

NÜRBURGRING CORNER ANALYSIS

Karussell to Brunnchen

On a recent flight from Bangkok to Kathmandu I was looking out of my window and I could see Mt Everest in the distance. A daunting sight. I wondered to myself what it would take to climb the thing. The preparation, physical and mental, probably even spiritual. And then I thought about the Nurburgring (you have to admit that is one great segue!). The Ring has been called the Everest of racetracks. Prepare for it properly and it will likely be a challenge well met. And just like Everest, without preparation, it could be a disappointing ordeal or worse. I have no doubt all of you are well on your way to learning this track so that you will meet this challenge head on.

When I was first using the Nurburgring sim, I found that certain stretches were especially difficult to grasp. I was simply lost. Just another series of rights and lefts (or were they lefts and rights?). For me, one of the most difficult areas to remember was from Hohe Acht to Brunnchen. It isn't that it is particularly challenging, at least any more than any other section. It's just that it looks like everything else. You have done 2/3s of the track and it is easy to get lost.

So let's pick up where we left off...launching out of the Karussell.



At this point you are just out of the banking, accelerating up the hill. Car placement is not super critical so you can free the car up and let it track left out of this corner.



Looking up the hill (it's steep here), this is what you see. You are heading to the top of the track at Hohe Acht (High Hut). Ahead is a very fast left hander. It is not usually necessary to brake for this corner. A lift is adequate. Where you lift determines how fast you take this one.



Lifting somewhere at the end of the curbing should be fine, but start by lifting a bit sooner. You will be surprised how much speed comes off due to the hill. Turn in on a balanced throttle.



Turn in is just beyond this point. Smooth hands pay off here.



We are at the apex of this left-hander, hard on the power. The track gets a bit complicated here. You want to track out to the right but it keeps turning to the left. You can go to power, but pay attention to the track-out. It is easy to go into the grass on the right if you lose focus.



You have tracked out and are coming up to the Hohe Acht combo. Still really steep. A light brake here helps the car turn, but you don't need much. Some shift down one gear here, others carry the same gear through the corner (usually 4th). I like to shift down as it gives me some revs to power through the second half of this. This can over-slow the car, though, so it is a tradeoff. Try it both ways and see what works for you.



At the apex. It is best here to hold the car left as you exit the corner. It will set you up much better for the right up ahead. Again, a slight lift will make the next corner less frantic. Turn in toward the end of the curbing.



At the apex of the first right-hander of Hohe Acht. Pretty standard corner though the exit is peaked.



After the right-hander, you hit the highest point of the track, Hohe Acht. This is where I always got lost. You are 2/3rds the way around the track and everything starts to look the same. Trees, asphalt, sky. Ugh!!! Let's see if we can find some uniqueness so we aren't lost. You can see ahead that you can't see ahead. The peak obscures the right-hander.



This is the approach to the Hohe Acht right-hander. It is a longish corner so bring down the speed a bit as you approach the peak and find third gear (in most cars). Turn-in is just a few feet from this point, not at the end of the curbing as with many points on the track, but still late.



In a few miles you have gone from the lowest part of the track to the highest. Welcome to the Hohe Acht. The corner looks to be a standard 90-degree right-hander, but then that would be too easy. Hold a longer apex. This picture shows a turn-in that is just a bit late.



Exiting the corner, you can see that the track is peaked a few hundred yards in the distance. Over this peak the track bends slightly to the left which is not visible until you get over the peak. And, at least in the GT3, it always seems like the place I go to 4th gear. It is helpful as you exit this right-hand corner to hold it to the right a short moment so that you can take the peak in a straight line with a better angle into the left bend. The car is not forced to the right ahead so that it will be easier to set up for the next right-hander. Also, taking the bump straight allows the car to be less unstable. I realize this is a bit of nuance, but it is helpful here. A big deal in the rain.



You are just approaching the peak in the above photo and you can just see the left bend. Is this a corner? Your call.



We are heading down into a section called Wippermann. A short straight over the peak leads into the first right-hander. Move the car left to set up for the right-hander. There are a lot of ways to take this right/left/right combination. Here is one option. I have seen people brake into this right-hand corner up ahead, but I find a balanced throttle works better. Touch the brake if you feel a need. After this it gets pretty busy.



After the first right in the series, move right preparing for the left-hand turn. If you didn't brake for the last turn you definitely want to slow for this one. Just another blind corner at the Ring! But the next two corners have curbs that are usable. The question is, "are they helpful?" The debate rages, but the best drivers I have followed through these corners seem to avoid the first curb on the left and really climb over the second. It is helpful to turn in a bit late toward the end of the curbing on the right in the above picture.



You can see that the corner is kind of squared off. Use the peak as the apex. It appears quite late in the corner. You will be turning into the next right-hander almost immediately after this point. The track is heading downhill so the car will pick up speed. Use discretion with the right pedal. Too much speed will bite you.



Doesn't look like a big deal but using the curb on the right helps a lot with the line through this corner. It also throws the car around, so it is a tradeoff. You want to be on top of the curb to gain the advantage. Try using it on one lap, then not on the next, and see what feels right.



Exiting that corner you will be busy collecting the car. You are now fast approaching the Wipperman compression. Use the left side of the compression for a quick snub of the brakes to slow the car, and, if you went to 4th, go back to 3rd. At the end of the curb, bend into the right-hand corner, and again, hold the apex a bit longer because the track does this:



Yup, another blind peak. Over this peak the left side of the track continues to the right, so if you do a normal track-out, you will end up in the grass. The opposite camber doesn't help. So, hold the corner just a bit longer (yes another "long" apex) than normal. The end of the curb is a good reference to track-out. Then, down into Eschbach, the last corner before Brännchen.



This is not a terribly difficult corner except that it is pretty steeply downhill. Turn-in reference is the Eschbach sign you see to the right. It is typically taken as a double apex (though rumor has it Walter Röhrl skips the first and he is kind of good at driving). Trust that the second apex will arrive.



Hitting the second apex, don't track out to the right. Hold the left side (run your left side tires over the cement bricks up ahead on the left), and you will be perfectly lined up to brake and turn in for the first corner of Brunnchen. Be ready to wave (just joking – keep your hands on the steering wheel!!) as you have made it to the most filmed section of the

Nürburgring, for better or for worse. Please don't add to the YouTube collection of Nürburgring mishaps.

So, a lot of detail. You can pick apart the details of the whole track like this. That's why it is so challenging to learn. Hopefully this section now has enough markers so that when you get there on the sim, or on the real track if you aren't simming, you will recognize it and not be lost like I was. Please realize you will likely not "know" every nuance of this track when you get there. I was blown away by the stuff I didn't know until I put these corners analyses together and looked really closely at the pictures. That is one of the beauties of this track. Every time you drive it, you learn something new. This is just another piece of a very big pie of which you can use to learn this monster. When you get there and drive the first few laps you will feel like you never studied anything, but trust that it is there in your brain and it will fall into place as you increase your time on track.

Okay, next stop is Brunnchen, Eiskurve and on to Pflanzgarten. The Nordschleife just keeps giving.