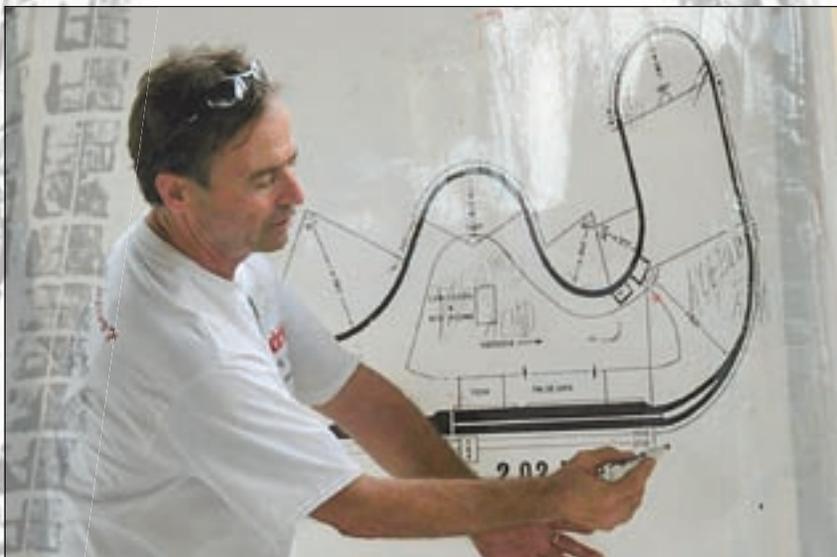
That is especially true when the instruction pertains to handling a car at speed. Driving is a very personal thing and every driver is at a different level of skill than those around them. When your goal is to teach drivers how to better handle their Corvette by meeting each student on their own personal level, the well of knowledge must get very deep and the classroom very small. Small enough to seat only two.

That is where schools like the Sports Car Driving Experience can really benefit the Corvette enthusiast. The instructors present at each teaching session have experience in driving some of the premier endurance races and have competed on famous racetracks around the world. Their resumes read off like a dream list of the aspiring sports car driver. The best part about the Sports Car Driving Experience is that they can actually help you to get there, but more on that later.

Before you stand on the top step of the winner's circle at a prestigious track, thanking sponsors and basking in champagne, you have to first do some driving. Actually, you have to do a lot of it. You don't reach that level of precision driving over night — it's something you build upon over time. You have to make that first step by getting into a car, experiencing the thrill of speed and the exhilaration that can only be had through lateral g-forces and that is where the Sports Car Driving Experience comes in. Making people better drivers is their main priority, by allowing the student to experience situations in a safe, controlled atmosphere that they normally could never experience in everyday driving. This way, not only does your breadth of experience grow, but it also hones your entire spectrum of driving skill. Not only can you do more, you can do more better.

We recently attended the Sports Car Driving Experience to find out more about the teaching they provide and the benefits they can bring to the driving enthusiast. There was plenty of time for driving. In fact, a two-day session will satisfy your appetite for speed for at least a week. But before you start carving corners,

**BY ANDY BOLIG**



Before hitting the track, instructor Peter Argetsinger gives us the lowdown on safely traversing the 2.02-mile road course. When on track, the instructors ride in the cars with you for immediate input and instruction.

you'll be greeted by your instructors and spend just a little time going over the preliminaries and safety requirements. Then, the group gets split into two different groups and the driving begins. Events are held at the Roebling Road Raceway near Savannah, Georgia, or Moroso Motorsports Park in West Palm Beach, Florida.

Starting with simple but fun driving exercises, the instructors have a chance to build a foundation and see your current level. Then they start to build upon what they see. Safely driving a Corvette is more than controlling the throttle and steering wheel, it's controlling the car when the car seems almost out of control. Knowing the difference between the proper driver input and over-controlling is

paramount when at speed. The first exercise makes that evident and also exposes the driver to the difference. In a tight autocross course, students are encouraged to gradually increase their speed and experience what the car feels like when it starts to go over the edge of control, and then they're asked to bring it back safely. This session can be exhilarating and educational, but even in the cooler air of Savannah during the month of March the exercise will have you perspiring in no time.

After two other sessions testing our shifting skills and threshold braking, we were headed for some track time with our instructors. Just outside of Savannah is a small track called Roebling Road. With broad, sweeping turns, this track is quite fast and you'll



For our driving session, heel-and-toe shifting was addressed but not emphasized. They had this cool practice rig to help hone our skills on the short periods of time when we weren't on the track.



One of the more interesting exercises was the tight autocross. Students were prodded to increase their speed to get the feel of when the car loses grip and how to counteract it.



have plenty of opportunity to wring out one of the Sports Car Driving School's Corvettes.

If you prefer not to take your Corvette on the twists and turns of track time, the Driving Experience has Corvettes and each one is equipped with performance Kumho tires – the main sponsor of the Sports Car Driving Experience. Cars range from standard C5s, C5 Z06s, and when we were there, they also had a C6 on hand as well as race-prepared C5 Z06s, equipped with full-race tire. Also, if you are interested in taking your driving to the next level, the Sports Car Driving Experience can rent out their Corvettes for track events. Once you

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have successfully completed a course, you can speak to Henry Gilbert, the school's founder, about renting one of their Corvettes for more serious track time. And if you are REALLY serious, you can opt to spend some time in the Sports Car Driving Experience's race-prepared Corvette. This is as close to having your own race car as you can get without having your name above the door. The weekend before our session at Roebing Road, one of the school's previous students, Al Biehl, attended his first race at Moroso Raceway with the car and placed first and second in the two 30-minute sprint races they had. Then, the car went on the trailer and



These are driving classes, not competitions. There are no timed laps and passing is only permitted when waved by. The emphasis is on honing your driving skills, not accident avoidance.



Just the week prior, this Corvette was tearing up the track at Moroso and winning its class. With the proper commitment, you could find yourself in the driver's seat.



was on its way to Roebing Road.

If you have ever watched the C5-Rs and C6-Rs racing on TV and secretly yearned to do the same thing, there are also three additional open track days scheduled for this year at the world-famous Sebring Raceway, where enthusiasts can carve the very same corners as the Corvette Racing team. The event is not structured as a teaching session but will consist of open lapping and the Sports Car Driving Experience will have their Corvettes available for rent during the event as well.

Above and beyond renting one of the cars, you can also have a personal instructor on hand if you so desire. Like





the cars, the instructors are not strangers to competing on the open track. You will find skilled technicians like Peter Argetsinger, Guy Cosmo, John Paul Jr. and Shane Lewis sitting in the seat next to you, giving you valuable instruction and building upon your current level of expertise. If at the end of the session you aren't a noticeably better driver, you weren't paying attention.

While the Sports Car Driving Experience can be quite successful in initiating newcomers to the world of performance driving, their ongoing commitment to their students helps them include added value to spending some time with them on the track. Upon completing the course the student is handed a packet that includes a group photo to remember the occasion, and

also – one of the coolest features – a DVD, shot while the student is driving that shows several laps of the track. Not only is this great to refer back to, but it also makes for a great showpiece when someone asks what you did while at the event. Also, the Sports Car Driving Experience has partnered with Breathless Performance Products for a special discount on any products they offer.

Many enthusiasts have been bitten by the performance driving bug recently, and with schools such as the Sports Car Driving Experience, you'll have an advocate with which you can hone your skills, get your driving certification, gain some racing experience, and most of all, realize your dream of performance driving. ■

### SCHEDULED DATES FOR CLASSES

#### ROEBLING ROAD RACEWAY

- July 17-18
- August 21-22
- September 18-19

#### MOROSO MOTORSPORTS PARK

- October 22-23
- November 19-20
- December 17-18

### FOR YOUR INFORMATION

#### SPORTS CAR DRIVING EXPERIENCE

(800) 453-5506

[www.sportscardrivingexperience.com](http://www.sportscardrivingexperience.com)

