



## Driving Advice from a Pro Driver

*By Bill Gilbert*

Fresh off a race win at Road America, IMSA GTD pro driver Madison Snow of the Paul Miller Racing team spoke with solo drivers at our Watkins Glen 1 event. This is my recap of his suggestions. Note: while much applies to all DE drivers, his advice and this recap targets solo drivers, not student drivers.

If you find some of his advice familiar, that is a good thing! But remember that, sometimes, hearing something familiar described in a different way causes it to “click.”

- Your **mind and focus** is a huge part of driving.
  - Show up to the track ready to focus on driving. Forget about work, family, etc. issues when in the car. Madison said his ability to “compartmentalize” is a key to his success.
  - Related to this is the ability to relax in the car, don’t “overthink it.” “Put in the effort, then relax.”
  - On track, a driver must have “spare brain power” in order to adapt to traffic, changing conditions, and much more.
  - Staying calm in the car is a big part of stamina. Drivers have to be focused for an entire session, not just a few minutes.
  - There are lots of things you can’t control, don’t let them bother you.
- Come to the track to **have fun!**
  - I found this surprising from a pro driver. But he pointed out that enjoying time with his teammates and the attractions around a track contribute to a positive and relaxed mental attitude.
  - It’s nice to hear reinforcement for NNJR’s DE motto: “Safe, Serious, Fun”!
- **Focus areas** in car.
  - Really important that the driver is comfortable in the car: reduces mistakes.
  - Consistency is huge. When driving, his goal is to be consistent with no mistakes (Ross Bentley would adjust the second part to make it positive, e.g. “perfect for 20 laps”).
  - He can repeat laps within a tenth; he suggested that 3 tenths is a good goal (setting aside traffic).
  - “Hit your marks every lap, including warm-up and cool down.” Build the muscle memory.



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- **Constructive Reflection.**
  - After a session, debrief. Identify the biggest issue and a plan to fix it. One, two or a max of three goals for the next session. Then move on. Make goals achievable; if you aren't getting it after trying, move on to focus on another goal. Don't beat yourself up!
  - He uses lap time variance as a primary tool; he has a co-driver to compare but pointed out that anyone can use two or more of their own laps to see the variance.
  - Best thing to improve is consistency.
- **Specific tips.**
  - He doesn't think about brake references when driving a lap. But he does use them when his goal is to improve a specific corner. If his goal is faster corner entry, he can see the current brake point in the data, so now he has a specific new brake point a car length later.
  - A driver should never be surprised by traffic ahead or behind.
  - Don't rush anything, especially a pass. Drivers, even in a race, are "dancing" with each other. Critical to be predictable and to cooperate.

If you attended one or more of Madison's sessions, you also got tips about many Watkins Glen corners. Let me know what you learned at [gilbert4@rcn.com](mailto:gilbert4@rcn.com) or at Watkins Glen 2.





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