



Italian Grand Prix

Autodromo Nazionale di Monza



THE 3.573 MILE Autodromo Nazionale di Monza is Ferrari's home track. If you can win there in a Ferrari the fans will go mad. The track is all about speed. If you don't have it, you won't win. The track offers loads of overtaking and drafting opportunities down its long straights. You won't get to try out the banked section, as it's been out of use since 1961, but flying into the Curva Granda at 190+ mph is a thrill, just as is trying to take the Ascari curve flat out. Overall this is quite a fun track because of the speeds involved. It's a great one to learn your car on as it's not too difficult to get a quick lap. However, to go from a quick lap to a really fast lap requires being one with your car and its abilities, along with some bravery.

CAR SETUP:

This track is all about top speed - how quickly you can get there, and how long you can stay there. The layout is basically three corners connected by some very long straights. These turns vary from flat out at Ascario to dead slow through the Parabolica. This presents an interesting question for car setup. Do you go for softer suspension and traction or harder suspension and better fast cornering? The Ascari bend should decide this for you. If you can't get through this without lifting, then you need to stiffen things up a bit.

As far as oversteer and understeer is concerned, understeer will kill you in the fast bends, like Ascari and Curva Granda. However, oversteer will not allow you to fly into the Parabolica safely. My preference is to get the car evenly balanced, then put in a slight amount of understeer. This will allow you to brake later into the turns. Because you are braking later and using trail-braking into the turns, the slight understeer will be cancelled out. Then through the turns where you aren't braking, the throttle can compensate for the slight understeer.

Use the back straight coming into the Parabolica to set your top gear. You should just top out at about 195 or so before you brake. Then space the other gears, 2nd through 4th, to let you accelerate out of the second Lesmo in second and get into fourth just before the bridge. First gear is only used at the start, so set it up to provide maximum acceleration off the line.

Ramp angles and clutches are the biggest determination to your speed here, however. The tighter your rear wheels are binded together and the faster you can have this happen the sooner you'll be able to get on the gas again, and the later you'll be able to brake. So bump up those numbers!

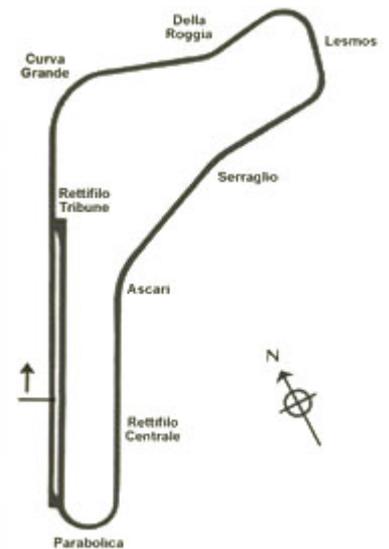
GOALS:

You should aim for a qualifying lap of about 1:28.00 to 1:29.00. That should put you pretty far up the grid.

During the race you should aim for 1:28.50 to 1:29.50 for your lap times if you don't encounter traffic.

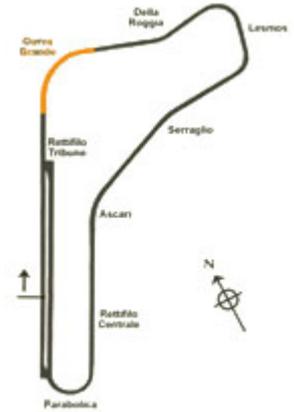
THE RACE:

Monza provides for some great racing. You can push really hard the entire time, which makes it really fun. The long straights provide for lots of drafting, which create many overtaking opportunities. The entrance into the Parabolica is the best, with the entrance to the Gurva Granda the most dangerous, but still possible if you're really good. It's important to be up on the grid to win, but you can still do it from mid-pack because of the nature of the track. The first turn is the most dangerous right after the start as everyone is flying into it on cold tyres two or possibly three abreast. So take it easy. You need to finish to win, and overtaking isn't too difficult here.



CURVA GRANDE:

Entrance speed: approximately 190-195 mph [306-314 kph]
Speed through the corner: approximately 135 mph [217 kph]
Arrival time at the corner: 10.34 seconds
Time to negotiate the corner: 7.90 seconds
Exit time of the corner: 18.24 seconds



The Curva Grande is the second fastest turn on the track. You'll enter it at almost full speed after flying down the front straight for what seems like an eternity. So look at the scenery, the trees, read the billboards, draft by a couple of cars, and then get ready for the turn.

The key to this turn is to not use the brakes too much and not to let the car drift out from the apex too early. Doing either of those will mean you will scrub off too much speed and be slow through the turn. The braking point is just as you arrive at the service road before the turn. Right when you get there, brake moderately for a moment and shift down to fourth gear. Then get off the brakes and let the engine do the rest of the work slowing you down.



You will also turn in when you brake. This will point the car at the apex and let you carry more speed through the turn. As you are finishing a very long straight when you enter this turn, you should take an early apex. You should be right against the curb fairly soon into the turn. Keep it there as you go by the lone tree on the right. You will need to use the throttle to get around this turn at maximum

speed. The beginning of the turn is more of a trailing throttle, letting the car slow down slightly. You do need to keep enough throttle on to prevent the rear from stepping out. Then once you are 'into' the turn start applying more throttle to slow your deceleration. The extra throttle will help to slide your car around the remainder of the turn as well.



Once you pass the tree on the right you should get back to full throttle. This will push you away from the apex, which is fine. You need to start leaving it now anyway. Using the throttle is better than unwinding the wheel because it gives you some extra speed off the corner, as well as putting your car into a subtle, very controllable, four wheel drift. Use this to your advantage as you exit.

As the turn ends you will be sliding across the road towards the grass on the left. Keep that throttle down and the wheel turned. The bit of grass on the left does provide some run-off area in case you push it too far. If you are getting too far to the left too soon, then ease off the throttle a little. As the road straightens out you should be able to slowly unwind the wheel while continuing under full acceleration.

THE FIRST LESMO:

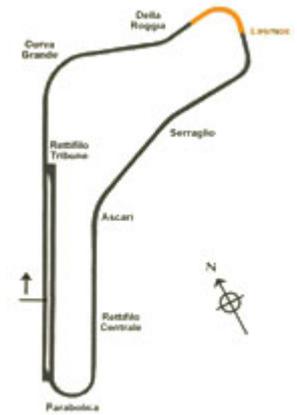
Entrance speed: approximately 178 mph [287 kph]

Speed through the corner: approximately 75-80 mph [120-129 kph]

Arrival time at the corner: 26.24 seconds

Time to negotiate the corner: 7.57 seconds

Exit time of the corner: 33.81 seconds



This right hander is the first part of the two Lemos. Of the two, it's the less important, but that doesn't mean you should throw it away. You'll fly around the Della Roggia flat out as you approach this turn. The braking zone is reasonably long, so if you are right behind a car coming off Della Roggia, a pass may be possible.

But for the fastest line through the turn, you'll need to be alone. So, assuming you are, get the car over to the left side of the track for your entrance. There are no brake markers here - they are for whimps anyway, so who needs them? - but you can use the racing groove as a good marker. When the groove gets darker continue on for a second then brake as hard as possible. Make sure you don't lock the wheels and spin. Shift down steadily to second gear. If you downshift too quickly the extra engine revs will lock the rear wheels momentarily and you'll spin. So downshift carefully as you slow down.



Once you're in second, you'll be pretty close to the turn-in point. You should turn in just before you get to the armco on the left. As you turn in, ease off the brakes a little. You will want to trail brake into this turn as it helps get the car around. Even after you have completely finished braking, you may find a small extra application of the brakes helps point the car for you.

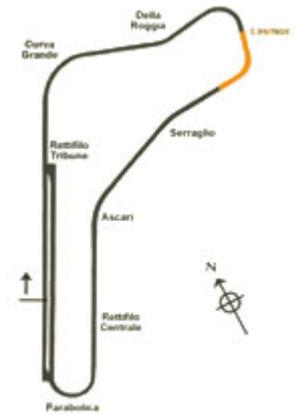
The apex is a fairly long one, but is reached early on during the turn. As you are approaching the apex, you should be balancing the car on the throttle, as you will have finished braking. Then as you go around the turn, shift up to third gear. This will gain you an extra tenth as you won't have to shift while you are accelerating towards the second Lesmos. Just past the half way mark is when you should be getting back to full throttle again. Being in third will also help prevent wheel spin as you exit.



The exit is fairly important as a good one will get you right behind another car going into the next Lesmo. The key is to be on the gas as soon as you can and slide the car out to the left. If you do it correctly, the car will straighten out just as you reach the grass. The straighter your exit line, the faster you can get back to full acceleration. Sort of aiming at the armco as you exit will give you a straight exit line. To finish off, get the car in a straight line under full acceleration against the left side of the track.

THE SECOND LESMO:

Entrance speed: approximately 120 mph [193 kph]
Speed through the corner: approximately 80 mph [129 kph]
Arrival time at the corner: 36.25 seconds
Time to negotiate the corner: 4.56 seconds
Exit time of the corner: 40.81 seconds



The second Lesmo is the more important of the two, as its exit begins the long flat-out-all-the-way part of the track that leads into the Parabolica. If you want to out brake someone into the Parabolica, you need to be right behind them as you make a perfect exit from this turn.



You will be in third gear between the two Lesmos. You will also be lined up well on the left side of the track as you approach this turn. The braking zone is basically non-existent, so don't try any passing moves here. You'll just end up being slow out of the turn and will have to wait an entire lap for another opportunity. Again, the racing groove is a good guide for braking. As it gets darker, continue accelerating. Then as soon as it lightens up again at the entrance to the turn, brake gently for a moment and shift down to second gear. This will slow you enough to make the turn. The braking and downshift will also help you turn the car into the apex.



You will turn in almost immediately after braking. As this turn starts a very long 'straight' you will want to take the apex as late as possible for the best exit. So try to hit the apex about half way through the turn. Just before reaching the apex, shift up to third gear. If you stay in second, you'll have to shift up in about a second anyway, and then you'll be under acceleration, and thus lose time. So shift now, while you're not accelerating. Then hold the car there under neutral throttle. Keep it balanced as sliding around will kill your exit. It's better to back off and get the car under you again, rather than trying to keep it going. The grass on the left is very slippery and if you touch it, a spin will not help your lap times.

As you hit the apex of the turn, start to increase your acceleration. Then let the car drift away from the curb. Continue to increase your acceleration as quickly as you can as you move over to the left side of the track. Again the straightest line will give you the most traction, and therefore, the most speed out of the turn. You should definitely be back to full acceleration before reaching the left side of the track. A slight steering correction may be needed if you push the rear wheels out to the left under acceleration so be watching for that as you exit.



THE ASCARI BEND:

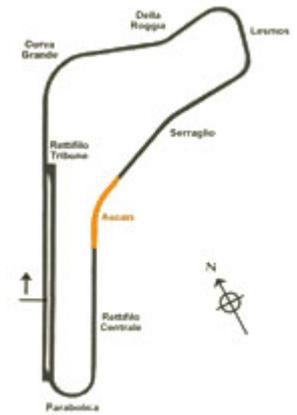
Entrance speed: approximately 181 mph [291 kph]

Speed through the corner: approximately 179 mph [288 kph]

Arrival time at the corner: 53.01 seconds

Time to negotiate the corner: 6.73 seconds

Exit time of the corner: 59.74 seconds



The Ascari bend is the only one of the three bends at Monza that presents any difficulty. Della Roggia and Seragallo are both easy. Without the right setup and entrance you cannot take Ascari flat out. If you can't take it flat, then you'll never see a really fast lap.

The key to this turn is the entrance. If you enter too soon, you'll need to unwind the wheel a bit to avoid running over the grass and then most likely will either have to lift to get the car under control again, or understeer towards the armco. Likewise if you enter too late, you'll understeer into the armco as well.

The track seems to have a little crowning here, and you can use that to your advantage. As you approach the turn you'll be in top gear. Position the car in the middle of the track for the entrance. Using the armco on the right as a guide, start to turn in just before you reach it. Try not to use too much steering lock. If you are at full lock go back to the garage and stiffen the car up a bit. As you progress into the curve, get the car right against the grass on the left. If you stay on the left side of the track you'll be slightly faster as the slight crown in the road will help turn the car for you. Remember to keep the accelerator floored the entire time.

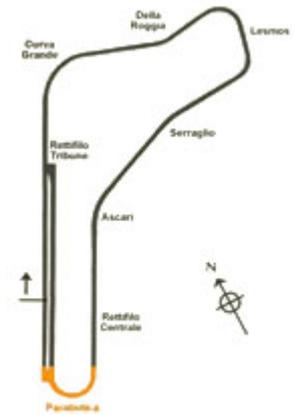


Once you can see the following straight start to unwind the wheel slowly and let the car drift out to the right. This will allow you to have the maximum straight line acceleration. The longer you keep the car turning, the slower you'll be down the straight. There is a service road to the right as you exit. Don't be afraid to use this as you exit the curve if you need to. Just make sure you don't clip the armco on your exit or the grass at the end of the service road. The perfect exit will mean that you don't need to use that service road at all.

Then power off down the straight towards the Parabolica.

THE PARABOLICA

Entrance speed: approximately 195 mph [314 kph]
Speed through the corner: approximately 70 mph [112 kph]
Arrival time at the corner: 1 minute 7.28 seconds
Time to negotiate the corner: 12.78 seconds
Exit time of the corner: 1 minute 20.06 seconds



The Parabolica is probably one of the most well known turns at Monza. It is also one of the most critical. It ends the fastest straight and begins the very long front straight. If you get a bad exit you will have a lot of time to think about it as the other cars fly by. Likewise if you mess up the entrance you'll have a lot of time to think about how long it's going to take you to get out of the sand trap one you finally stop.



This turn offers the best overtaking opportunity one the track. If you made a good exit from the Lemos and took the Ascari bend flat, you should be in a good position to draft another car and then pull out to try and outbrake them. Just make sure you don't wait too long before braking or you'll just slide right off the track.

There are several lines that work well coming into this turn. Personal preference will decide the one that works best for you. For me I start right against the left side of the track and brake in a straight line. Then I use trail-braking to help me turn in as I get closer to the turn.

There is a billboard on the left of the track which makes a great reference point for braking. It is actually facing away from you as you approach the turn, so you'll just see its back. Just after you pass this, brake as hard as you can. You will be well into the darker racing groove by this time. As you brake downshift to second, making sure you don't lock the wheels and spin.



Once you reach the curb, continue to brake, but at a lesser extent. Start to turn in and hold the car against the curb as you continue around. Once you are off the brakes, balance the car on the throttle. Then slowly start to increase your acceleration. If you begin to push away from the curb, ease off. You don't want to get away from it just yet.



The curb stops about half way through the turn. At this point begin to increase your acceleration as much as possible. When you shift up to third is key here as well. When the rear wheels start breaking away you should shift. Like the exit from the second Lesmos this will mean you don't have to shift under acceleration.

So play around with when you shift. Try some laps where you shift into third very soon, and other later, then see which works for you. Once you're in third you should now be able to put the accelerator to the floor without losing the rear wheels. Then slowly unwind the wheel so that you can start accelerating in a straight line. Your goal is to let the car drift all the way to the left and just miss the guard rail on the exit. This allows for the straightest, and fastest line out of the turn.