

## SO YOU WANT TO BE A MARSHAL

By Terri O'Leary (Evil Pumpkin)

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No probably not. Marshaling has received a lot of bad press over the last couple of years and if that's all you know about marshaling then you probably have no interest at all in trying it out!

So why do we do it? Well there's a simple answer to that question – we love motorsport. If you've ever been to a race meeting at any circuit then you already know that the atmosphere is incredible. The excitement, the sheer fun of being with a group of like minded people all there for the same reason – racing? In fact, it's probably the main reason you go is to spectate. OK, now take that feeling – and multiply it by 100 – and that's the reason we marshal.

Marshaling is one of the most rewarding ways to spend your time in motorsport. You get a fabulous view of the racing, you get to meet and become familiar with the competitors, you gain a unique insight into the world of motor racing and you learn new skills at the same time. There are many different forms of marshaling – too many to write about here! From rallies to circuit racing, from lawnmowers to monster trucks, from karts to superbikes and any other kind of racing you can think of that involves at least 2 wheels and a engine! No matter what your preferences are, there's a marshaling niche for you.

Different racing classes have different marshaling duties – and duties also vary from country to country depending on the organization of the marshals clubs involved. But two duties that are reasonably constant are course marshaling and flag marshaling. Course marshaling ranges from the basic – pushing a car out of a gravel trap – to the more complicated such as providing fire cover. Flag marshaling is an art form and is something you can learn to live and breathe if you're one of the good ones.

I'm not going to lie about it – marshaling isn't easy. It takes up quite a bit of your spare time (although how much time is entirely up to you) and there are days when you have to stand in the pouring rain for 8 hours – days when you don't get a lunch break – days when you get a really boring post. Days when you feel downright unappreciated and wonder why you bother. But for most of us, those days are outweighed by the good days. Days when you deal with an incident and know that you did a really good job – and that someone out there is still racing because of the role you played. Days when you work seamlessly with the members of your crew and enjoy a camaraderie that you may never find anywhere else. Days when you laugh so hard, your ribs are sore. In most of our lives, we work 40 hours a week in a job where sometimes you wonder why you bother and whether anything you did made any difference at all. Marshaling fills that gap in your life. It makes you feel useful. Everything you do as a marshal, no matter how small, makes a difference to someone's life. Whether it's helping a driver out of a gravel trap so they can continue racing or assisting at a more serious incident – it makes a difference.

Very few things in the world can beat the adrenaline rush of watching a field full of cars flying off the grid towards you at top speed into a hairpin corner! You're probably wondering how safe it is. Well, that depends on your point of view. Is it as safe as staying home watching TV all weekend? No definitely not. Is it safer than crossing a busy road during rush hour? More than likely, yes. Accidents do happen. Sometimes – very rarely – those accidents are fatal. When that happens, the worldwide community of marshals mourn together and share our pain. But fatal accidents are very rare. Overall, marshaling worldwide has an excellent safety record.

The worldwide community of marshals. Interesting phrase, but it's true. With the advent of the Internet and websites like 10-10ths, it's become easier to contact marshals in other countries and discuss marshaling issues. I have marshaling friends in the UK, US, South Africa, Netherlands, Germany, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia ... the list goes on. Marshaling is a great equalizer – it is a community – and it's not confined by location, creed, colour, gender or whether you love or hate marmite!

So those are some of the things that I love about marshaling and what keeps me doing it – even after a rainy no-lunch day. When I went to my very first training session, the instructor told us “marshaling isn't for everyone”. But if you find it's for you and you work hard and learn, you'll find it the most rewarding thing you've ever done – and it will greatly increase your self-confidence.”

Why not give it a try – the only way to find out is to do it. Go along to your local circuit and look for the boys and girls in orange – or black – or white ... and talk to them. They' would be able to put you in touch with someone who can help you find out more. You can go out on the banks for a trial session – there's no obligation to keep doing it! Pop into the Marshals Forum on the 10-10<sup>th</sup>s and have a chat with us here. You could also visit [www.marshalspost.com](http://www.marshalspost.com) which has details of marshaling clubs all around the world.

Marshaling can help you be a little bit more you.