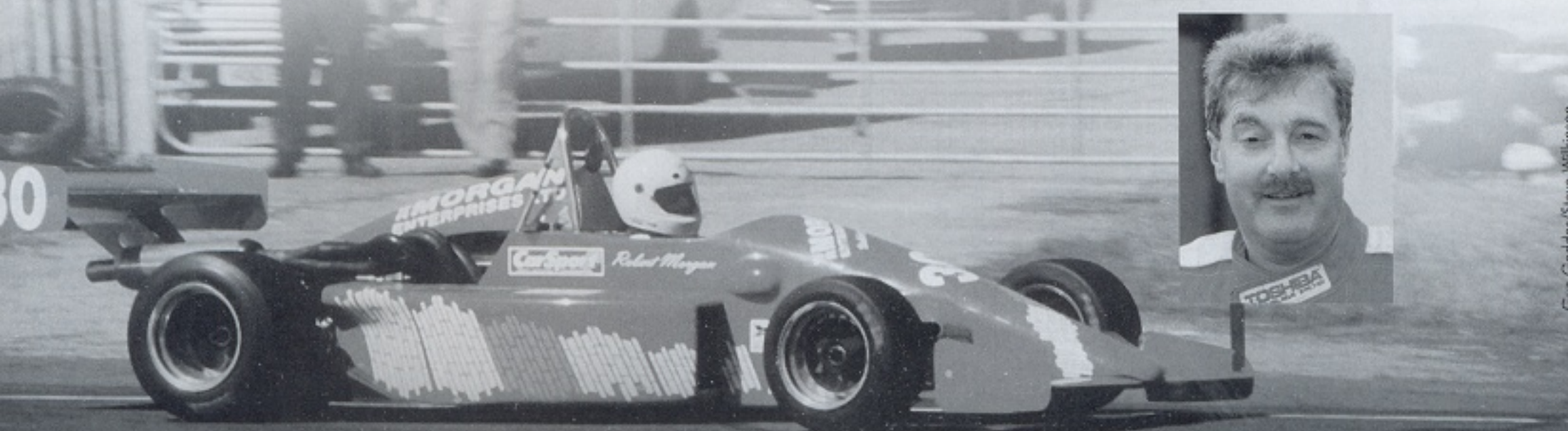


DRIVE IT - KIRKISTOWN



The first customer for Mike Pilbeam's MP82 chassis, Ulsterman **ROBERT MORGAN** took the Millington powered car to the Northern Ireland Sprint and Hillclimb Championship double in 1998 in a double defeat of legendary sparring partner Robert Woodside. On Kirkistown's 2-lap sprint course, unique to the British series, Morgan showed the mainland contenders the way round to win the 1999 Farndon run-off. Here he describes his technique in the Pilbeam on the circuit where Grand Prix drivers such as John Watson and Eddie Irvine cut their racing teeth.

The short tyre warming area before the right turn to the startline is sufficient to clean the rear tyres. Grip levels at Kirkistown are good following the recent resurfacing of over half the track. As you can see from the first picture, the start of the 2-lap British Sprint course angles in from just off to the right of the main paddock straight. The area can be a bit dusty early in the day, but conditions progressively improve allowing more aggressive starts.

From the start there is a 250 yard run to the flat out left-hand kink at Debtors. On the first lap speed is still building and a smooth line, brushing the inside kerb midway through the bend, helps maintain maximum acceleration. In the MP82 I take top gear on the approach to the right-hander at Colonial, moving to the left of the track and braking as late as possible.

Colonial has two elements; a long, double apex right followed by a left flick on to the next straight. Change down to second gear for a left-of-centre entry into the first apex and allow the car to drift out to the middle of the track before squeezing right to get a late apex on the final part of the right-hander. Hold the car to the right and pull third gear to allow a smooth line for the final left-hand part of the complex. Avoid riding up the left-hand kerb and let the car drift to the right, catching fourth gear on the short run to Fisherman's and drawing the car back to the left of the track for the right-hander.

Brake smoothly, changing down to

second to scrub off some speed and enter Fisherman's left of centre. Make sure not to turn in too early, let the car run slightly wide on the first apex, then turn in to clip the second kerb at mid-point. Squeeze in the throttle as the g-forces build, dragging the car to the outside kerb which can be used in dry conditions. A good run round Fisherman's allows an early change to third gear for the short straight to the Budweiser complex.

Budweiser is a right/left/right chicane with the first right-hand element taken in second gear. Turn in late for the first right-hand section, holding the car to the right to get the line for the next left. Again turn in late, crossing the kerb and allowing the car to run wide on exit to carry as much speed as possible. Now in third gear, use the smooth concrete on the right to ease the line onto the straight and grab fourth on the run to the Paddock Chicane, moving over to the left of the track still under maximum acceleration.

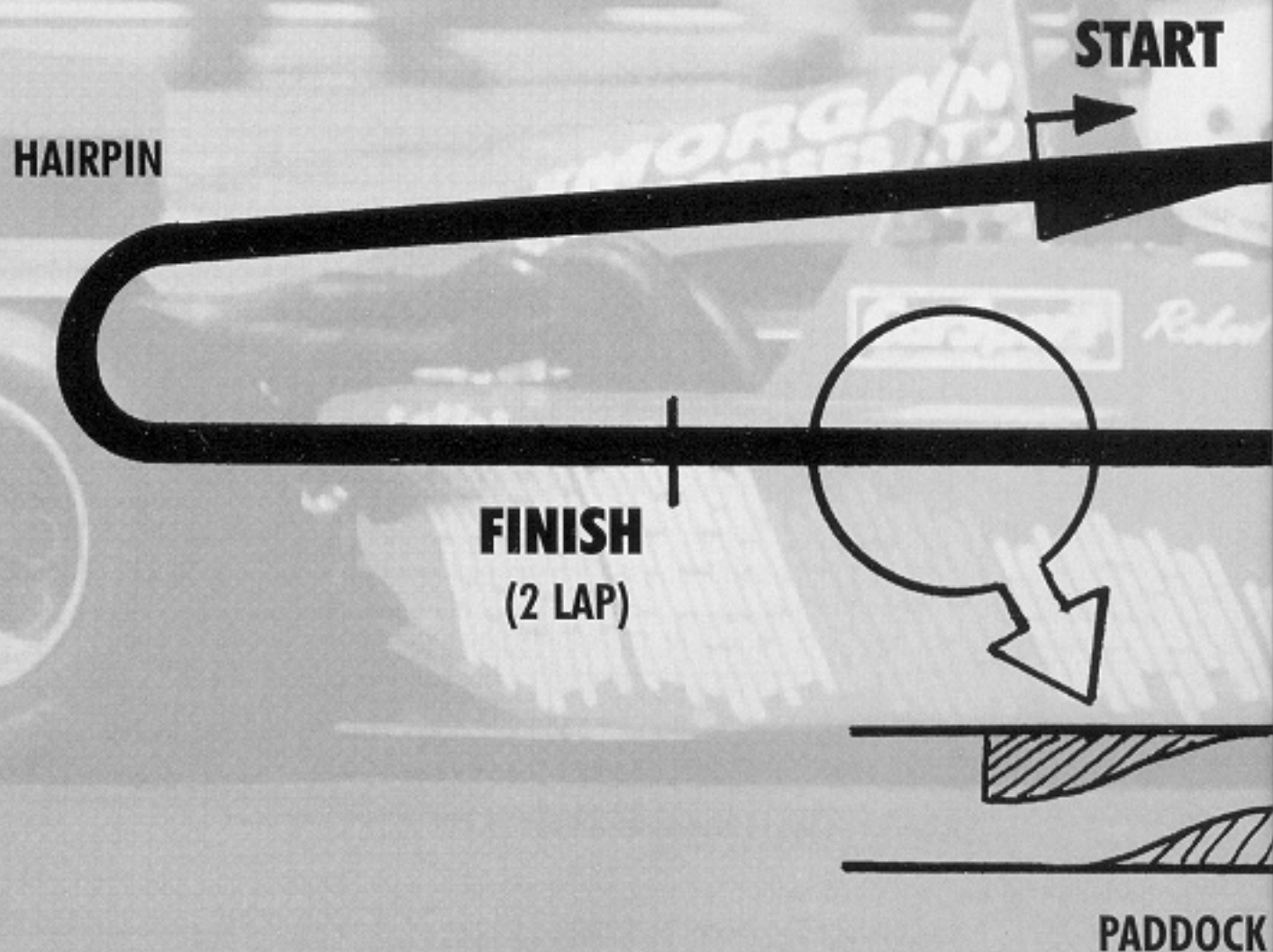
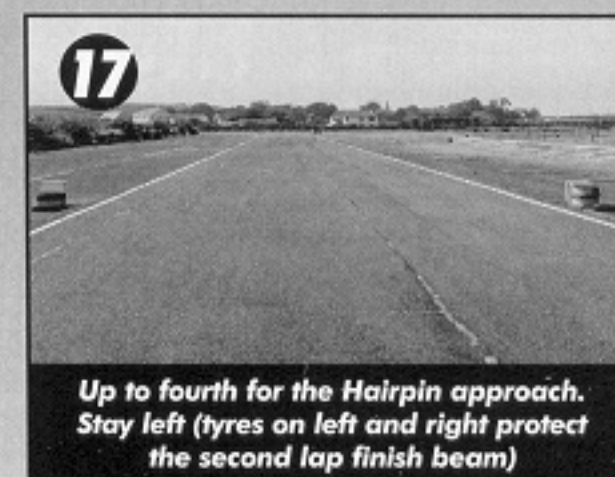
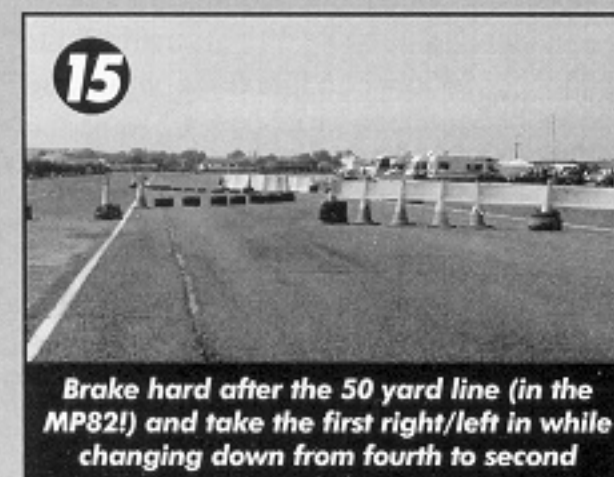
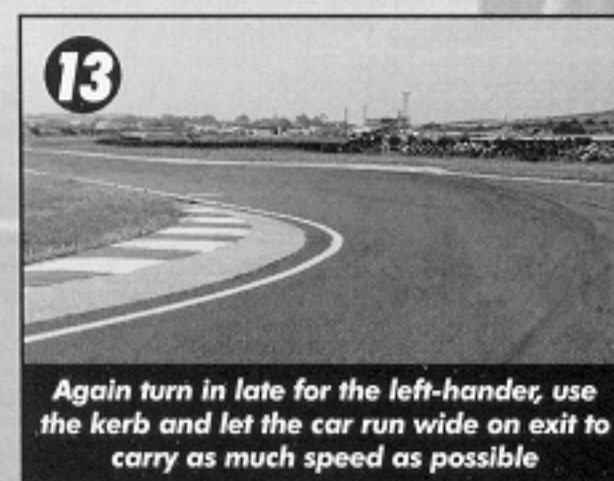
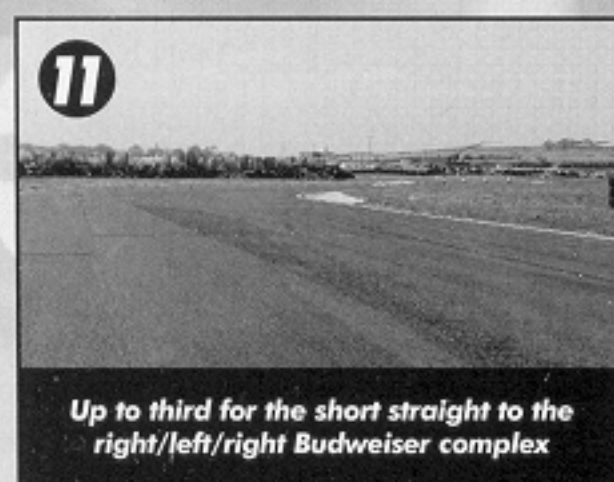
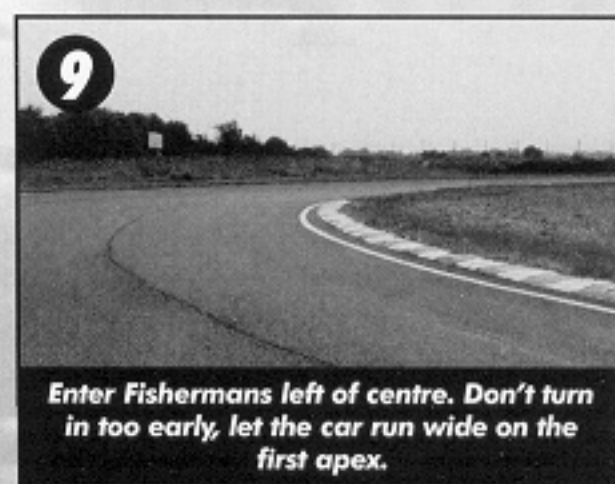
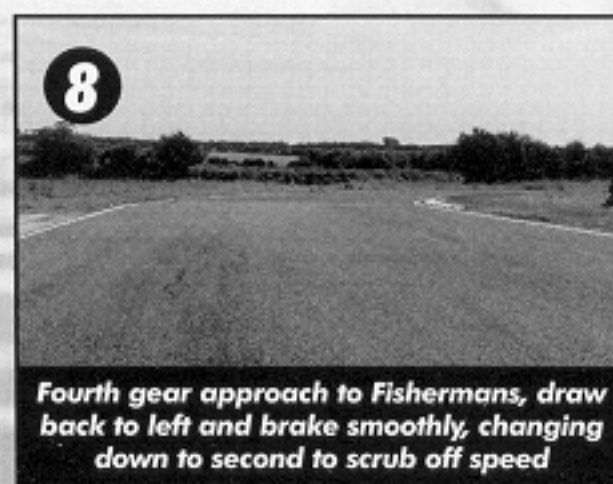
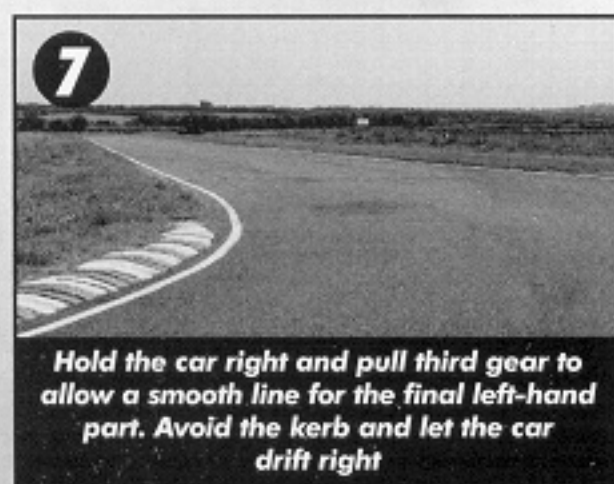
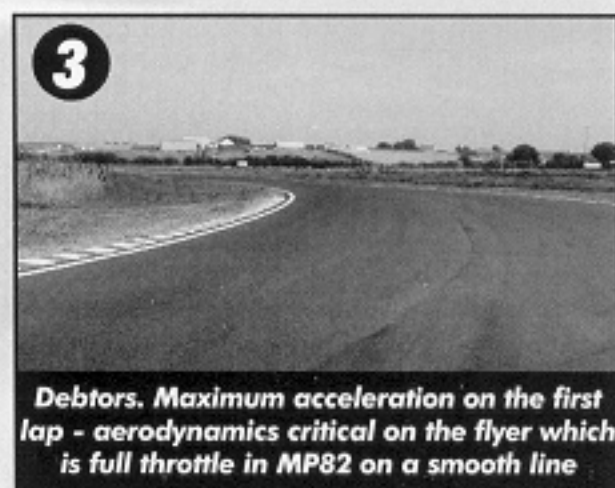
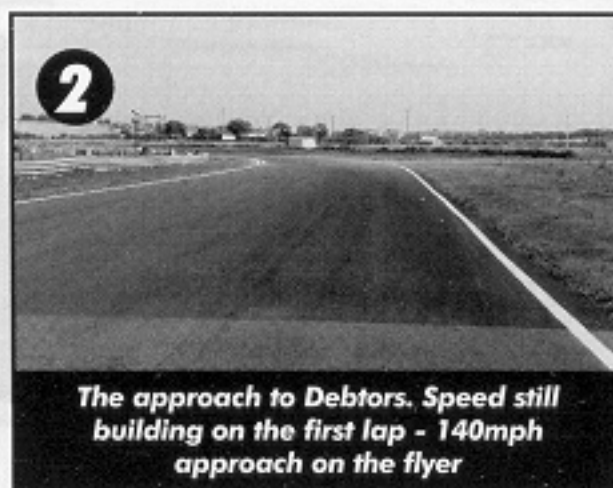
The tyre wall obstacle that is the artificial Paddock Chicane looks daunting and has two distinct parts; the right/left in and the left/right out. The brakes on the MP82 allow you to pass the 50 yard line before standing hard on the middle pedal, braking and turning right into the mouth of the chicane while changing down from fourth to second. Get back on the power during the short centre section ready for the left/right flick under acceleration through the second element. This usually induces oversteer, requiring opposite lock

correction back on to the straight.

The next section of track down the straight and round the Hairpin is only used on the British Championship event, as the Northern Ireland series turns in behind the control tower after the Paddock Chicane. Change up to fourth gear on the approach to the Hairpin, stay left, brake and drop down three gears to first in a straight line before turning in late, almost level with the apex. This will require a lot of right hand lock. Squeeze the power on as early as possible, using the full width of the track as you head for the startline and the second lap. Top gear arrives under full power passing the pits, which on the flying lap means around 140mph on the approach to the lefthand kink at Debtors.

The aerodynamic set-up to take Debtors flat is critical, but providing the right wing setting is chosen for the MP82, the car holds steady at full throttle. It's possible to use only half the road when a smooth line is taken from the right side of the track to the left, just brushing the inside kerb. Not enough front wing and even the full width of the track seems too narrow. On the flying lap the bumpy approach to Colonial requires that you brake a little earlier to allow for the faster speed, then it's Fisherman's, Budweiser and the Paddock Chicane before the finish line at the back of the Paddock itself.

Hopefully you've just done 2.5 miles, including about 20 corners, in just over 100 seconds.





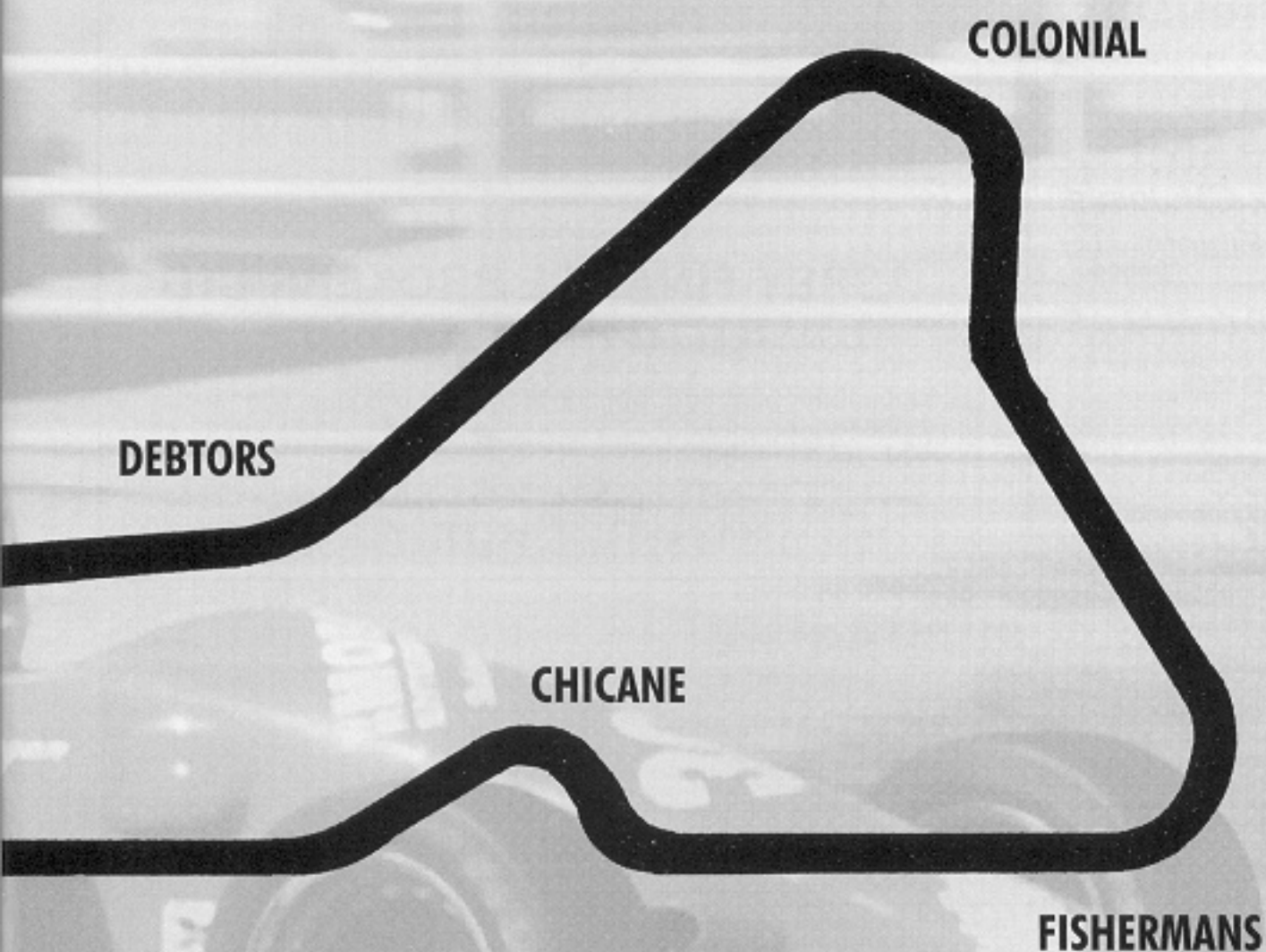
4 Colonial. Bumpy approach, left of centre entry and down to second gear



5 Allow car to drift into the middle of the track after the first apex...



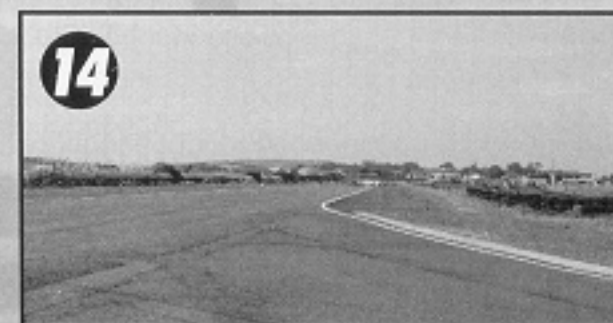
6 ...before squeezing right to get a late apex on the final part of the right-hander



10 Clip the second kerb at mid-point and squeeze the throttle. Outside kerb can be used in dry conditions



12 Turn in late for Budweiser's first right-hand section, hold the car right



14 Now in third gear, use the smooth concrete on the right to ease the line on to the straight and grab fourth for the run to the Paddock Chicane



18 Down three gears to first in a straight line ready for late turn-in



19 Turn in late, almost level with the apex. A lot of right-hand lock will be required



20 Squeeze the power on as early as possible, using the full width of the road as you head for the startline and the second lap