



1: BURNOUT : Start with a burnout—applying water to the tires, then smoking them for about 100 feet. Coughlin says, "Fans love 'em. We love 'em as drivers. You do that to heat the tires up and make sure you get a nice clean strip to get started on the race track."

2: STAGING : Pull forward to the pre-stage line. The top light on the Christmas tree (a lighting device at the center of the track) lights up. Quickly make last-second adjustments. Roll into the stage zone. The second light comes on the tree. You're ready.

3: THE RACE : Yellow lights appear on the tree. Floor the gas and let the clutch out. In less than half a second, the yellow lights turn green. From the starting line to the finish line, a round takes about six seconds with speeds reaching in excess of 200 mph. Says Coughlin, "That's how a run goes: Do a nice burnout, prepare and, once you're staged, make a pedal-to-the-metal run to the finish line."

ANATOMY OF A DRAGRACE