

## A Lap Of Watkins Glen

By Ian Prout

Watkins Glen should be considered as one of the premier road course facilities in North America. At 3.5 miles in length Watkins Glen is a true driver's track that possesses fast sweepers, dramatic elevation changes, and long straights. "The Glen" has hosted the likes of Mario Andretti, Jim Clark and Jackie Stewart over the years, and the history involved with this motorsport facility is legendary.

Before we look at a lap, Please remember the basics :

1. Keep The Eyes Looking As Far Ahead As Possible At All Times
2. Use all of the road, from Turn In, Apex to Track Out Radius = Speed
3. Stay relaxed and Remember Smoothness with Throttle/Steering/Brake Inputs

Now onto a lap of The Glen. As you exit the pit lane, it is important to stay to the right hand side of the track. Check your mirrors, and gradually accelerate up to speed and bring the car over to the left hand side of the circuit. Shortly after exiting the Pit Lane, the driver will face the esses. This is a very fast uphill, and blind section of the circuit. The esses are essentially a very fast left, then right turn. It is important to carry as much speed as possible – but do be careful to not get wheels up on the curbing through the esses, as the curbing is rather steep and will upset the balance of a car. As you exit the esses, stay to the left hand side of the track --- now you are going to keep your eyes up, and use the braking reference signs as you approach the "bus stop". The bus stop will require hard braking and downshifting as the driver approaches. Try and short cut the corners of the bus stop as much as possible, as there are rumble strips that you can drive over, without upsetting the balance of the car. As you exit the bus stop, let your car track out to the left hand side of the track. Now you will be faced with a rather fast, late apex right hand corner. Keep the eyes up again, hit your apex, and let the car track all the way out to the left hand side of the course. (Side Note : remember that radius equals speed, so at pretty much all corners of The Glen, Use All the Road --- do not pinch the car in at corner exits, use all of the track) Now you will be setting up for "the boot". As you approach the boot, keep the car to the right hand side of the track. Keep the car as straight as possible and you will need to get on the binders quite aggressively here, as you prepare for a fairly late downhill apex through the laces of the boot. Again, hit your apex (not a few feet wide of the apex), and then let your car track out again, all the way to driver's right. Now is some hard acceleration, as you head into the toe of the boot. Keep the car over to the left hand side of the track as you approach the laces. After some hard braking, this is one of the few corners at The Glen that allows you to turn in a tad early, as the track rises fairly sharply uphill – and the compression of the spring provides quite a bit of grip. Now hit your apex, and unwind the wheel as soon as possible following the apex. (Side Note : As you exit the boot, the driver is reminded that from the apex to the track out point, the driver should be Unwinding Steering and Adding Throttle!) Now we have a brief straight away, may be time to check your mirrors and point the faster cars bye with a point bye and/or pass the slower cars! You will be on the far left hand side of the track, as you

approach the heel of the boot. This is a fun, slightly downhill corner, that has a slightly late apex. A reminder to get very close to this apex, accelerate out of the corner, and then gradually bring the car over to the right hand side of the track, as you prepare for a blind apex, left hand turn that will bring you back onto the “short course” section of the Glen. At this point, you will see plenty of baby blue Armco, as the apex to this left is blind. The corner eventually opens up, so keep the eyes Up and hit your apex, then free the car up to driver’s right side of the track. Now you are approaching a very fast, left hand, almost 90 degree sweeper: a straight forward corner that you do not want to over slow the car for. As you track out, you can put the rhs tires up on the curbing a bit, especially if you are going for the widest possible radius. Finally, we are approaching a very fast, and important right hand corner, as it leads onto the front straight. This is a fast, 90 degree, right hand sweeper --- there is a bit of camber built into the track at this corner, use that to your benefit, clip your apex, and let the car track out all the way to driver’s left. Now we are on the front straight away, a great time to check your mirrors, check your gauges and give or take a Point Bye! The track now drops off downhill as we approach Turn One (which as a side note is the most important corner of this track, as it leads onto the longest straight away. Exit speed out of Turn 1 will dictate how you get through the esses and back straight – remember Exit speed is king.) Keep the car to lhs of the track as you approach turn one – make sure to keep those eyes up, and there are some rumble strips on the inside edge of turn one, near the apex, which you can drive over, without upsetting the balance of the car. Get those rhs tires close to your apex in turn one, unwind the wheel, and track all the way out to drivers left. This brings us back to where this lap all began – heading up to the fast esses, take a deep breath, keep the eyes up, and prepare for another exciting lap at this fine facility!

Ian Prout has been racing at Watkins Glen for over 15 years. He has race wins at Watkins Glen in cars ranging from an ITC Ford Fiesta, Crossle Formula Ford, and Spec Racer Ford. Most recently, Prout won the 2009 Watkins Glen Fun One Double Regional in September 2009 in Spec Miata. His biggest WGI claim to fame is winning the SCCA WGI National in 2000 in a monsoon rain storm, only to crash after taking the checkered flag (we can keep that on the down low!) Mr. Prout is the President of the Sports Car Driving Association, LLC [www.scdal.com](http://www.scdal.com) as well as being a freelance automotive marketing specialist.