



# LOTUS **ALP** EUROPE

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## Race day hints and tips for novices

### Abstract

This document provides some very basic hints and tips for Lotus Cup Europe drivers who are attending their first race. The document is split into seven basic categories which cover the following key areas: Arrival at the circuit, Scrutineering, Drivers Briefing, Qualifying, Race, Parc Fermé and Prize Giving. This document is not intended to be comprehensive, but it is hoped that it will be useful for those attending their first race meeting.

### Arrival at the circuit

#### Arrival time

The key bit of advice here, is: Be early. You will be very surprised at how busy things will be, even though there seems to be little that needs to be done. Moreover, although timetables may have been set, it's not impossible that they may change. Try to allow as much time as possible to allow for changes and unforeseen circumstances.

#### Familiarisation

If you have allowed enough time and you're at an unfamiliar circuit, it is sensible to spend some time in familiarising yourself with where things are. Even if you're familiar with the circuit, it's worth double-checking on the day that changes haven't been made for your specific event. Are you in a normal paddock, or a different one? You should find out how to quickly get to the following:

- Sign-on office
- **Your** paddock
- Briefing location
- **Your** Scrutineering bay (there may be more than one of these too)
- Race Control
- Assembly area

#### Sign-on

Before you can proceed any further, you will need to sign on for the race. For this you'll need to take your race licence to the sign-on office and complete the necessary forms and have your licence checked. Although you might be allocated a time for sign-on, it's often possible to sign on earlier so worth checking with the LoTRDC paddock marshal on arrival.

You'll need to know your name, your car number and which race(s) you're entered in.

**Don't forget** to take your licence with you and afterwards put it somewhere safe!

Also, if you are a novice and require licence upgrade signatures, don't forget to take your **signature card** with you. You will leave this with the sign-on staff and will have to collect it after your race (typically at Race Control).

Once you've successfully signed on, you will be given a slip of paper to present for scrutineering. You will not be able to have your car scrutinised without it. It's very easy to lose this slip, so make sure that you know where you put this and keep it safe. A slip of paper held in your hand in a wet and windy paddock is not a good combination.

It's also a good idea to try to collect an updated itinerary for the day. You'll need to know what time your scrutineering, qualifying and race are. **Remember!** They may have changed since you had the originals.

### Scrutineering

Once you have signed on, you will need to have your car and your safety equipment scrutinised. You should be allocated a time for this and it's very sensible to do this as early as possible too. If you have a problem, you may need to return to have the process re-done and you can't do this if you've left things to the last minute.

You now take the slip of paper which you haven't lost since you were given it at sign-on and present it, with your car and your safety clothing at the scrutineering bay. By safety clothing, we mean your race suit, helmet, balaclava, gloves and underwear. You don't need to be wearing these, but you mustn't forget to take them. Obviously, if you're not actually driving for several hours, then carry them in the car with you. If your first qualifying session is imminent, it might be wise to be wearing your race suit by this point.

### What you need (or might need)

- The slip of paper from sign-on
- If your car needs a tool to allow access to brake reservoirs etc (eg Elise S2), make sure you take this with you.

### The process

The purpose of the scrutineering is to check basic safety for your car and your clothing. There are specific items which will be checked and you will not pass (and thus, not be allowed to drive) if they are not correct. Before you head for the scrutineering bay, you should check the following for yourself too. It is sensible to remove inspection panels etc while you're queuing; to save time.

- Fluid levels - especially brake and clutch reservoirs
- Lights working - including rain light
- Battery cut-out working - this will be tested
- Extinguisher within date and within the green band - you may need to know how to demonstrate the battery test on electrically operated units.
- Appropriate race suit to prevailing standard
- Appropriate helmet to prevailing standard
- Harnesses solidly fixed (this will be checked quite vigorously)
- Seats solidly fixed (checked with similar vigour)

Once you pass, you will then be given a scrutineering label which you must affix to an easily visible part of the car. You won't be allowed on circuit without a label and they'll be checked at the assembly area.

### Drivers' briefing

When you sign on, you should be told about the Drivers' briefing. You must attend this briefing; even if you're a seasoned competitor or raced at that circuit before. The briefing will cover important information about the day and you should pay particular attention. As with timings, it is possible that there might be some specific changes to the procedures or processes on the day and you need to be aware of all of these.

A good example of this is the use of a Safety Car. Some circuits will use one at some meetings and not at others. You need to be aware of whether one is being used and also of what you must do if it is used. If you don't know what you should be doing, you are very likely to do something wrong.

Another very important aspect which might be covered is surface conditions. It may be that there has been an incident in an earlier race which might lead to some unusual characteristics for that day. It is obviously very important to know this information, both in terms of safety and competitiveness.

### Qualifying

In order to determine your position on the starting grid, you must complete qualifying laps. In fact, if you have not qualified, you will not be permitted to race, unless you have competed on that circuit configuration in the previous 12 months. The most important thing to know about qualifying is that **you must have at least three complete laps** recorded. If you fail (either due to over exuberant driving or mechanical failure) to complete three laps, you will not be able to race and you will have a very short day!

You will know when your qualifying is due to happen from the itinerary you collected at sign-on, or from asking other drivers in the paddock. As ever, this time is liable to change, so it's sensible to be in the paddock in plenty of time and watch what everyone else is doing. When it's time for you to begin your qualifying, you should hear an announcement telling you to proceed to the assembly area. Start your car and proceed there without delay. Don't forget to take your helmet with you, but you don't need to put it on yet.

When you arrive in the assembly area, your scrutineering label will be checked, so make sure you know where it is stuck and that you can make it easily visible. You'll then be directed to line up in a queue behind the other drivers. For qualifying, the order is irrelevant and it'll be first-come-first-served.

You will then wait in this queue for some time while the circuit is prepared and the drivers currently out on track complete their runs. Shortly before you're sent out, you'll be told when to put on your helmet (or you'll see everyone else doing so). You'll then be instructed to queue in the pit lane before being let out on track in line.

Bear in mind that in qualifying you're trying to get the best lap time – not pass the other drivers. The best way to achieve this is to try to give yourself as much space as possible. Also, in your early laps you will have cold tyres and brakes, so it's sensible to build up

speed for successive laps. Don't forget that you must complete at least three **full** laps in order to race. So, it's sensible to drive these first three conservatively, building up speed gradually to get your best time.

Qualifying is usually twenty minutes, so pace yourself to use this time wisely. However, it's far from uncommon for qualifying time to be reduced if the race schedule is running behind. You should be told before you start whether this is likely. However, if there is a red flag during qualifying, it's very likely that qualifying time will be reduced. You should use your judgment about how this affects your "building up speed" strategy.

In the simplest terms, you continue to drive around the circuit as fast as you can until you see the chequered flag; whereupon you should return to the pits on the next lap. Of course, you can pass cars as you see fit.

It is not required to complete the whole twenty minutes of qualifying, if you think that you have your optimum time within the first few laps. However, as a novice, it is probably wisest to take advantage of as much time as you can. You can return to the pits early if you desire.

On returning to the pits, you should follow the marshals' instructions. It is most likely that they will direct you back to the paddock area to wait for the race.

Once you're back in the paddock, you should check your times and your grid position. Someone will bring these to the Lotus Cup Europe race centre in the paddock, and you can wait there for them.

### **The Race**

Finally, after all of the preparation, it'll be time for the Race. As with qualifying, you should listen out for announcements and also watch the other drivers. When you're called, you should proceed to the assembly area again.

This time, the process is slightly different. As you now have a grid position you will now be directed to a parking slot which matches your position. This is because you will need to be directed onto track in order. The process should be pretty simple. Just follow the instructions from the marshals and park where directed.

It's quite likely that you'll wait in the assembly area for some time. Some people like to sit in their cars and contemplate their strategies while others will walk around chatting with the other drivers. When the circuit is ready, you'll be instructed to return to your car to prepare. You should put on your helmet and wait for the marshals to direct you onto the track.

Follow the other cars (unless you're talented enough to be in Pole position) onto the circuit and follow the marshals' instructions closely. They'll direct you to your starting position on the grid.

In this initial line-up process, you'll know precisely where to stop as the marshals will direct you clearly. **You won't have this luxury for the proper start.** For this reason, it's a very sensible idea to look at what's around you so that you can find the same slot the next time. It may sound odd, but it can be difficult to find your position again without a marker. Look at who is in front and to the side of you. Often the starting grid is adjacent to the pit garages and you can see which number garage you're next to and

make sure you return there. In short: Try to find a landmark to make sure that you can get back to the same position.

Once everyone is lined up, the marshals will withdraw and you'll wait for the countdown timer. You should see a five minute and then a thirty second marker. These should be announced with a klaxon or other audible alert. After the thirty second marker is withdrawn the start lights will come on. Once the lights go off, you should start. It probably worth noting that the durations quoted on the timing boards are seldom as long as they suggest.

However, this first lap is a formation lap (green flag lap). You should use this to work out how you'll start and to try to get some heat into tyres and brakes. Avoid excessive weaving as it's not permitted and is largely unnecessary. There's nothing as embarrassing as spinning your car trying it. You should proceed around the formation lap keeping in order as far as possible. You shouldn't be passing any cars on this lap.

Once you complete the formation lap, you will return to the grid. This is where you need to find your landmark to make sure that you come back to the same place.

The idea now is to start the race as quickly as possible once the cars are back on the grid. You should see the countdown boards and then the start lights again. Once the lights go out this time, the race proper will start.

The object of the exercise is to get to the end of the race before everyone else.

When the race is over, the chequered flag will be shown. You must return to the pits on the next lap. It is a courtesy to wave to the marshals on your cooling down lap, to thank them for their help, please remember they are all volunteers and do appreciate your thanks.

On entering the pits, the marshals will show you to where to go. If you haven't achieved a podium position and there's no problem with your car, or your driving, you'll probably be directed back to the paddock, where you can explain the reasons why you didn't win. You should use the time between the pits and the paddock wisely, as it doesn't leave much time to think up excuses.

If you have a podium position or if there is a problem, the marshals may direct you to park at the end of the pit lane. If you're in the top three, you might be taken on a parade lap to wave at the adoring crowds. If you've done something wrong, the marshals will explain what's up and you may need to report to the Clerk of the Course.

If you're simply returning to the paddock, this journey may be interrupted if you have to be diverted to Parc Fermé. This should be obvious as you'll be stopped on your way to the paddock and given instructions on what to do.

### **Parc Fermé**

Sometimes after a race, the series scrutineers may want to check your car for compliance with the regulations. If this is so, you'll be instructed where to go and you should comply with the instructions.

This inspection may include many things, such as weight, vehicle modifications or power output. Of course, every car should comply with the regulations and it is this process

which ensures that they do. While undergoing this process, no changes may be made to the car. It is most important that no member of your support team touches your car.

### **Prize giving**

For those drivers talented, or lucky enough to win a prize, there is often a presentation at the end of the meeting. This tends to be quite informal and may happen in the paddock. If there are several classes of race or if the races are at a weekend, the prize giving will be the last process. It's good to wait and support those who have won a prize and to collect your own if you are one of the few.

You should be notified during the meeting if there is likely to be a presentation. This should tell you when it is and where.

### **General hints and tips**

The following points don't really fit into the categories above and are provided to give the novice some suggestions for practical queries.

- If you are entered into more than one class of race, it is likely that you will need to qualify for each class separately. Bear this in mind with your timing
- You should allow plenty of time to change into your race suit. It is likely that you'll use the nearest toilets as a changing room. Once your qualifying assembly is announced, things will happen very quickly.
- If you're not sure about something: Ask. The other drivers may well have more experience than you and most won't mind at all if you have any questions.
- Watch what the other drivers are doing. If they all suddenly disappear with race suits in hand, it's likely that you should be doing the same thing.
- Try to have somewhere secure and dry to keep things. You can't carry your wallet with you while you're racing, so plan ahead and have somewhere to keep such things.
- Always lock your support vehicle and put valuable possessions somewhere safe.
- Prioritise and plan. Things can get very hectic; especially if schedules are compressed. If you finish a race in one class and then need to go out for another, you can find yourself arriving back in the paddock just in time to return to the assembly area. Chances are your car needs fuel and you will probably need a drink. If the schedule is tight, try to have these things prepared.
- If the worst happens and you have an accident, follow the marshals' instructions. They know what you should be doing and how to do it safely. Although, you might want to give some guidance on how to load your pride and joy onto a tow-truck with love rather than speed, perhaps; should this be necessary.

Most of all have fun, it's unlikely a Formula 1 team will spot your skills and no one wants to go home after a weekend with a large repair bill.