

Car Racing Competition @ WCCI2008

Software Manual

TORCS is car racing simulator designed to let users develop and run their own programmed driver-bots. This is usually done by (i) developing a C++ bot module following some TORCS guidelines and (ii) compiling and installing it.

The Car Racing Competition software extends TORCS and simplifies the development of bots by providing C++ and JAVA API easy to use for developing your own bot under your preferred OS. To this purpose, the competition software provides a client-server architecture that separates the development of the car controller from TORCS. Therefore, competitors just work on the client side using their preferred programming language and do not need any understanding of TORCS itself.

The competition software consists of two main modules: a server-bot module and a client module. The server-bot is a module for TORCS that provides the communication to the remote (client) controller and implements the models for the car sensors and the controller actions models. It does not have any intelligence. The client module provides to the competitors a representation of the current game status (received by the server-bot) and an easy-to-use interface to control the server-bot actions.

This document is organized as follows. Section 1 explains how to install the server-bot module. Section 2 provides a detailed description of the sensors and actions available to the controller which you can use when developing your own bot. Section 3 explains how sensors and actions can be used by the client module (i.e., what you need in practice to develop your entry to the competition). Finally, Section 4 explains how to configure TORCS to run your own bot once you developed it.

1 Installing the server-bot module

To provide a very accessible interface to TORCS we developed two modules to run TORCS in a client/server architecture. The server has been developed by providing two specific bot driver called *wcci2008competition* and *wcci2008trainer* that, instead of having its own intelligence, sends the game state to a client module and wait for a reply, i.e., an action to be performed by the controller. So to begin the competition, we first need to install TORCS and the competition server-package provided in this bundle.

1.1 Linux – from sources

1.1.1 Compiling TORCS

Download the “all-in-one Source Package for Linux and FreeBSD” from: <http://torcs.sourceforge.net/>. Then configure, compile and install TORCS following the instructions in the README provided with the TORCS source package. Additional information are available at <http://www.berniw.org/> (TORCS → Installation – from left bar).

KNOWN ISSUE: depending on the distributin you are using, it could be necessary to run `./configure --x-libraries=/path/to/your/X11/lib` (e.g. on OpenSUSE `--x-libraries=/usr/X11R6/lib/`).

1.1.2 Patching TORCS

To add some features to our client/server interface (e.g. the possibility of restarting the race directly from the client) you need to slightly modify the TORCS sources. To this purpose, download from the competition website the TORCS Patch for linux ([linux_v02.tgz](#) package) and unpack it into your base TORCS directory (i.e. where you run `./configure`). This will create a new directory called

wcci2008patch. Enter the wcci2008patch directory and run the do_patch.sh (run do_unpatch.sh to revert the modifications). You should be able to apply the patch with the following commands:

```
cp wcci2008patch.tgz /path/to/your/torcs/base/directory
cd /path/to/your/torcs/base/directory
tar xzf wcci2008patch.tgz
cd wcci2008patch
sh do_patch.sh [or do_unpatch.sh to revert changes]
```

Then rebuild torcs and re-install it:

```
make
make install (as root if necessary)
```

1.1.3 Installing server-bot

Now you need to install one (or both) of the server-bots provided, that are TORCS bot that would act as a server for your competition entry. Download and unpack the Linux Server package ([linux-v02.tgz](#)) where you prefer. To compile and install it, you need to have TORCS installed and you have to set properly the environment variables TORCS_BASE and MAKE_DEFAULT:

```
export TORCS_BASE=/path/to/your/torcs/base/directory
export MAKE_DEFAULT=$TORCS_BASE/Make-default.mk
```

Then, go in the directory where you unpacked the server-bot, compile and install it as follows:

```
make
make install (you might need to be root to run this command)
```

To check if the server-bot is properly installed, just run torcs and from the menu select:

Race → Quick Race → Configure Race → Accept.

If everything is installed correctly, you should find the *wcci2008competition* and/or *wcci2008trainer* bot in the list of “Not Selected Player” on the right.

1.2 Windows – binaries

1.2.1 Installing TORCS

Download *binary* version of TORCS for Windows from <http://torcs.sourceforge.net/> and install it.

1.2.2 Patching TORCS

For Windows we provide binaries containing both the changes to TORCS engine and the server-bot. Download the Windows Patch package ([win-patch.tgz](#)) from competition website and copy it in your TORCS directory (i.e. where you installed the game). Unpack it in that directory (it should ask for overwriting some files in that directory, answer always yes!). To check whether everything is properly installed, just run wtorcs and from the menu select:

Race → Quick Race → Configure Race → Accept.

You should be able to find the *wcci2008competition* bot in the list of “Not Selected Player” on the right.

1.3 Mac OsX

Unfortunately we are not currently able to provide a reasonable support to Mac users, as the latest version of TORCS seems to have problems under OsX. By the way all the client interfaces provided are fully working under Mac, therefore it is possible for Mac users to develop their entries as long as they can set up a windows or linux machine (either a virtual machine or a physical one) with a working server.

2 Sensors/Effectors Interface

In this section we describe the sensors and the effectors provided from our TORCS Competition Server.

2.1 Sensors Definition

The sensors give several information about your own car and, in general, the current game state. Table 1 shows a detailed description of the available sensors.

Name	Range (unit)	Description
angle	$[-\pi, +\pi]$ (rad)	Angle between the car direction and the direction of the track axis.
curLapTime	$[0, -]$ (s)	Time elapsed during current lap.
damage	$[0, -]$ (point)	Current damage of the car (the higher is the value the higher is the damage).
distFromStart	$[0, -]$ (m)	Distance of the car from the start line along the track line.
distRaced	$[0, -]$ (m)	Distance covered by the car from the beginning of the race
fuel	$[0, -]$ (l)	Current fuel level.
gear	$\{-1, 0, 1, \dots, 6\}$	Current gear: -1 is reverse, 0 is neutral and the gear from 1 to 6.
lastLapTime	$[0, -]$ (s)	Time to complete the last lap
opponents	$[0, 100]$ (m)	Vector of 18 sensors that detects the opponent distance in meters (range is $[0, 100]$) within a specific 10 degrees sector: each sensor covers 10 degrees, from $-\pi/2$ to $+\pi/2$ in front of the car.
racePos	1, 2, ...	Position in the race with respect to other cars.
rpm	$[2000-7000]$ (rpm)	Number of rotation per minute of the car engine.
speedX	- (km/h)	Speed of the car along the longitudinal axis of the car.
speedY	- (km/h)	Speed of the car along the transverse axis of the car.
track	$[0, 100]$ (m)	Vector of 19 range finder sensors: each sensor represents the distance between the track edge and the car. Sensors are oriented every 10 degrees from $-\pi/2$ and $+\pi/2$ in front of the car. Distance are in meters within a range of 100 meters. When the car is outside of the track (i.e., pos is less than -1 or greater than 1), these values are not reliable!
trackPos	-	Distance between the car and the track axis. The value is normalized w.r.t to the track width: it is 0 when car is on the axis, -1 when the car is on the right edge of the track and +1 when it is on the left edge of the car. Values greater than 1 or smaller than -1 means that the car is outside of the track.
wheelSpinVel	$[0, -]$ (rad/s)	Vector of 4 sensors representing the rotation speed of wheels.

Table 1: Description of available sensors. Range is reported with the corresponding unit measure (where it is possible). Symbol - means that range is not limited.

2.2 Effectors Definition

Effectors represent what action the client bot can perform and, therefore, how it can affect the current game state. Table 2 shows a detailed description of the effectors available. While `accel`, `brake`, `gear`,

and `steer` effectors represents properly some control actions on the car. The effector `meta` is used to affect the status of the game and was introduced to restart the current race.

Name	Range	Description
accel	[0,1]	Virtual gas pedal (0 means no gas, 1 full gas).
brake	[0,1]	Virtual brake pedal (0 means no brake, 1 full brake).
gear	-1,0,1,...,6	Gear value.
steering	[-1,1]	Steering value: -1 and +1 means respectively full left and right, that corresponds to an angle of 0.785398 rad.
meta	0,1	This is meta-control command: 0 do nothing, 1 ask competition server to restart the race.

Table 2: Description of available effectors

3 The client module

3.1 The C++ client

The client is a stand-alone console applications provided with C++ sources. In this section we first explain how it can be compiled and used and then we give some details about extending it to develop your own bot.

3.2 Compiling and using the client

Linux and OS X. First, unpack the client package in a directory. Than open a terminal in the directory where you unpacked the client and type `make` to compile it. The compilation process should end without any error or warning and you should now have an executable named `client` in you directory. Now, in order to launch the client you have to type from the terminal:

```
./client <ip> <port> <id> [<maxEpisodes> <maxSteps>]
```

where `<ip>` is the IP address of the machine where TORCS with the server-bot is running; `<port>` is the port on which the server-bot is listening (you must use 3001); `<id>` is your bot ID (you must use `wcci2008`); [`<maxEpisodes>` `<maxSteps>`] are optional parameters to set respectively the maximum number of learning episodes to perform and the maximum number of control steps in each episode.

Windows. First, unpack the client package in a directory. The package is provided with a DevC++ project (<http://www.bloodshed.net/devcpp.html>) but of course you can use your preferred C++ development tool/IDE. To compile it under Windows, just uncomment the first two line of `client.cpp` according to the instruction in the source file. In the package you find also the system library `WS2_32.lib` necessary for using the `WinSock` functions. You should be able to compile the client without any error or warning and build the `client.exe` executable. To launch the client open an MS-DOS console and type:

```
client.exe <ip> <port> <id>
```

where `<ip>` is the IP address of the machine where TORCS with the server-bot is running; `<port>` is the port on which the server-bot is listening (you must use 3001); `<id>` is your bot ID (you must use `wcci2008`); [`<maxEpisodes>` `<maxSteps>`] are optional parameters to set respectively the maximum number of learning episodes to perform and the maximum number of control steps in each episode.

3.3 Extending the client with your driver

To develop your own bot, you have to implement a C++ class that extends the `BaseDriver` class provided. In particular, it is necessary to implement three functions:

- `string drive(string sensors)`: where the input parameter `sensors` is a string representing the current state of the game perceived by your agent and the function has to return a string with the controls representation.
- `void onShutdown()`: this function is called at the end of the experiment (i.e. at the end of the race) before the client terminates
- `void onRestart()`: this function is called when the race is restarted upon client request (this function could be used to free memory, close files, saving solutions, etc.).

You are provided with an example of a very simple programmed controller: the `SimpleDriver`. The `SimpleDriver` is used by default to build the client executable. Therefore, in order to build a client executable to run your own driver:

- **on Windows**: uncomment the first lines of `client.cpp` and set properly the `__DRIVER_CLASS__` and `__DRIVER_INCLUDE__` to respectively the name of your implementation of the driver class and to the header file of your driver class.
- **on Linux and OS X**: In the `Makefile` set properly the `DRIVER_CLASS` and `DRIVER_INCLUDE` variables to respectively the name of your implementation of the driver class and to the header file of your driver class.

3.4 Time Constraints

In the development of your driver, keep in mind that the server has a timeout when calling the `drive()` function, to make it possible running the race in real time: your bot should be able to send back the action in **10ms** in order to keep in sync with the server. If your bot is slower, you would probably lose the sync with the server and so it is up to you to find out how to avoid that this will happen. In order to allow the application of computationally intensive techniques to develop the bots, we provide an additional server bot, called `wcci2008trainer`, with a timeout of **10 seconds**. Notice that the final evaluation will be performed with the same time constraints required by `wcci2008trainer`.

3.5 The JAVA client

Details of the JAVA implementation of the client can be found in the JAVA package available at: http://cig.dei.polimi.it/wp-content/uploads/2008/04/raceclient_v03.zip

4 Using and Configuring the Competition Server

Once you have installed TORCS and the server-bot provided (either Windows or Linux version), you can start to develop your own bot extending one of the provided client modules. When you want to run your own bot you have to launch TORCS and start a race, then you have to launch the client extended with your own programmed bot and finally your driver bot will start to run in the race. In TORCS there are several race modes available, however the client-server modules supports only two modes:

- the *Practice* mode that allows a single bot at once to race
- the *Quick Race* modes that allows multiple bots to race against

However, before starting a race with TORCS, you need to configure the following things:

- you have to select the track on which you want to run the race
- you need to add the `wcci2008competition` bot to race participants and eventually other bots you want as opponents.

- you have to define how many laps or how many kilometers that race will last
- you might want to select the desired display mode

In TORCS, all the above options are stored in a set of XML configuration files (one for each race mode). Under Linux configuration files are created after the game is launched for the first time and are located in the following directory:

`$HOME/.torcs/config/raceman/`

where `$HOME` is your home directory. Under Windows instead the configuration files are located in the `.\config\raceman\` directory located under the directory where you installed TORCS. We provide two standards XML files for the *Practice* (`practice.xml`) and *Quick Race* (`quickrace.xml`) modes. To use them you simply have to copy them into your configuration directory (as explained above). However you might want to change this configurations according to your needs and this can be done in two two ways: through the graphical user interface (GUI) of the game or editing directly the XML configuration files.

4.1 Configuring TORCS through GUI

The easiest way to configure the race options is using the TORCS GUI. Each race mode can be fully configured selecting from the main menu of TORCS:

Race → Quick Race [or Practice] → Configure Race.

Once you change the configurations of a particular race mode, all the changes are stored automatically by TORCS the corresponding configuration file.

Selecting track. In the first screen you can select any of the track available in the games and then click on *Accept* to move to the next screen.

Selecting bots. The second screen allows the selections of bot that will participate to the race. Notice that in the *Practice* mode only one bot is allowed, therefore in order to add a bot you have first to deselect the currently selected one (if any). First of all you have to make sure that the server-bot, *wcci2008competition*, is within the selected drivers, otherwise your own bot will not be in the race. Then, in the *Quick Race* mode only, you can add other drivers to the race from the list on the right (representing all the bot drivers provided with the game). When adding bots pay attention to the car model they use: there are several types of car in TORCS with different features and you might want to be sure that only drivers with the same cars will race against. Notice that *wcci2008competition* uses a *Mercedes CLK DTM* and the others bot using the same car are:

- *bt7 bt8*
- *olethros 7*
- *berniw two 8*
- *inferno 4*

When you have selected all the drivers that will be in the race, you can click on *Accept* and move to the next screen

Setting race length and display mode. In the final configuration screen you can set the race length either as the distance to cover (in km) or as the number of laps to complete. Finally you can choose between two display modes option: *normal* or *results only*. The *normal* mode allows you to see the race either from the point of view of one bot driver or as an external spectator. In this display mode, the time speed can be accelerated up to four times the normal speed, that is you can see 1 minute of race in 15s. In the *results only* mode instead you will not see the race but only the lap times (in *Practice* mode) or the final result of the race (in *Quick Race* mode). However this mode allow you to run simulation much faster: time speed can be accelerated up to 20 times (or even more), that is one minute of race can be simulated within 3 seconds.

Enabling “results only” mode for “quick race”. By default, the *Results Only* display mode is not available by default for the *Quick Race* (this is what make *Practice* mode really different from *Quick Race* in TORCS). This features cannot be turned on from the TORCS GUI but requires a modification to the configuration file `quickrace.xml` (as explained in a following section). However the `quickrace.xml` example provided already has this modification and therefore you simply need to copy this file in your configuration directory to enable the display mode control from the TORCS GUI.

4.2 Configuring TORCS through Configuration Files

All the race settings described above can be configured also editing directly a configuration file. In TORCS each race type as its own XML configuration file. The settings of *Practice* are stored in `practice.xml` while the settings of *Quick Race* are in `quickrace.xml`.

Selecting track. To select the track, find the “Tracks” section inside the XML file, that will contain the following section:

```
<section name="1">
  <attstr name="name" val="TRACK-NAME"/>
  <attstr name="category" val="TRACK-CAT"/>
</section>
```

where you should (i) replace `TRACK-ROAD` with the category of desired track (i.e., `road`, `oval` or `dirt`); (ii) replace `TRACK-NAME` with the name of desired track (e.g., `aalborg`). For a complete list of the installed tracks in TORCS, you can see the list of all the directories organized under three main directories, `tracks/road/`, `tracks/oval/` and `tracks/dirt/`, where TORCS is installed. Under Windows you find them in your main torcs directory, under linux the tracks directories could be found in `/usr/local/share/games/torcs/` or in different places depending on your distribution.

Selecting bots. To select bots you should modify the “Drivers” section inside the XML file. In particular in this section you should be able to find a list of the following elements:

```
<section name="N">
  <attnum name="idx" val="IDX"/>
  <attstr name="module" val="NAME"/>
</section>
```

where `N` means you are editing the `N`th bots that will be in the race. The `IDX` is the index of the instance of the bot you want to add: for some bots provided with the game there are several instances (e.g., `bt` bot has several instances: `bt 1`, `bt 2`, ...); when a bot has only one instance (e.g., the `wcci2008competition` bot) `IDX` should be set to 1). The `NAME` should be replaced with the name of bot you want to add without the index of the instance (e.g., to add the `bt 7` bot, you should use as `NAME` simply `bt` and 7 as `IDX`). A list of available drivers can be found in the `drivers/` directory located in the same place where you have the `tracks` directory introduced before.

Setting race length and display mode. To change race length and display mode you have to modify the “Quick Race” or “Practice” section (depending on which race type you want to setup). In particular you should change the following lines:

```
...
<attnum name="distance" unit="km" val="DIST"/>
...
<attnum name="laps" val="LAPS"/>
...
<attstr name="display mode" val="MODE"/>
...
```

where `DIST` should be either the desired race length in km or 0 if the number of laps is used as race length. Accordingly, `LAPS` should be either the desired number of laps or 0 if the distance is used as race length. Finally `MODE` is either `normal` or `results only`.

Enabling “results only” mode for “quick race”. In order to enable *results only* mode on *Quick Race* you need to do add following lines under the section “Options” inside the section “Configuration”:

```
<section name="2">
  <attstr name="type" val="display mode"/>
</section>
```

4.3 Start to Race!

Once you configured properly TORCS you are ready to run your own bot. From the main menu of TORCS select:

Race → Quick Race [or Practice] → New Race.

You should see that TORCS screen should stop reporting the line `Initializing Driver wcci2008competition...` and the OS terminal should report `Waiting for request on port 3001`. This means that the server-bot `wcci2008competition` is waiting for your client to start the race. After the race is started, it can be interrupted from the user by pressing `ESC` and then by selecting `Abort Race` from the menu. The end of the race is notified to the client either if interrupted by user or if ended because the distance/lap limit is reached. Please notice that choosing `Quit Game` instead of `Abort Race` to end race will not result in a correct notification of the end of the race to the client and therefore the client will not be able to perform a clean shutdown as expected.