

Test Drive Le Mans Game Guide Final

by Wolf Feather

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This walkthrough was originally written for Test Drive Le Mans on the PSX, but the walkthrough is still applicable to the PC version of the game.

TEST DRIVE LE MANS: GAME GUIDE

by

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SPACING AND LENGTH

For optimum readability, this driving guide should be viewed/printed using a monowidth font, such as Courier. Check for font setting by making sure the numbers and letters below line up:

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ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZabcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

This guide is nearly 20 pages in length using Courier 12 font in the Macintosh version of Microsoft Word 98.

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INTRODUCTION

Shortly after I bought my original PlayStation console in 1999, I happened upon Test Drive Le Mans. I remember really liking the game at the time, although my driving skills were not truly up to par at that time, so I eventually sold off the game.

Since then, I have upgraded to a PlayStation2 and greatly improved my driving skills. I have also owned Le Mans 24 Hours (for PS2) since its release in August 2001 and have recently been thinking that it would be great to reacquire Test Drive Le Mans to see how the two games compare, especially in their renditions of the famous Le Mans circuit (La Circuit de la Sarthe).

Stepping backward from the PS2 Le Mans 24 Hours to the PSX Test Drive Le Mans is very a eye-opening experience. In Quick Race mode, where car adjustments such as fuel and aerodynamics are not available, car handling is VERY twitchy, to the extent that even the cars with the best handling characteristics are simply not driveable. Some of the other game modes, however, DO allow for car adjustments; if the right combination can be found, the cars can be driven fairly well... although the cars will still be somewhat twitchy in terms of handling. Le Mans 24 Hours is also more of a simulation-style game, whereas Test Drive Le Mans is much more of an arcade-style game with a (very) few tuning and adjustment options available.

What disappointed me most, however, is the 'lack of

faithfulness' to the real-world Le Mans circuit. Le Mans 24 Hours does an excellent job of this; real-world drivers can complete a lap at Le Mans in about 3:40, give or take a few seconds. Test Drive Le Mans, however, severely compresses the Le Mans circuit, to the point that I currently have a record lap time of 1:24.86 :- (This is most likely due to the limitations of the PlayStation itself (the console for which the game was designed), but this also means that there is no true sense of the immense length of the world-famous Mulsanne/Hunaudieres straight; also, there are also virtually NO elevation changes in Test Drive Le Mans. For those with any level of familiarity with Le Mans 24 Hours, the Le Mans circuit in Test Drive Le Mans is definitely recognizable, but also very much an abomination :- (

Just to clarify, Test Drive Le Mans is definitely NOT a bad game!!!! However, despite being an arcade-style game, Test Drive Le Mans definitely does require better-than-average driving skills. As such, it is NOT a good game for young children, as they will quickly become frustrated at their lack of success (especially in Quick Race mode). Some measure of patience is certainly required in any driving game, but Test Drive Le Mans requires a lot more patience than any other driving/racing game I have ever played - either on PlayStation OR PlayStation2.

Portions - primarily the two Circuit Details sections - of this guide have been lifted from my Le Mans 24 Hours Game Guide and Le Mans 24 Hours: Le Mans 2000 Guide, with alterations made where appropriate. In the Le Mans and Test Course (Bugatti) circuit details, where the corner/segment names are known, I have translated these names to English and dropped any accent markings, as standard text-only Internet documents are based on the English-language ASCII character set. Also, circuit detail information is for dry-conditions daylight driving; appropriate modifications are required for nighttime driving and driving in other weather conditions.

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GAME MODES

There are several game modes available in Test Drive Le Mans. To check progress in the various game modes (except Multiplayer Mode), go to Game Progress (available within Options from the Main Menu).

Le Mans: This mode comprises both Amateur and Professional difficulties. The options here are 12-minute, 24-minute, 2-hour, and 24-hour races at Le Mans (La Circuit de la Sarthe). The 12-minute, 24-minute, and 2-hour races condense a full 24-hour race into the chosen time frame, so that events in Le Mans mode are run during both day and night. Once a difficulty level has been selected, players must choose a team for which to drive based upon offers via e-mail; each team has a particular car, so team choice affects the car available for the big race. Each team's car can be first tested, using the Test Course (based upon the real-world Bugatti Circuit). Qualifying is a good option, used to attain the best possible starting position for the big race.

Arcade:

Challenge: There are six different Challenge series.

There are no opportunities to adjust car characteristics before a race, and there are also initially only two cars from which to choose. New cars are unlocked as you progress through Challenge series. A win is required to advance to new Challenges.

Time Attack: There are six different Time Attack series.

There are no opportunities to adjust car characteristics before a race, and there are also initially only two cars from which to choose. New cars are unlocked as you progress through Time Attack series. A win is required to advance to new Time Attack series. However, as you progress through Time Attack, the object is to try to set new lap records. Also, there is a countdown timer, which is reset every time you pass through a Checkpoint; if you fail to reach the next Checkpoint before the timer runs out, you will automatically fail/lose that Time Attack attempt, and must restart.

Quick Race: This is certainly the most unforgiving mode in the game, as there are NO opportunities to adjust car characteristics before a race. The player DOES get to choose the venue for the race, however.

Championship Mode: Once a team has been selected for the ten-race season, the action begins!!! For each race, players are given the option to qualify for the ten-lap races. Points are awarded in FIA style:

First Place: 10 points
Second Place: 6 points
Third Place: 4 points
Fourth Place: 3 points
Fifth Place: 2 points
Sixth Place: 1 point

This means that, with twelve cars in the field, only half the entrants will receive points in each race. The object is to have the most possible points at the end of the season to thus win the Championship :-)

Multiplayer Mode: Le Mans, 3-race Championship, and 5-race Championship for two players at once.

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TUNING

Tuning options in Test Drive: Le Mans are extremely limited. Here are the options presented (only in certain game modes) and what adjustments will do to affect car handling:

Aerodynamics

Aerodynamics affects the airflow over the car, which in turn affects car handling in acceleration, top-end speed, and cornering ability.

Low: This setting will provide the fastest-possible acceleration and highest-possible top-end speed, but cornering will be more difficult.

Medium: This is the 'middle ground' setting, and may be just fine for many players.

High: This is the opposite of the Low setting, thus resulting in a low top-end speed (important on long straightaways, such as at the Mulshanne Circuit) and slower acceleration (important from a standing start and when exiting slow corners), but will improve cornering ability.

Fuel: Players can select the amount of fuel a car has at the beginning of a race or qualifying attempt, and how much fuel to put into the car when serviced in Pit Lane during a race. The amount of fuel does affect car handling, as a full fuel tank weighs more than a nearly-empty fuel tank. Car handling will most be affected in acceleration from a standing start or from slow corners, and in cornering.

Steering: This affects how quickly the car reacts to steering inputs by the driver/player. For many players, this can usually be kept at its neutral/middle setting.

Tires

Hard Slicks: Hard Slicks have the longest possible tire durability, but provide the least amount of pavement grip. Only experts should use Hard Slicks.

Soft Slicks: Soft Slicks are the exact opposite of Hard Slicks, providing maximum pavement grip but the shortest durability. Using Soft Slicks will mean more trips to Pit Lane just to change tires; also, off-course excursions (through sand and grass) will shorten tire durability through increased tire wear.

Intermediates: These are good tires to use when the road conditions are damp.

Wets: Wets should be used in rainy conditions. The other tire compounds do not adequately shove the water out of the way to allow the car to move forward and corner as well as it should in wet conditions.

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TIPS

In most race modes, the player will always start from the final position on the grid. Once the race begins, passing can legally take place; there is absolutely NO reason to wait until crossing the Start/Finish Line to begin passing other cars. This can mean gaining valuable positions immediately, as the other cars at the rear of the field tend to accelerate quite slowly and/or make mistakes (such as knocking each other off the circuit).

While Yellow Flags (slow and do not pass) and Blue Flags (pull aside to let faster cars pass) are used in Test Drive Le Mans, there are no penalties for not obeying the flags shown. Therefore, make use of Yellow Flags to pass one or more cars as they are greatly slowed, and continue fending off challengers even if the Blue Flag is shown.

Also relating to flags, the Oil Flag will occasionally appear. When it does, speed is still important, but cornering is likely to be trickier than normal, possibly resulting in a major spin (and thus possibly a collision).

To win the Le Mans Mode races, you need only win at any ONE time period given. Therefore, for fastest advancement through the game, select the 12-minute race for each of the car categories (GT2, Prototype, and GT1). When you go to Game Progress (in the Options selection from the Main Menu), you will see that you have been credited with completing Le Mans for the car category and difficulty level (Amateur or Pro) selected. For those stepping backward from Le Mans 24 Hours, this is different from LM24H, which requires winning the Le Mans (and Petit Le Mans) races at ALL the time periods provided in the game in order to attain the 100% game completion rating.

At Arnage, there is a point about 2/3 through the course (in the standard configuration; this is about 1/3 through the course in the reverse configuration) where the barrier gives way on the inside of a corner, revealing a nice wide patch of grass. To gain time and hopefully make a few passes, make use of this grassy area. However, the grass will cause the car to slide, so it is best to turn sharply into the grass well before the corner, and allow the slipperiness of the grass and the momentum of the car to carry the vehicle through this 'shortcut' to the pavement on the other side, where the wheels will regain grip; it may be best to lift off the accelerator while taking this 'shortcut.' It is possible that the car will bang the outside barrier on corner exit, but it should only be a sideswipe which will not slow the car much. This is an excellent place to make passes (especially around packs of traffic), as the official corner is a sharp perpendicular turn, thus the CPU-controlled cars will slow tremendously to clear the official corner.

Near the end of Maison Blanche, there is a tight left-right-left segment. Because races at Maison Blanche are typically run at dusk, it is difficult to discern the corners, as the barriers all look essentially the same. Slowing a little is certainly a good idea here until intimate familiarity of the circuit is gained. In the reverse configuration, this segment is much easier to see, and can be cleared easily at full acceleration unless encumbered by traffic.

Especially in Time Attack Mode, be careful about banging other cars or bumping the barriers. Time Attack Mode requires placing first AND finishing each segment of the given circuit before time expires. One or two minor offs during a Time Attack race will not usually be detrimental to success. However, banging a barrier or another car and getting spun around WILL be detrimental to success; in this case, restart. This same advice also holds true for EVERY race at Pro level.

For those stepping backward from Le Mans 24 Hours, Test Drive: Le Mans does NOT have the bands of red lights to indicate corners or the entrance to Pit Lane at the Le Mans circuit. Therefore, until intimate familiarity with the circuit is attained, be wary of missing the Michelin and Motorola Chicanes and instead banging the barriers.

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CIRCUIT DETAILS: LE MANS

This is without question the longest circuit of the game... and quite likely the reason players buy or rent this game!!! It is IMPERATIVE to learn this circuit flawlessly during daylight conditions, as visibility is unbelievably poor at night and in wet-weather conditions.

Turn 1 (Dunlop Curve): This is a rather nice right-hand fade which can be taken flat-out. However, it may be a good idea to begin braking for Dunlop Chicane when exiting Dunlop Curve. An elevation change begins here. Pit Exit rejoins the main circuit at the entry to Dunlop Curve.

Turns 2-4 (Dunlop Chicane): Given the continual upward slope through Dunlop Chicane, it is extremely easy to slip off the pavement on either side of the circuit... and both sides are filled with plenty of kitty litter. Braking well before entering the Dunlop Chicane is of UTMOST importance - especially in wet conditions - as the corners of the chicane are rather tight. At the beginning of a race, all the traffic can make this segment even more treacherous than it would be normally - which should be enough incentive to try to qualify on pole.

Straightaway: The significant hill crests as you pass underneath the big Dunlop tire.

Turns 5-6 (Red Mound S): This left-right chicane begins just after passing the Ferris Wheel (lit with bright red lights at night) on the left side of the course, and is a good reference point to use in picking your braking zone. The barriers are rather close to the pavement on both sides through the chicane, so any off-pavement excursions will certainly result in sliding along the rails; this is especially important in case you carry too much speed through this chicane.

Turns 7-9 (Red Mound Curve): This is a set of three right-hand semi-corners which can usually be taken flat-out, unless you find yourself encumbered by traffic. However, keep a tight line to the apex of each of the three semi-corners, or you may find yourself with a few wheels in the sand and grass on the outside of the course. The outside of the final corner is actually paved (where public roads form the major portion of the circuit), so this can be used as a good swing-out area if necessary, and can also be used to pass a small group of cars on the inside of the corner; beware the outside barrier here as you will be likely be carrying A LOT of speed.

The 'Back Stretch:' Approximately one minute, forty seconds is spent here on the back side of the circuit. This is without question the best place for drafting and passing other cars. The 'Back Stretch' (the Hunaudieres Straight) is broken by two chicanes.

Straightaway (Hunaudieres Straight - Part I): This is the longest straightaway of the circuit, and very good top-end

speeds can be achieved here, especially if you were able to blast your way through Red Mound Curve without even tapping the brakes. However, there is no room for error if you get involved in a three-abreast situation, as the barriers come almost directly up to the pavement. During the day, look for the distance-to-corner markers or else you will miss Motorola Chicane (flashing red lights alert you to the chicane at night and in poor-visibility conditions). All along this straightaway, make use of the draft if at all possible to increase your overall speed.

Turns 10-12 (Motorola Chicane): This is the same chicane format as the Dunlop Chicane (right-left-right), but wider and without the hill. Beware the barriers. In poor visibility conditions, the first corner of the chicane is easily identifiable by the red lights; during the day, however, the chicane is very difficult to see from a distance, so be sure to look for the distance-to-corner markers.

Straightaway (Hunaudieres Straight - Part II): Very good top-end speeds can be achieved here. However, there is no room for error if you get involved in a three-abreast situation, as the barriers come almost directly up to the pavement. During the day, look for the distance-to-corner markers or else you will miss Michelin Chicane (flashing red lights alert you to the chicane at night). All along this straightaway, make use of the draft if at all possible to increase your overall speed.

Turns 13-15 (Michelin Chicane): This is exactly like the Motorola Chicane, but is a left-right-left combination with a tighter initial turn. In poor-visibility conditions, the first corner of the chicane is easily identifiable by the red lights; during the day, however, the chicane is very difficult to see from a distance, so be sure to look for the distance-to-corner markers.

Straightaway (Hunaudieres Straight - Part III): Yet another long straightaway, but with a small fade to the right almost one-third of the way along its length. After clearing the small rise (similar to a bridge over a small country stream, about two-thirds of the way along the straightaway), look for the distance-to-corner markers for Mulsanne Curve. All along this straightaway, make use of the draft if at all possible to increase your overall speed.

Mulsanne: If you can carry enough speed into Mulsanne and have sufficient tire grip, you can essentially treat both Mulsanne Hump and Mulsanne Curve as one long double-apex corner by riding up on the inside rumble strip of Mulsanne Curve. Mulsanne Hump and Mulsanne Curve together essentially form a 135-degree (double-apex) megacorner. It is very easy to go too wide exiting this megacorner, and CPU-controlled cars often will find themselves in the sand trap, so keep watch for such activity as you round Mulsanne Curve.

Turn 16 (Mulsanne Hump): The distance-to-corner markers actually are for the following right-hand turn, but no one

can afford to miss Mulsanne Hump, whose apex is almost exactly in line with the 100m marker and bounded on the left by a nasty barrier.

Turn 17 (Mulsanne Curve): The distance-to-corner markers are actually for THIS corner. This is a ninety-degree corner requiring moderate braking and a solid, clean racing line to keep out of the sand trap. It may help to keep tight to the apex and roll the right tires up on the inside rumble strips; however, the barrier is just barely off the pavement, so do not edge TOO far toward the inside of the corner here, or your car will be bounced back across the pavement and possibly into the sand trap on the outside of Mulsanne Curve.

Straightaway: This straightaway has three fades to the right along its length. All along this straightaway, make use of the draft if at all possible to increase your overall speed. At the apex of the third fade, begin braking for the Indianapolis Curve.

Turn 18 (Indianapolis Curve): This left-hand right-angle corner can easily be missed, so use plenty of braking beginning at the apex of the third fade along the previous straightaway. Do not cut this corner too sharp or you will likely bang the barrier on the inside of the turn, which is set rather close to the pavement. Indianapolis Curve is marked by bright red lights.

Turn 19 (Arnage Curve): After a very brief straightaway, this is a right-hand right-angle corner. The trick here is to NOT come up to full speed following the Indianapolis Curve, thus saving your brakes a little (which is extremely important in endurance races). Do not cut this corner too sharp or you will likely bang the barrier on the inside of the turn, which is set very close to the pavement. If you go wide, say 'Bonjour' (daytime) or 'Bonsoir' (evening/nighttime) to the outside barrier. Likewise, if you carry too much speed over the inside rumble strip, countersteer immediately to avoid a spin (and that still may not help). Arnage Curve is marked by bright red lights.

Straightaway: This 'straightaway' has four fades (left-right-left-right). After the fourth fade, get ready for the fast-approaching Porsche Curve.

'Chicane:' This next segment essentially forms an extra-wide right-left-left-right (classic 'bus stop') chicane as it leaves the public roads. Extreme care is required here, as the pavement is extremely narrow.

Turn 20 (Porsche Curve): Light braking will likely be needed here, although - with a tight racing line - experts can probably blast through here at top speed if not encumbered by traffic. An uphill rise begins here.

Turn 21: The rise crests here as the course turns to the left. The barrier on the left is very close to the pavement here.

Turns 22-23: The course elevation drops at Turn 22 as the circuit turns to the left, making this corner more challenging than it would at first appear. Turn 23 follows immediately, turning to the right. The left-side barrier is extremely close to the pavement through these two corners.

Turns 24-27 (Prairie): There are four significant semi-corners (right-left-right-left) here. Top speed can be carried all the way through Prairie, but only with a flawless racing line, else you risk dropping a wheel in the grass and slowing yourself down. On exiting Turn 27, the single yellow line marking the Pit Entry begins on the right; often, even the computer-controlled cars which are not going to Pit Lane will be straddling or driving to the right of this Pit Lane Line.

Turns 28-31 (White House): These tight left-right-left-right S-curves are the finale of a rather lengthy lap of the Le Mans circuit. The pavement here is extremely narrow, making safe passing impossible; if any passing is to be done here, it is only by ramming another car off the pavement and into the kitty litter. The entire area is surrounded by massive sand traps, so if you slip off the pavement, you will be slowed almost to a snail's crawl, losing valuable time and allowing those behind you to pass with the greatest of ease. A VERY brief straightaway separates the first left-right combination from the second. Note that to keep your time in this section to a minimum, you will need to make use of the rumble strips on the inside of each corner; however, if you come through ANY corner of White House carrying too much speed (especially in wet racing conditions), the car will bounce severely and perhaps spin or slide out into the kitty litter.

Pit Entry: Just like White House, Pit Entry is a double-chicane, so severe braking is required before reaching the first corner. Pit Entry is also surrounded by sand traps, and the outside of the second corner of the double-chicane has a barrier to protect cars in Pit Entry from out-of-control cars sliding off the main circuit.

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CIRCUIT DETAILS: TEST COURSE (BUGATTI)

The Test Course in Test Drive: Le Mans is actually the real-world Bugatti Circuit, the permanent section of the Le Mans Circuit. Bugatti is a rather technical circuit, so top-end speed is generally not the best way to set up a car here. Those familiar with the Nevers Magny-Cours F1 circuit will certainly appreciate its similarity to the four semi-parallel straightaways on the first half of the Bugatti circuit.

Turn 1 (Dunlop Curve): This is a rather nice right-hand fade which can be taken flat-out. However, it may be a good idea to begin braking for Dunlop Chicane when exiting Dunlop Curve. An elevation change begins here.

Turns 2-4 (Dunlop Chicane): Given the continual upward slope through Dunlop Chicane, it is extremely easy to slip off the

pavement on either side of the circuit and both sides are filled with plenty of kitty litter. Braking well before entering the Dunlop Chicane is of UTMOST importance as the corners of the chicane are rather tight. At the beginning of a race, all the traffic can make this segment even more treacherous than it would be normally.

Semi-parallel Straightaways: These four semi-parallel straightaways can produce an unexpected aural effect. Once traffic stretches out all around the circuit, whenever you are on the middle straightaways, you will almost certainly hear cars speeding past you on the straightaways to either side of you.

Straightaway: The significant hill crests as you pass underneath the big Dunlop tire.

Turn 5 (Chapel): This is a rather tight right-hand hairpin which will require moderate braking on entrance. Chapel begins immediately after passing the tall Ferris Wheel on the left.

Turn 6 (Museum Curve): This is a wide left-hand hairpin with an extensive sand trap to the outside of the pavement. Of the three consecutive hairpins, this is by far the easiest to handle, allowing for most cars to still carry some considerable speed through the hairpin, but braking is still required before entry.

Turn 7 (Green Garage): Yet another tight right-hand hairpin requiring harsh braking. If you miss your braking zone, you will find yourself beached in the kitty litter to the outside of the hairpin.

Turns 8-9 (Ox Way S): Hard braking is required here after the fourth of the semi-parallel straightaways. Beware the sand traps to the outside of each corner, and make sure not to overcompensate and roll through the grass on the inside of the corners. Turn 8 begins immediately after passing underneath the Bridgestone bridge.

Turns 10-11 (Blues S): Brake early or Turn 10 will have you either out in the kitty litter or spinning around in the middle of the pavement. The right-handed Turn 10 is rather straightforward.

Turns 12-13 (Connection): Pit Entry is to the right immediately before entering Connection, so beware of slower cars here. The Connection complex is extremely complex, as the final chicanes and the Pit Entry of the Le Mans course rejoin the Bugatti course here. Just make two right-hand, ninety-degree turns at a moderate pace (likely making good use of the rumble strips) and you will soon find yourself safely back on the Pit Straight. The pavement here is extremely narrow, making safe passing impossible; if any passing is to be done here, it is only by ramming another car off the pavement and into the kitty litter.

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CONTACT INFORMATION

For questions, rants, raves, comments of appreciation, etc., or to be added to my e-mail list for updates to this driving guide, please contact me at: FEATHER7@IX.NETCOM.COM; also, if you have enjoyed this guide and feel that it has been helpful to you, I would certainly appreciate a small donation via PayPal (<http://www.paypal.com/>) using the above e-mail address.

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Wolf Feather Jamie Stafford
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Just as there are many parts needed to make a human a human, there's a remarkable number of things needed to make an individual what they are.
- Major Kusanagi, _Ghost in the Shell_

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What isn't remembered never happened. - _Serial Experiments Lain_
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