

Published based on [AMG Driving Academy - Trackside Experience](#).

AMG Driving Academy - Trackside Experience

[caption id="attachment_41695" align="aligncenter" width="540" caption="AMG Driving Experience - Click above for picture gallery"]



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The AMG driving academy is a global initiative from Mercedes Benz to train enthusiasts and Mercedes owners to skillfully and safely drive AMG vehicles with increased driving pleasure and better safety. The courses offered are the Emotion Tour, Basic Training, Advance Training, Pro training, Winter Sporting and Masters SLS AMG GT3. Mercedes Benz has collaborated with the Buddh International Circuit to bring the AMG Driving Academy to India and will kickstart 2012 with the Basic Training programme. Lucky, as many will call me and i shall gracefully admit, i got a chance to be a part of the exclusive preview which was organized for select media on the eve of the 11th Auto Expo.

The Driving Academy will be the first of its kind in India and third outside Germany. The participants will be trained by experienced German drivers. There will be total of maximum 64 participants per year with the course including both theory and practical sessions. The course will span out into 2 day sessions per quarter at the circuit which is total 8 days in a year trackside. Course fee will be Rs 75,000 per year with Mercedes Benz owners getting a special price tag of Rs 50,000 per year. The fee will cover all the trackside expenses. Travel and hotel arrangements will be borne by the participant. At the end of the year, the participants will get a Certificate stating that they have been trained by the AMG Driving school.



Getting to my experience with the AMG cars, the session started with us being introduced to our trainers. If you follow Formula 1, one face will seem too familiar. Bernd Maylander (right) is the official Formula 1 safety car driver since the last 12 seasons. As i will mention later, it was a breathtaking experience to sit alongside him on a hot lap around the circuit. Reinhold Renger (center) is the Chief Instructor at the AMG Driving Academy and one of the most senior instructors. Norman Simon (left) is an instructor and race driver. All the instructors at the academy have more than 10 years of professional racing experience.

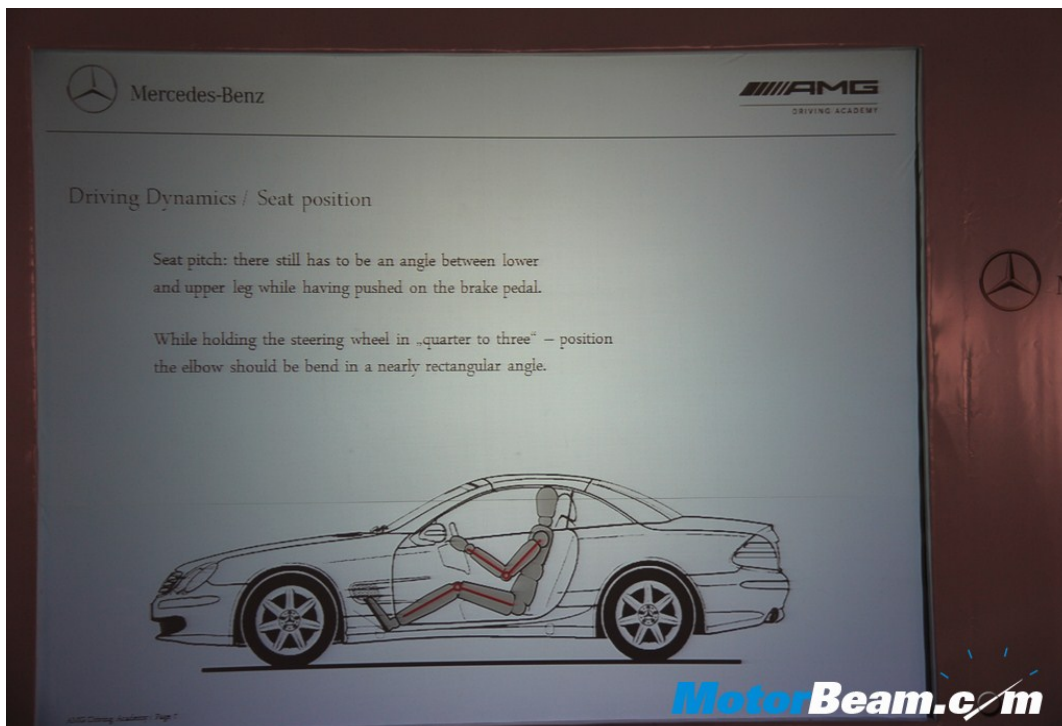
Our AMG experience was divided into 4 parts -

1. Theory
2. Taxi with Bernd Maylander
3. Lead Follow on the Race Track behind the Safety Car
4. Slaloming to get a feel of Handling and ABS Brake

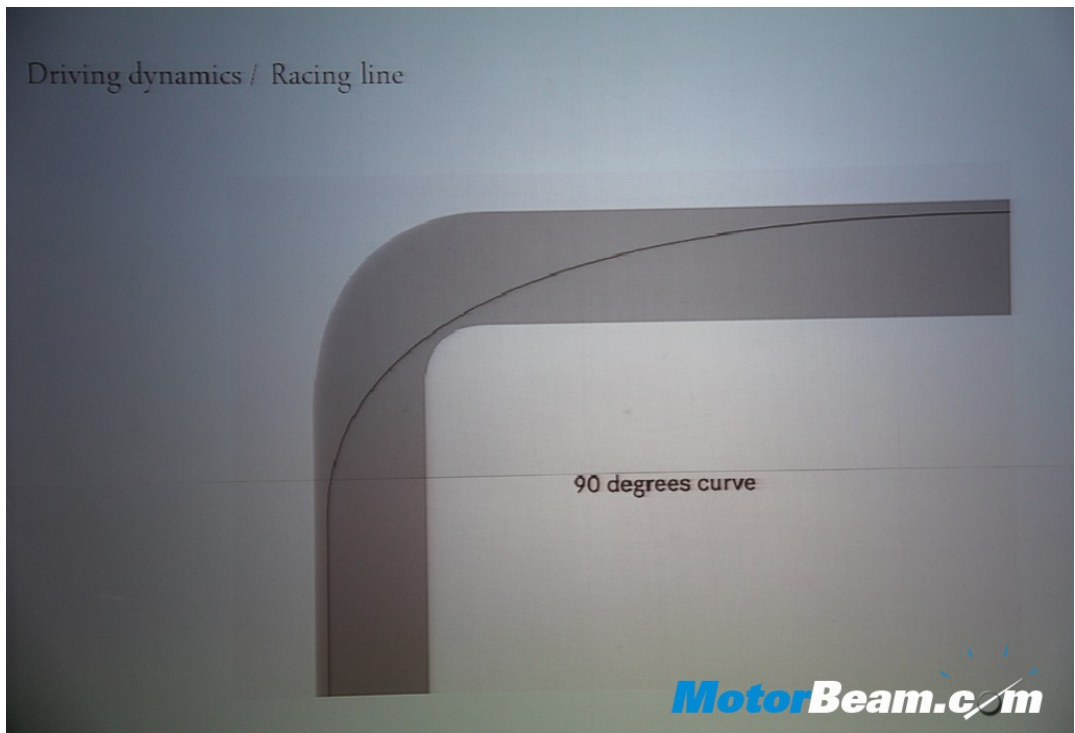


1. Theory

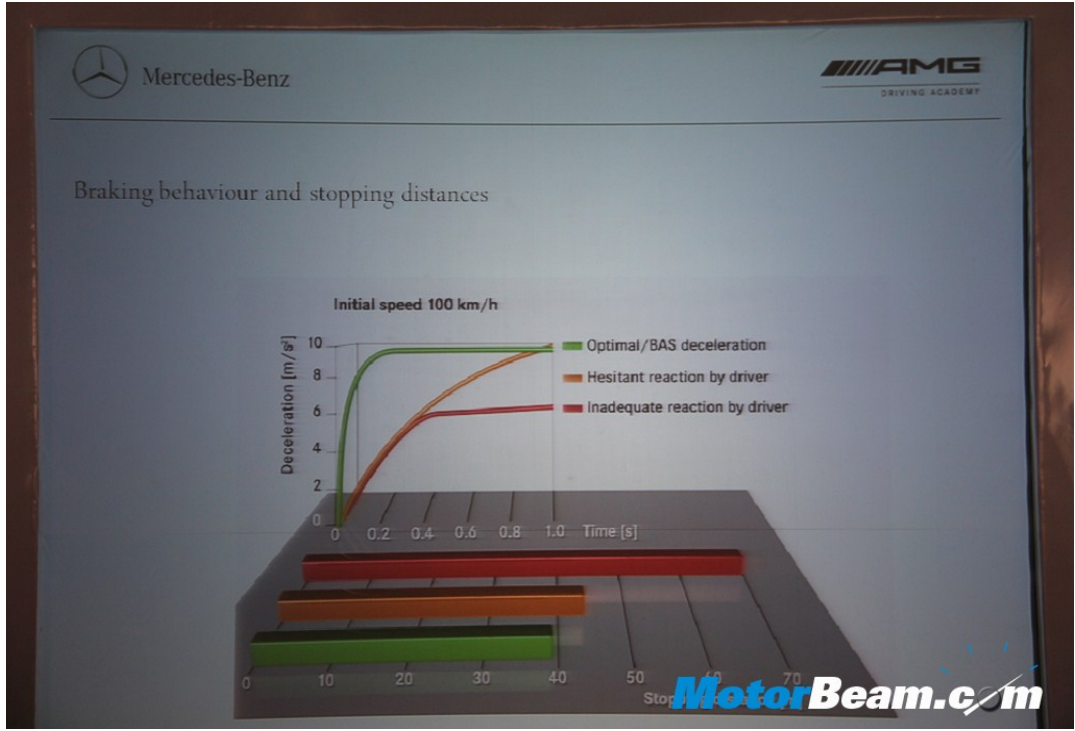
Renger gave us a few important instructions and threw light on the Flag rules which have to be followed at the circuit. Seat positioning and steering principle were given special importance. The steering has to be held with both hands at all times. Other key things discussed were -



The first thing to do when you step into the car is to adjust the seat accordingly as shown.



Different racing lines and how they should be taken to get the fastest time on the track.



Braking behavior and reaction time graph.



Observation is important and the participant should focus far ahead as shown. Amongst other things, the importance of ABS and ESP were discussed.



2. Taxi with Maylander

The participants were split into 3 batches and my batch was the first to get a taxi ride with Maylander. With helmets on and seat belts fastened, we head out of the pits in the C63 AMG. The C63 AMG is powered by a 6.3 litre V8 engine which churns out 457 Bhp and 600 Nm Torque. Power to weight ratio is perhaps the best of all the AMG cars. As Maylander stepped the gas, i was thrown back into my seat with adrenaline swiftly rushing into my blood. The sound of the 6.3 ltr V8 was phenomenal and Maylander on the wheel was squeezing out the last bit from the entire 457 horses. The track had not been used since the inaugural Formula 1 Grand Prix and hence grip

levels were low. The tyres were squealing and the car was sideways with the track offering little grip, but i have to give it to Maylander. I have never seen anyone with such finesse and car control, no wonder he is driving the Formula 1 safety car since the last 12 years. We did 2 laps and were back into the pits. The brakes and tyres were smoking away to glory.



3. Lead Follow on the Race Track behind the Safety Car

In the next leg, we were to get into the cars and drive in formation behind the safety car. Before getting behind the wheel, i will briefly mention the cars present on the track.



Renger was behind the wheel of the Safety car, the awesome SLS AMG Gull-wing. Powered by a 6.3 ltr V8

engine, the SLS AMG produces 571 Bhp and 650 Nm torque and does 0 - 100 in a 3.8 seconds with a top speed of 317 kmph.



Cars meant for the participants were two C63 AMG's and an E63 AMG. I did see a SL63 AMG in the pits but did not see it on the track.



I was eagerly edging to get into the car and was put behind the wheel of the E63 AMG for my run on the track. I would have preferred the C63 ideally, since its lighter and sharper around the track but i had 68 Bhp more on hand as compared to the C63, so i wasn't really complaining. The E63 AMG is powered by the same 6.3 ltr V8 and produces 525 Bhp and 630 Nm torque and hit 100 from 0 in 4.5 seconds. The C63 AMG also stops the clock in the exact same time but the 68 horses extra on the E63 make up for its extra weight. The top speeds of both

have been limited to 250 kmph.

After adjusting my seat position and putting the car on Sports mode with a Stiffer suspension setting, i was ready to go. Renger came and had a check on the settings. All good. I maintained 60 kmph in the pits and steeped on the gas after i crossed the pit exit, the sound of this 6.3 ltr beast was phenomenal, soul soothing so as to speak, its till ringing in my ears.



The Buddh International circuit is the one which makes all this possible. Designed by non other than Herman Tilke, its an absolute masterpiece. In the picture above, the SLS is approaching turn 3, which is completely blind, you start turning in (right) and then you see the apex, absolutely brilliant. The elevation changes on the circuit are more apparent than what is appreciated on television.

[youtube:<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IN8RRiyWSR8> 540 375]

I got a taste of both understeer and oversteer and even missed the apex a couple of times. Grip levels were still far from ideal. On the start finish straight i was doing about 240 kmph, though i never did get a chance to look at the speedo again. The perfume for the day was burning rubber and the smell greeted me when i stepped out of the car. I will summarize my experience in this video. The frames have been accelerated to 165 percent to give it a race track feel.

Turn up the volume now and appreciate the sound of the E63 AMG on the Test Track.

[youtube:<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YpUsb6Q1Gkg> 540 375]



4. Slaloming to get a feel of Handling and ABS Brake

The last part of the programme was taken up by Norman and included going through slaloms to understand the handling and braking characteristics of the car. Unfortunately i was unable to get into the car for this part as we had come to the end of the allotted time.



To sum up, it was an eventful and a good days work for me. It is a great initiative from Mercedes Benz to start this kind of an Academy in India, a country which is at the bottom as far as motorsports are concerned. This program will not only help people extract the best out of their car but also train them on the importance of safety & basics of driving and will encourage motorsports in the country. I know a few people who will be willing to sign up, if they haven't done so already and the Buddh International Circuit is all set to be busy throughout the year. A certificate

sits pretty on my desk and reminds me of the roaring V8's on the track, its says "Trained by the AMG Driving Academy", this piece of paper puts a smile on my face & is absolutely priceless.

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