

Indiana Racing to Widen its Lead in Motorsports

To appreciate how large, diverse and important Indiana's motorsports industry is you have to force yourself to look beyond the excitement of the world-famous Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

The famed 2½ mile oval is host to the Indianapolis 500, as well as the Brickyard 400 and the Red Bull Indianapolis GP. But Indiana is also the location for drag racing's foremost annual event — the US Nationals at O'Reilly Raceway Park — as well as unlimited hydroplane boat racing with Thunder on the Ohio and the Governor's Cup. With more than 50 major motorsports venues, Indiana is also home to USAC's Hoosier Hundred, Indiana Sprint Week, Indiana Midget Week, NASCAR's Kroger SpeedFest, and some of the nation's major Go Kart races. At all levels, Indiana is recognized around the world as a major hub for racing excitement.

Indiana Motorsports Association (IMA) Executive Director Tom Weisenbach starts to sound like a broken record when he ticks off all the types of racing in the state: "I'm willing to bet we have more than 500 drag racing teams. We have about eight sports car teams. We have tons of open wheel USAC sprint car midget teams ☒" You get the picture. Almost every weekend someone is racing something in the Hoosier state.

Of course, that much racing requires a lot of support, and it goes way beyond pit crews. Indiana is home to world-class engine builders, high performance gear manufacturers, specialists in cooling systems and drive train components, a research and development facility with its own wind tunnel, and a racing car seat design company, to mention just a few of the companies that specialize in making vehicles go faster and safer. More than 400 companies employ more than 8,800 workers in the Indianapolis region's motorsports industry alone, paying more than \$425 million per year in wages. They find good company, good customers and good employees here.

This growing industry requires employees with specialized skills, and Indiana's universities have stepped up to the challenge. In December, 2009, representatives of the Indiana Economic Development Corp. Motorsports Initiative, the Indiana Motorsports Association and seven participating universities announced the creation of the Indiana Motorsports Education Alliance (IMEA).

The higher education members are Indiana State University, Indiana



Indianapolis Motor Speedway is home to the Indianapolis 500, the Allstate 400 at the Brickyard and the Red Bull Indianapolis GP.

“There are more opportunities in Indiana to get the best possible motorsports education than any other place in the United States.”

Rollie Helmling, director of the IEDC Motorsports Initiative

University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), Ivy Tech Community College, Marian University, Purdue University and Vincennes University— all of which offer motorsports-related courses and/or degree programs. The University of Indianapolis is also a member of the alliance.

“There are more opportunities in Indiana to get the best possible motorsports education than any other place in the United States,” says Rollie Helmling, director of the IEDC Motorsports Initiative.

The universities offer race team management, marketing, safety, public relations, events management and other motorsports business courses, as well as advanced manufacturing, motorsports engineering technology and mechanical engineering technology courses. They also offer hands-on opportunities, including racing teams and internship programs.

IMA’s Weisenbach points out that Indiana State University’s Team Sycamore Racing is a full-time, full-fledged NHRA drag racing team. “It is put together by students. The car is worked on by students. Students on the business side went out and found over \$200,000 worth of sponsorship, and the four drivers are all students. It is phenomenal,” he says.

Weisenbach and three partners recently founded the International Motorsports Industry Show (IMIS). The two-day IMIS trade show offers individuals and companies from all facets of the racing business the chance to interact, share ideas and products, build relationships and attend seminars to improve motorsports business around the world.

“Having a show like IMIS is very important to the motorsports industry in Indiana,” Weisenbach says. “Indianapolis is the motorsports capital of the world and we felt that IMIS, which is for hardcore racers only, will be something that will be great for Indianapolis, the state of Indiana and motorsports as a whole.”

The inaugural show, in December, 2009, attracted more than 10,000 participants. “In 2010 our show is projected to double,” Weisenbach says. “We’ve doubled the size of our exhibit hall space and we’re

projecting double attendance numbers as well.” Future shows are scheduled for the week after Thanksgiving through 2015.

Speedway, Ind., the town that is home to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, is creating its own showcase for Indiana motorsports. In November, 2009, Speedway broke ground on the first phase of Speed Zone, a redevelopment project designed to create a world-class motorsports education, technology and cultural center within a revitalized town center.

The first phase of the redevelopment includes an estimated 2.5 million square feet of new, mixed-use development made possible through \$500 million in private and public investment. Plans call for a research and development component, an entertainment component and a revitalized Main Street.

Located south of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, the planned research and development area will include a teaching and workforce development center, applied research facilities and a business incubator. “We have proposed that one of the sites along Main Street be the location of a postsecondary educational facility where the various universities teaching motorsports curricula locate,” says Chuck Cagaan, president, Mansur Real Estate

Services, along with Greenstreet Ltd., is serving as master developer of the project.

Entertainment options will include new planned museums and hotel, entertainment and conference space. This area will also include racing-related experiences, diverse dining options and retail. There is talk of relocating the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Hall of Fame Museum from inside the track to the new development, where it would be joined by other museums. The Hall of Fame Museum alone draws 250,000 to 300,000 visitors a year.

Redevelopment of Speedway’s historic Main Street will create a traditional town center to serve as a gathering point. A year-round destination will be formed by improving pedestrian safety and accessibility, enhancing access to the business and retail corridor, installing a Wall of Fame, building a bike path and increasing the number of sidewalk cafes and shops.

The project will better integrate the town with the track to provide entertainment, dining and retail opportunities for track visitors all year, says Cagaan. He points out that the Indianapolis Motor Speedway draws nearly 1 million visitors a year and has an annual impact of \$700 million to \$800 million.

The end result of the redevelopment will be a vibrant, thriving and attractive downtown Speedway destination that will foster growth within the existing business community, encourage development of new enterprises and welcome race fans from around the world.●



The Indianapolis Motor Speedway Hall of Fame Museum draws up to 300,000 visitors a year and is central to a \$500 million Speedway, Ind., redevelopment project.