

## VIRTUAL PREPARATION



It's been a few years since NASA held their Championship event at Mid-Ohio, and I knew I'd be rusty as I came to grips with the Factory Five on a circuit I haven't driven since 2008. Enter iRacing, the reality-mimicking, PC-based racing simulator that added Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course to its lineup of precision-modeled tracks a number of months back. Rather than simply pound out virtual laps on my own, however, I wanted to try something a little more constructive.

Peter Krause of Krause & Associates is a professional driving coach as well as a boisterous proponent of the benefits of training with consumer-grade simulators. His office at Virginia International Raceway even has a full racing sim setup.

Best of all, iRacing allows folks to rent their own private track sessions—virtually. With Peter in Virginia and me in Florida, we'd be able to drive on a virtual Mid-Ohio with real-time two-way headset communication.

Peter simply set up a password-protected room at our prearranged time, and we both logged in and got to work. The closest car to an FFR Challenge Roadster in the iRacing stable was the Spec Racer Ford; it offers a similar open-cockpit view, and the power-to-weight ratio is in the same ballpark.

We started with a low-speed, lead-follow session, where Peter would stop at key corners and point out features to help us place the car. Because iRacing uses detailed photography and laser scans to plot a track, such nuances abound. Aim for the photographer cutout in the fence in the distance under braking, for example, or place your right-front tire on the outer seam of the sealed asphalt in

this corner. The subtleties of the track are there to be mastered if you take the time.

Peter's expert knowledge of the track really shined through, particularly when it came to what's changed since iRacing did their scan. For example, on the wall that runs to the right of the front straight, they've painted one of the concrete segments a different color, and it serves as a good turn-in marker. This repainted wall wasn't in the sim, but sure enough it was there when I got to Ohio.

He also noted potential problem areas. For example, the sim allows drivers to cut some of the curbs. Peter knows which

ones will throw a car into a dangerous spin in real life.

With the intended line established, we started some lead-follow exercises at about 75-percent speed. The intercom-style communication allowed for instant feedback as I encountered trouble areas. After an hour of training, I had a much better idea

of the real line around Mid-Ohio. I spent the next few nights practicing on iRacing, and my virtual lap times dropped by a couple seconds in the process.

The benefit of the practice time was huge, especially considering my late start to the weekend. Rather than trying to remember the line in that first qualifying session, I was up to speed in a hurry and driving Mid-Ohio more precisely than ever before. Better still, I was really thinking about where I wanted to put the car long before I reached each corner.

Peter's training runs \$125 per hour for a minimum of 3 hours of training, and that price includes detailed course notes, the corner-by-corner preview, a lead-follow session, and real-time coaching and review over iRacing's in-sim voice communication setup.—Scott R. Lear

### sources

iRacing  
iracing.com

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