

NÜRBURGRING CORNER ANALYSIS

Hatzenbach To Hocheichen

Where do you start when you have to learn such a daunting track as the Nürburgring. Well, how about the beginning. Hatzenbach. Now that's a great name. Let's take a look at the first part of this amazing track. Hatzenbach is not one of the most intense parts of the Nürburgring, but it does reward precision. Like many of the areas at the Ring, Hatzenbach is not a specific corner. It is a series of corners and is really fun when you get it right.



You have come off the front straight and made it through the Tiergarten compression and the S's before passing the old pit entry. The S's have progressively slowed you down and transitioned you from a high-speed series of corners to a more technical part of the track, where you will be asked to make quick left and right transitions, keeping the car up on its "toes". This is also a section that can get pretty crowded with people, taking Hatzenbach at much different speeds. Also keep an eye out for people who get behind the right/left/right transitions and end up completely out of the rhythm. You don't see a lot of big accidents here but it can get busy with the different speed differentials.

But first we need to get there. We are going to start at the Start/Finish Line:



Coming out of the last right-hand corner, the car is positioned on the left side of the track. Over the fence on the right is the old pits, which is still used today for various race series. Up ahead is the actual start finish line for the Nordschleife. This is where timed attacks of the latest and greatest street cars start and finish. Just beyond the S/F line the track is peaked, which just happens to be the beginning of the braking zone.



The next corner is to the left so move right. Just a heads-up, occasionally the old pits is used on track days, so it is possible a car can appear on the right as it exits the pits. The braking zone is in the area where the white part of the wall on the right ends, or maybe just beyond that depending on the car. To prevent lock-up you may have to modulate the brakes a bit in this area.



Approaching the braking zone, you still can't see the corner. Notice the old pit exit on the right here. The guard rail ends ahead which allows you to move a bit more right if you like. Typically, you begin braking just ahead, but as you hit the peak you may want to relax the braking a bit to prevent lock-up. Then back on the brakes after the brow.



Harder on the brakes now. No big advantage is gained by going right of the white line. Notice how the track is heading downhill here, which continues after the corner. Depending on the car, this is likely a third gear, pretty standard 90-degree corner. Try trailing the brakes a bit into the corner here to help the car turn. With the track falling away, getting some weight on the nose of the car seems to work.



The curbs are not friendly here and it is not uncommon to see cars up against the guard rail on the right. Never great to get one corner into a lap and damage the car. So, go ahead and power up but be aware of the grip. You are heading down hill so the car will pick up speed quickly.



Track out is pretty standard with strong power application. The right up ahead is a non-event with no real need to track out to the left to set up for it. You typically won't be going fast enough to make that necessary. As you see with the cars ahead are mid track. The corner after this one is a bit more exciting.



Standard track out to the left on exit lines you up for the next corner.



The track is still dropping here and you will likely be in 4th gear. The corner ahead is a fast one but can easily be overcooked. A bit of brake is necessary before turning into the corner.



Just short of the turn in, a bit of brake here is a good thing. The 2 km sign is a good reference both for braking and turn in, the latter being just beyond the sign. You are still going downhill here.



Approaching the apex, still downhill. But if you look closely the track flattens out at the exit. You can start thinking about going back to power, but as with many corners at this track, do so progressively. This corner, for some reason, has a high pucker quotient (yes that is a driving term, at least it is now, “HPQ” from now on), but is really satisfying to get right.



Which looks something like this. Hard on the power. I wouldn't recommend planning on using the concrete area but it's there if you need it and will not upset the car much. You can really just follow the left side of the track. Up ahead is a slight left, then the main part of Hatzenbach. There is often a lot of traffic in the next section.



Hugging the left side you can see the cars up ahead moving right. They are in the braking zone for the S's, the main part of Hatzenbach.



This is an important picture. You are likely in 5th gear here at a pretty good clip. The S's are taken in 3rd in most cars so you need to slow and shift. How complicated you make this section is determined by how late you leave your braking. Ahead you see the first corner is a slight left followed by a double apex right. You can trail brake into the first right but it gets to be a serious balancing act so start by braking early and getting the car balanced. Hatzenbach has a great rhythm to it but it takes a bit to get there. Work up to it (hmmm, there's a theme here).



In the middle of the first left, you can see how we have caught the other cars by braking later.



The first half of the double apex. You should be on a balanced throttle at this point. One thing to note here. Since this image was taken they have modified the tire wall on the left by moving it closer to the track. What was tight now feels a bit claustrophobic. Definitely need to be looking to the right into the corner. You should be able to hold one steering angle to make it through this double apex.



Half way through, you can give the throttle a small squeeze right here. You can see the grass up ahead at the second apex is just dirt as people straighten out the second half of this corner.



The concrete grating on the right is usable but you really don't need it. Looking into the next left hander, nothing really special here. Again, a balanced throttle, maybe a bit of a squirt.



The next two corners determine whether or not you are a Hatzenbach Hot Shot or Hack. Ahead is a right-hander followed by a left, the left being the slowest part of the S's. Get this right and you will finish this section kissing the exit curb. Wrong and you will likely kiss something a bit firmer. It is best to touch the brake at the point where the Porsche is right now. Doesn't take a lot but it is important to take some speed off here.



To curb or not to curb, that is the question. You can see the Cayman is not. We are. You can also see that people use the curb and then some. This is one place at the Ring where the curb helps. But don't be a wimp, get up on it. This will really help set up for the tight left up ahead. There is a real rhythm to this. As you come off the curb the car will be a bit unsettled so you

have to time the left turn when the car is ready to do it. So, decide whether or not you are going to use it. Start with your speed down a bit, but feel how the car bounces and then takes a set. As your speed builds so will the bounce and you will have less time to set up for the left so, that's right, be progressive. It's a really fun section. And if you don't want the drama, stay off the curb altogether. I'm pretty sure there won't be any F1 scouts out when we are there.



We are off the curb and heading into the left. You can feed in the power.



Tracking out of the final corner of the Hatzenbach complex. The painted part of the curb is very usable here. If you overcook the corner so is the concrete grating, but there is a step up to it and not a lot of room for error so use it if you need it but don't use it as part of your plan.



So that is Hatzenbach. Not as hairy as some of the sections of the track but still takes concentration and experience to get it right. There is a rhythm....a squirt of throttle here, dab of brake there. One thing to keep in mind about this section. It can get really crowded. People take this section all sorts of different ways. So be patient if you get stuck behind someone because the S's are no place to pass. The picture above is heading into Hocheichen. In the section pictured here you can get by people but it is a short straight, don't get greedy. We will tackle that and the famous Flugplatz in the next installment.