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INDYCAR SERIES

WINTER SPECIAL 2007



MONDAY NIGHT FEVER

HELIO TAKES THE CHECKERS IN DANCING WITH THE STARS - NOW FOR ANOTHER INDY 500 WIN!

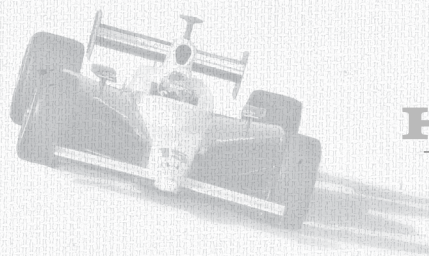
THE DANICA FILES
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ER, WHAT
OFF-SEASON...?

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YOUR HANDS
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DANICA'S DIARY

So what does a driver do with all that "free" time once the season ends?

(Opposite) It's all part of a day's work: Danica Patrick prepares to go testing. (Below) Scott Dixon tries out the new paddle shifters at Barber Motorsports Park

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PADDLE TO THE METAL

IndyCar Series drivers get their wish – paddle shifters for their race cars

INDYCAR.COM

ALL THE LATEST NEWS, PLUS LIVE STREAMING, TIMING AND SCORING AND MUCH, MUCH MORE



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Paul Webb photos

BRISCOE, MUTOH AND HOWARD SLATED FOR FULL-TIME RIDES IN 2008

The new season brings new faces in new places, as at least three IndyCar Series teams will have someone new behind the wheel.

With Dario Franchitti (the reigning series champion and Indy 500 winner) off to NASCAR, Andretti Green Racing has decided to take a chance on promising young Indy Pro Series standout Hideki Mutoh of Japan. The 25-year-old finished second to Alex Lloyd in the 2007 Indy Pro Series championship, and scored an impressive eighth-place finish in his IndyCar Series debut at Chicagoland in September while driving with Panther.

"It's very exciting," he says. "The team's record is very impressive and I am hopeful that I can contribute to its future success."

And with teammates like 2004 series champion Tony Kanaan, 2005 Rookie of the Year Danica Patrick and 2006 Rookie of the Year Marco Andretti to help him learn the ropes, Mutoh is eagerly anticipating his first full season. "I hope to gain a lot of experience from my teammates," he says.

Another Indy Pro Series graduate looking to make a name for himself in the big cars is Jay Howard. Despite starting only the first three races of 2007 after winning the series championship with Sam Schmidt Motorsports the previous year, owner/driver Marty Roth was



Dave Lewandowski

Hideki Mutoh prepares to try his new ride, the Andretti Green Racing No. 27 vacated by Dario Franchitti

convinced the 26-year-old was the right person to drive his new second car. Roth decided to expand his stable to take advantage of the new-for-'08 TEAM program (see page 10).

"Everyone is just pushing forward," says Howard. "I couldn't have asked to walk into a better situation. Marty definitely is a man of his word and he definitely is 110 percent into this."

Finally, there's Team Penske, whose new partner for Helio Castroneves isn't new to the IndyCar Series or the Penske organization: The first chapter of Ryan Briscoe's IndyCar Series career was written with Target Chip Ganassi Racing in 2005, but a terrifying crash at

Chicagoland ended his season and his tenure with the team. The now-26-year-old Australian made a handful of starts in 2006, and had a strong one-off appearance at the 2007 Indy 500, but he's spent most of the past two racing seasons driving Roger Penske's factory-backed Porsche RS Spyders in the American Le Mans Series.

"It really is amazing," Briscoe says. "It's sort of a dream position for a driver, and to get the chance to come back full-time in the IndyCar Series, I'm extremely excited. I hope I can live up to the expectations, do a great job, and I can't wait to get it all started."



Alex Lloyd speaks with Chip Ganassi at Infineon last August. Guess they must have got on well...

With two of his Indy Pro Series cohorts racing in the IndyCar Series in 2008, Alex Lloyd is set to join them – although probably not right away. Lloyd, who won a record eight races in 2007, has signed on to Target Chip Ganassi Racing as part of the team's Driver

ON TARGET GANASSI GIVES INDY PRO SERIES CHAMP LLOYD A DEVELOPMENT DEAL

Development Program. His 2008 racing season will likely consist of a combination of Rolex Grand-Am Series events, IndyCar Series races and testing.

"I wanted to make sure I'm in a place where I can have good prospects for the future and not just in 2008, and I felt that by joining this team I have the opportunity to do well and, if I perform well, to be there for a long time," says Lloyd.

He joins two IndyCar Series champions on the team, Scott Dixon and Dan Wheldon, with whom he will partner at the Rolex 24 at Daytona in one of Ganassi's Daytona Prototypes along with Salvador Duran. He may also benefit from some of the other drivers in Ganassi's stable, including Juan Pablo Montoya, Dario

Franchitti and Scott Pruett. Lloyd tested with Ganassi at Sebring in August and a few days later drove in the Grand-Am event at Infineon Raceway, the same weekend he clinched the Indy Pro Series title.

"He is a talented driver and a perfect candidate for our development program," Ganassi Racing managing director Mike Hull says. "In the span of 10 days, he took the wheel of two very different race cars for the first time. He showed at Sebring that he is ready to race [in the IndyCar Series], and then at Infineon Raceway for the Grand-Am event, proved under race conditions that his skills were immediately equal to the best drivers in the very competitive high-horsepower Daytona Prototypes."

HELIO ADDS MIRROR BALL TO TROPHY COLLECTION

Castroneves and partner Julianne Hough claim win on Dancing with the Stars

Helio Castroneves' Baby Borgs will have some company in the trophy case of his Coral Gables, Fla., home with the addition of the *Dancing with the Stars* mirror ball championship trophy.

The two-time Indianapolis 500 champion and his professional dance partner Julianne Hough prevailed in a "dance-off" with Spice Girl Melanie Brown and her pro partner to determine the winner. Both were allowed to select their favorite dance (Castroneves chose the Quickstep and Brown the Mambo). Both received perfect 30 scores from the three-judge panel.

What put Castroneves into Victory Circle, where there wasn't a fence to climb but a half-gallon plastic jug of milk waiting, was the vote from the 21-million-plus viewers of the ABC show. In the finale, voting totals from the Nov. 26 performances were combined with the judge's total score from both nights to determine the winner. Earlier in the evening, Marie Osmond was eliminated based on voting total/scores from the previous night.

"I was so worried but Julianne kept telling me everything would be fine," Castroneves said a few minutes after the stage lights were

dimmed. "When our names were announced, I had to look at Julianne to make sure I heard it correctly. Honestly, that feeling when they called our name was totally different than winning a race. Obviously, Indianapolis is my biggest win, but this is great. [The dancing trophy] will go right between [the Baby Borg trophies] because this has mirrors and can reflect them."

Castroneves and Hough had little time to celebrate their win.

The Castroneves and Hough victory tour continues into the new year, with appearances in several cities, including some that play host to the IndyCar Series.

HELIO'S DANCING WITH THE STARS VICTORY TOUR

Jan. 18 – Indianapolis
 Jan. 19 – Nashville
 Jan. 21 – Tampa, Fla.
 Jan. 22 – Jacksonville, Fla.
 Jan. 23 – Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.
 Feb. 9 – Providence, R.I.
 Feb. 10 – Philadelphia



Courtesy ABC



VIDEO EXTRA
 2007 racing
 highlights



TESTING, TESTING, 1, 2, 3

IndyCar Series teams try Barber, new aero package for Iowa and a bunch of stuff at Homestead

After a limited test at Iowa Speedway to come up with a new wing package for the IndyCar Series cars for the faster-than-expected oval, the series conducted an open test at Barber Motorsports Park near Birmingham, Ala., on Oct. 12.

That test was also the first real trial, on Scott Dixon's No. 9 Target Chip Ganassi Racing car, of the new paddle shifters that the drivers will use in 2008. Seven drivers tested the circuit - Dixon and Dan Wheldon for TCGR, Danica Patrick, Tony Kanaan and Marco Andretti for AGR, Helio Castroneves for Team Penske and Vitor Meira for Panther. While Kanaan turned the fastest lap at 118.722mph, the real revelation was the track, and the crowd.

"It's the best test facility we've been so far, definitely," said Meira. "There are several types of corners - long corners, short corners, a lot of elevation change, hard braking - it's a perfect test facility. Not only that, it's beautiful, and the track is very cool to run on. I think it's an A-plus for sure."

Some 2000 fans showed up to watch the proceedings on the Friday, a surprising

development to many on hand.

"What I really take from this is here we are, 30 miles from Talladega, and look how many people got to know the IndyCar Series," said Kanaan. "I bet all these guys will watch us when they take the weekend off from NASCAR. It took me 15 minutes to get to the pit lane signing autographs. They saw how much access they can get to us, they saw how fast the cars are."

As for Barber's future with the series, the organization has expressed interest in holding an IndyCar Series race, but it's strictly talk at this point. Several drivers, while praising the track for its testing characteristics, indicated it's not quite ready for a whole field of fast open-wheelers all heading into Turn 1 at once. Meira expressed concerns over the width of pit lane, while Castroneves wished for a longer straight.

In early December, some teams tested at Homestead, while Scott Dixon and Ryan Hunter-Reay tried out a new configuration at Infineon Raceway. The next round of open testing will be at Homestead in February.

PHOTO GALLERY
BARBER TEST
[CLICK HERE](#)



VIDEO EXTRA
TESTING AT
BARBER

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Shawn Payne/JMS Photo



(Left) John Barnes likes what he sees in the new TEAM program. (Below) The promise of the program came with the signing of Jay Howard to drive Marty Roth's car

Dan Strech/LAT

TEAM WORK VIDEO LINK

SHOW ME THE MONEY

TEAM REVENUE SHARING PROGRAM GUARANTEES TEAMS THAT RUN FULL SEASON A MINIMUM RETURN

In an effort to encourage more entrants to contest the full IndyCar Series schedule, series officials have created the IndyCar TEAM program. IndyCar TEAM, which stands for Team Enhancement Allocation Matrix, will award a minimum \$1.2 million to each car that enters every race, including the Indianapolis 500.

"IndyCar TEAM really provides some tremendous stability and predictability for our existing teams with respect to their operating budget, which will make them healthier while positioning us favorably for attracting more teams," said Terry Angstadt, president of the

commercial division of the Indy Racing League, the sanctioning body for the IndyCar Series.

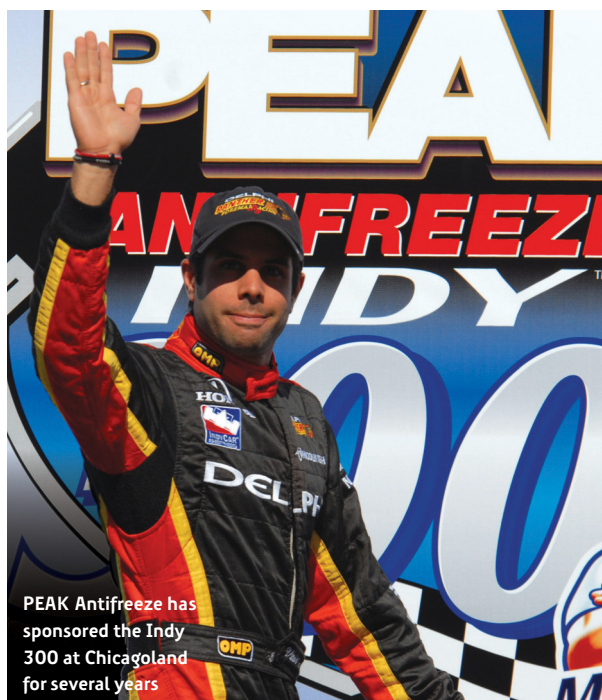
The implementation of IndyCar TEAM, which begins with the 2008 season, also marks the end of the series' traditional, race-by-race purse structure. However, the purse for the Indianapolis 500 will not only remain in place, but it will also be increased by more than 25 percent for 2008, from the record

\$10.67 million for the 2007 edition to at least \$13.4 million, with the possibility of at least \$2.5 million of that going to the winner.

"As the Indianapolis 500 and the Indianapolis Motor Speedway approach some historic milestones in 2009 and 2011, it's only appropriate we strengthen the incentive to compete in 'The Greatest Spectacle in Racing,'" said Joie Chitwood, president and COO of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. "The new purse structure for the Indy 500 will help all entries earn more money than ever during the Month of May."

And if the dollar figures presented above seem lofty now, there's a chance they'll climb even higher as time goes on.

PEAK LAUNCHES OIL WITH INDYCAR SERIES



PEAK Antifreeze has sponsored the Indy 300 at Chicagoland for several years

Paul Webby/LAT

PEAK, the antifreeze brand familiar to IndyCar Series fans through its sponsorship of the Indy 300 at Chicagoland in recent years, is launching a new line of motor oils with the help of the IndyCar Series.

Through a multi-year official partner agreement with the series, PEAK Performance Motor Oil becomes the Official Motor Oil of the IndyCar Series and the Indianapolis 500. PEAK has for several years used IndyCar Series driver Danica Patrick as a spokesperson for its products.

All PEAK Motor Oil bottles will feature the IndyCar Series and Indianapolis 500 logos as part of the partnership. PEAK will work with Patrick to launch a national TV, print and radio advertising campaign for their new motor oil.

"PEAK is expanding its involvement in the IndyCar Series to include league, driver and event partnerships and we look forward to working with them to build our respective brands," says Terry Angstadt, president of the Indy Racing League's Commercial Division. "We have a plate full of attributes that include speed, diversity, technology and innovation that were looked upon favorably by PEAK and continue to gain momentum in the marketplace."

PEAK ANNOUNCEMENT VIDEO - CLICK HERE

INTRODUCING OUR NEWEST REPORTER:



YOU

We know you've got a question you're itching to ask and IndyCar Series driver. It might involve the art of racing, or it might be about his or her favorite color. Whatever it is, send it to us, and we'll do the legwork; we'll pick the best questions, hunt the driver down and print their answers in a future issue. So hit up the e-mail link below, put "IndyCar Series driver question" in the subject line and send it to us. We'll do our best to get you the answer.

ASK A DRIVER CLICK HERE

THANKS FOR A GREAT SEASON

We are celebrating another record-shattering season at Sam Schmidt Motorsports!
Those of you who've helped us get there, we can't **THANK YOU** enough.

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OWNER Sam Schmidt

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Randy Klein, Tim Neff,
Bobby Elrod and
Dave Reininger

CREW NOT PICTURED
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Kevin Conley, Derrick
Stepan, Chad Potier,
Steve Kisner, Lawrence
Burch, Brad Kreutzer, Brad
Redman, Amber O'Haver,
Deuce Turrill, Remi
Langeteine, Kaaveh Akbari
and Sam Goldsmith



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SMART Papers - Tim Needham, Glenn Davis & staff
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Impact Racing - Bill Simpson, Jimmy Pinkley & Mike Walton
ABC/ESPN - Bob Jenkins, Jack Arute, Robbie Buhl, Stan & Brianne Pedigo
Dallara Automobil - GianPaolo Dallara, Stefano dePonti & Sam Garrett
Speedway Engine Development - Rick Long, Jeff Gordon & Gang
Indy Media - Dave Calabro, Vince Welch, Derek Daly, Robin Miller & Curt Cavin

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

INDY PRO SERIES AND INDYCAR SERIES TELEVISION SCHEDULES

The Indy Pro Series will feature a record 16 races, divided evenly among oval and road course rounds, for 2008. The development series will visit eight ovals and conduct doubleheaders at each of four road or street courses.

The series opens once again at Miami-Homestead Speedway on March 29 before a doubleheader on the streets of St. Petersburg. A unique event will be a same-day doubleheader at Watkins Glen on July 6. The Indy Pro Series racers will have a chance to

perform on their biggest stage on Carb Day, the Friday before the 92nd running of the Indianapolis 500.

"Just like the IndyCar Series, our champion will have to succeed on all types of racing circuits from short ovals, speedways and the 2.5-mile oval at Indianapolis to road and street courses," says Indy Pro Series Executive Director Roger Bailey. "The opportunity to compete on Carb Day at Indianapolis in front of more than 100,000 fans is an experience that is second to

none for our drivers, teams and sponsors."

The 16-race IndyCar Series season, including the 92nd Indianapolis 500, will be broadcast in high definition on ESPN, ESPN2 and ABC. The 2008 schedule, ESPN's 13th as the IndyCar Series television partner, includes seven events each on ABC and ESPN2 and two on ESPN. The networks also will cover Indianapolis 500 qualifying May 10-11 and 17-18. The Indy Pro Series broadcast schedule will be announced early in 2008.



INDYCAR SERIES/INDY PRO SERIES SUPER SCHEDULE

(TELEVISION CHANNEL AND TIMES ARE FOR INDYCAR SERIES RACES)

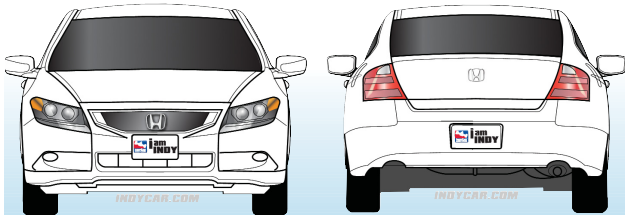
DATE	VENUE	INDY PRO SERIES	TELEVISION
March 29	Homestead-Miami Speedway*	Sat	ESPN2, 8 p.m.
April 6	Streets of St. Petersburg	Sat, Sun	ESPN, 2:30 p.m.
April 19	Twin Ring Motegi, Japan		ESPN, Noon
April 27	Kansas Speedway	Sun	ESPN2, 5 p.m.
May 25	Indianapolis Motor Speedway	Fri	ABC, Noon
June 1	The Milwaukee Mile	Sun	ABC, 4 p.m.
June 7	Texas Motor Speedway*		ESPN2, 10 p.m.
June 22	Iowa Speedway	Sat	ABC, 3 p.m.
June 28	Richmond International Raceway*		ESPN2, 8 p.m.
July 6	Watkins Glen International	Sat x 2	ABC, 3:30 p.m.
July 12	Nashville Superspeedway*	Sat	ESPN2, 8 p.m.
July 20	Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course	Sat, Sun	ABC, 1:30 p.m.
Aug. 9	Kentucky Speedway*	Sat	ESPN2, 6:30 p.m.
Aug. 24	Infiniteon Raceway	Sat, Sun	ESPN2, 5:30 p.m.
Aug. 31	The Raceway at Belle Isle (Detroit)		ABC, 3:30 p.m.
Sep. 7	Chicagoland Speedway	Sun	ABC, 3:30 p.m.

*Sat night race



VIDEO EXTRA
A LITTLE
CONTROVERSY

FANS HAVE CHANCE TO TRICK OUT SAFETY CARS



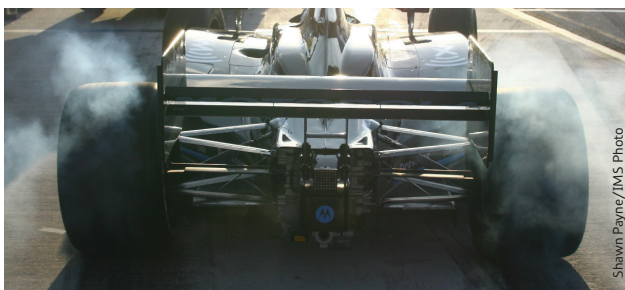
IndyCar Series fans have long been able to paint their own race cars on indycar.com; now they have the chance to trick out the paint and graphics on the new Honda Accord Safety Cars to be used during the 2008 IndyCar Series season.

In a contest lasting through Jan. 1 on the indycar.com Web site, fans will be able to register, download a template of the all-new, 268hp Honda Accord Coupe, and then create their own unique paint schemes and decals for the vehicles that will pace 14 of the 15 domestic IndyCar Series events during the 2008 season.

The contest winner will receive a pair of tickets to the season-opening IndyCar Series race at Miami-Homestead Speedway on March 29, 2008, along with pit/garage passes and travel accommodations for both the winner and a guest.

"Everyone at Honda is enthusiastic about the new Accord and its role as the new Safety Car for the IndyCar Series," says Robert Clarke, president of Honda Performance Development. "This is the highest-performing, best-looking Accord yet. We eagerly anticipate seeing the paint and graphic schemes developed by fans. It's a great opportunity for our supporters to become even more involved in the IndyCar Series."

CLICK TO WIN
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Shawn Payne/IMS Photo

COMING IN MARCH! The 2008 IndyCar Series Season Preview

Tracking the changes from the off-season, the latest developments in testing and the full rundown of what to expect in what is set to be an outrageously exciting year. Don't miss it!

DOPPLER EFFECT



Inside Line

Jeff Olson, Senior Writer

I...NO, YOU RESOLVE...

In the spirit of the holiday season, I'd like to take this moment to offer some resolutions for 2008. Not for myself – I'll be working diligently on my plans to drop 20 pounds while attaining world peace – but these resolutions are for others. Resolutions for Racers by Way of the Press Room.

So, without further ado or another version of *Auld Lang Syne*, here's what I'd like to see in 2008:

(1) I want Vitor Meira to win a race. I'm not asking much. He's obviously capable and close to doing it already – he's finished second seven times – but Vitor needs a win and a hug. The day of his victory will be a day of unequalled joy in the paddock. I want to witness it.

(2) Same goes for Danica. She's shown us she's for real. The first victory will be her just reward for the effort she's put into it and the skill she possesses. Someday it won't matter whether a driver is male or female. Her first win will be the first step in that direction.

(3) I'd also like to see Helio milk the dancing thing for as much as it's worth. Normally I'd never make such a request, seeing as how reality TV is a sign of the apocalypse, but Castroneves' victory on *Dancing with the Stars* is just plain, silly fun. What else can I say? Helio is likable. His schtick doesn't get old. It just gets infectious.

(4) The budding rivalry between Tony Kanaan and Scott Dixon needs to develop into something fierce. Let's be straight: These are the two best drivers in the series and two of the best of their time. There is no filter on either one; they'll tell you the truth, even if it's

politically incorrect. Both are thoroughly entertaining in and out of the car, and their duel has the potential to be the A.J./Mario of its time. Doesn't have to be mean or even heated, just ferocious and intense.

(5) Is it wrong to hope Sam and Dario do well in NASCAR? It isn't about Us vs. Them. It's about wanting to see two good racers – and



Two of the top drivers in the series, are Tony Kanaan and Scott Dixon set for a battle royale?

good people – succeed in something new. Hornish is the best natural talent to hit oval racing since his mentor, Rick Mears. Franchitti is the most complete racer of his time. We should be fully supporting them.

(6) Finally, we would all benefit to see Sam Schmidt Motorsports move to the IndyCar Series full time. Sam is an inspiration as a person and as a businessman. His team is the most successful in the short history of the Indy Pro Series, having won three of the last four championships. His teams are organized, efficient and staffed by some of the best minds in the business.

That's all I ask. Now it's back to weight loss and world peace.

Danica's DIARY

Forget Cheetos and the TV remote...the off-season is anything but relaxing for a star IndyCar Series driver

As related to Jeff Olson Photo by Paul Webb

What's it like for a race car driver when the wheels stop turning? Think the off-season is nothing but endless hours on the couch with a bag of Cheetos in one hand and the remote in the other?

Hardly.

For racers, the off-season is nearly as busy as the on-season. Just when you'd think a vacation might break out, the duties return. Sponsor appearances, testing, team meetings and other demands keep drivers from getting too lazy.

Just ask Danica Patrick. We did, and she was kind enough to provide a diary of her very eventful off-season activities. Take it away, DP:

September 19

Our off-season finally arrived, and I am so ready for it. Even though our last race at Chicagoland Speedway was Sept. 9, I still didn't get to go home to Arizona for a while after that because I had a few more commitments.

First, we had the IndyCar Series awards ceremony on Sept. 11. I always enjoy the awards ceremonies because it's one of the few opportunities to get together with the drivers

at a time when we're relaxed. So many times at the racetrack we're busy and stressed, so the banquets are a great time to have some fun and socialize with each other.

On Sept. 12, we went to the Indy DownForce Fan Club party, which was fun. It's always great to get a chance to meet the fans when you're away from the track and don't have to run off to a practice or a meeting or something like that.

I always feel like I'm rushed at the track and can't give as much time to the fans as I'd like, but at a party like this one, you can really spend some time talking to people. Our fans are great, that's for sure.

I got home later in the week and had a chance to unwind. It was great to be home for a few days with no deadlines or responsibilities. I'm really a homebody; I enjoy just being home and going through a normal routine. I find that so relaxing and comforting.

Things should be a little slower for the next few weeks, but we aren't without things to do. I'm off to a two-day sponsor appearance this weekend for Andretti Green Racing, so there is still work to be done. ▶

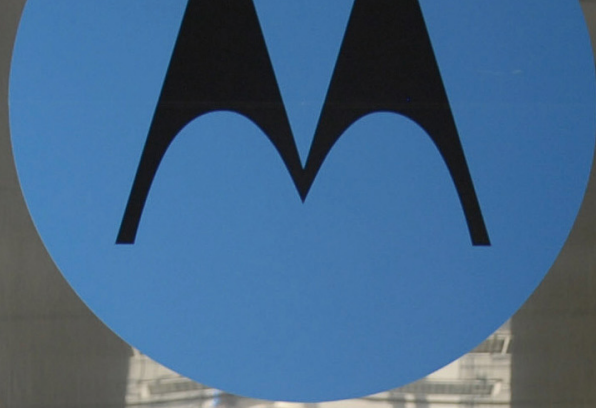


Danica and others congratulate then-teammate Dario Franchitti on his Championship on Sept. 11

“The banquets are a great time to have fun and socialize”

Danica Patrick

PLEASE
wipe your feet



Off-season?





Paul Webb

“I love to be lazy and self-indulgent”

Danica Patrick

October 2

After a few weeks out of the race car, we got back to business with a test at Iowa Speedway. I drove Tony Kanaan's car for the second day of the test, and everything went very well.

We weren't testing for ourselves, but in a joint effort to improve things for the next trip to Iowa. The IndyCar Series is playing with aerodynamics – wickerbills and such – to try to loosen things up for us. The first race at the track didn't go very well. We weren't able to race side by side, and several of us crashed.

Part of the problem is that the track is so good and so fast that the cars were mismatched for the conditions. We went in expecting a Richmond and we got a little

Kansas Speedway. As a result, we ran single file for much of the race.

That said, I love the place. Iowa is a great new track, slightly less than a mile, and we had a pretty good car there this summer during the race until we got caught up in a wreck. If we can get the aero package just right so we can run two wide all the way around, then the second race at Iowa Speedway will be fantastic.

At any rate, it was good to get back in the car and start preparing for next year. As drivers, we never feel like we can start soon enough. And even after just a few weeks without racing, I was beginning to get anxious.

Marco and I did a press conference after the first day at Iowa, and most of the questions were about Dario. Unless you've been living underground for the past few weeks, you know that Dario Franchitti has gone to NASCAR.

As I said in the press conference, the whole AGR team is going to miss his experience. He was a great champion and a good friend, and we won't be able to replace his knowledge. Like Tony, Dario was a mentor. I learned so much from him, and you just can't replace that.

I'm proud of Dario and consider myself fortunate to have been his teammate, even if it was only for a year. I wish him all the best, and I know he'll do well in NASCAR. We'll be rooting for him every Sunday next year.

Next week it is off to Birmingham, Ala., for another test session at Barber Motorsports Park, which is a nice road course. We'll try

Danica says she never has as much time with the fans at the track as she'd like, but she finds some for autographs

some new things and keep gearing up for 2008. It's a long off-season on paper, but the season opener at Homestead-Miami Speedway will be here before we know it.

October 17

All is pretty quiet here right now, a welcome change from the way things were during the season. I've had a few more days to relax at home, and the time to decompress is welcomed.

During the racing season, the action doesn't end. From April until September it's rare that we get one day with nothing to do, so we relish the downtime. However, I can't take much of it before I start getting antsy and ready to go again.

Don't get me wrong. I love to be lazy and self-indulgent, but there comes a point when I get bored with relaxing and want to get back to work. The off-season's nice in that I get a chance to do both. I work on occasion and then relax.

We tested last week at Barber, a beautiful road course in Birmingham. It's used primarily for sports car and motorcycle racing, and I don't think the IndyCar Series plans to race there in the near future, but it's very nice.

Our test was OK. Nothing spectacular, just OK. We had a little problem with our car that cost us a couple hours of track time, but as a team we still learned a little bit, so it was good. I really liked the racetrack. What a beautiful setting.

Unless something changes, I won't be in my race car again now until early December for more



Chris Jones/IMS Photo

“It’s been too long. I’d drive every day if I could”

Danica Patrick



Paul Webb

personal sponsors, then headed to Las Vegas for the SEMA Show. SEMA is the Specialty Equipment Marketing Association and the show is huge – in fact, it’s the biggest automotive-related show in the world.

A couple of our team’s sponsors make cool products for the automotive industry, so I went to SEMA to help promote them. It is such a busy trade show, and it’s very important for our team and sponsors.

AGR announced my new teammate – Hideki Mutoh. I don’t really know Hideki yet, but I’m aware of how good he was in the Indy Pro Series.

Many people think he is the most talented IndyCar Series driver to come out of Japan, so I’m anxious to see how he’ll do in the No. 27 car.

November 7

I can’t believe I’m going to say this, but I think I am finished with all of my appearances – at least for the rest of this month!

It should be a fun time of year, especially since I’ll have a little bit of time to myself. My wedding anniversary is this month, and so is

testing for Firestone. But I’m sure we’ll still have plenty to do as there are always appearances to make. We never seem to run out of those!

October 24

I started out this week by traveling to San Diego for what was a pretty normal sponsor appearance, but there was nothing normal about San Diego on this trip.

Most of San Diego County was on fire, and as I flew in I could see how bad it was. I can’t imagine what it would be like to go through what the people of Southern California are going through at this time. My heart goes out to them.

It’s just a terrible situation. The wind is so strong, and the conditions are so dry. It must be such a helpless feeling for the people involved. I feel so bad for everyone.

I know this for sure: Firefighters are truly American heroes. They put their lives on the line, and to watch how they fought these fires is truly inspiring. They are so courageous, and their hard work helped to stop the fires.

San Diego is one of my favorite places to visit. It is a really beautiful place, and to watch what is going on there is unbelievable.

Please keep everybody in your thoughts as they recover from this disaster.

October 30

It’s been a busy week for me, with appearances on both sides of the country. I spent a couple days in New York last week with one of my

Danica at the DownForce Fan Club party on Sept. 20 (top) and back at work with Tony Kanaan for testing at Barber

Danica speeds out of the pits at Chicago, about to complete her final race laps of the year and begin the off-season



Chris Jones/IMS Photo

Thanksgiving. It’ll be great to be able to spend some real quality time with the people who are closest to me and support me so much during the racing season.

Believe me, they are my biggest cheering section all season long, so it’s nice to be able to just hang out with everyone and have fun. I’m really looking forward to this.

November 20

I hope you’re enjoying your holiday and are able to spend some time with your family and friends. That’s how I am spending my week, and it has been wonderful.

If the goal at Thanksgiving is to eat as much as you can and take as many naps as possible, then I am overachieving. I’ll work out extra hard next week to make up for it.

November 28

I hope you’re having a good week and are getting back into the swing of things after the holiday.

I’ve had a pretty quiet week and am getting geared up for our test next week at Homestead-Miami Speedway. We’re going to be doing some tire testing for Firestone on the road course and on the oval. It’s very important and I’m really looking forward to it.

I haven’t had the chance to drive since we tested in Alabama a couple of months ago. It’s been too long. I’d drive every day if I could!

Did you see Helio Castroneves win *Dancing with the Stars*? I was so happy when they announced his name. Helio is a great person and a wonderful personality, and he fit with that show so well.

The whole thing was just wonderful for him and for IndyCar Series racing. It gives us more attention and draws more people to our sport.

I’m so proud of him, but I’m sure we’ll all be teasing him the next time we see him! ■

He's got it

PHOTO GALLERY
FANCY FOOTWORK
[CLICK HERE](#)

It may not be the special bottle of milk he enjoys so much, but when two-time Indy 500 winner Helio Castroneves and Julianne Hough won the Dancing with the Stars competition, producers had some of the white stuff ready

ALL THE RIGHT MOVES

Trading four tires for two decidedly not left feet, Helio Castroneves, with partner Julianne Hough, takes home the winner's trophy on Dancing with the Stars

By Dave Lewandowski

Helio Castroneves falls onto the sofa and gingerly peels off the pink socks that complement his shirt to reveal blisters and red marks on both feet. It might be a familiar scene for the *Dancing with the Stars* professional dance partners after an extended rehearsal, but this IndyCar Series driver isn't accustomed to such bodily damage inflicted by relatively slow-speed contact.

The two-time Indianapolis 500 winner momentarily frowns at the sight, then shrugs.

"I didn't know dancing would be so much hard work," says Castroneves, whose lexicon had been impregnated by rondes, whip turns and fondu during the 10-week run of the top-rated TV show. "It's a sport. The physical part was hard because I was using muscles I never used before. My hips don't move. In a race car, you don't want your hips to move because it can be dangerous. It was something very different for me."

Maybe at the outset. But after learning and performing the Foxtrot, Mambo, Samba and

assorted other ballroom routines with pro partner Julianne Hough, it didn't seem as foreign to the Brazilian with the thousand-watt smile. Eventually, Castroneves emerged as a cross between Roberto Benigni and Fred Astaire. Ultimately, the couple reigned on the dance floor and in the hearts of millions of viewers.

When host Tom Bergeron announced that the duo had won the celebrity competition, the ebullient Castroneves initially didn't comprehend what he was hearing.

"When our names were announced, I had to look at Julianne to make sure I heard it correctly," he says, clutching the cheesy mirror ball trophy like one of his Baby Borgs. "Honestly, that feeling when they called our names was totally different than winning a race. Obviously, Indianapolis is my biggest win, but this is great.

"It is so fun and surreal. I have to say that I never thought I would go this far. My goal was not to be the first one eliminated, and look where I am. I mean, this is just an incredible experience."

LONG SHOT ATHLETE IN THE MIX

When reigning *Dancing with the Stars* champion, Olympic short-track speed skating medalist Apolo Anton Ohno, casually mentioned, "You should be on the show" on race day of the 91st Indianapolis 500, it intrigued Castroneves. He sought to learn more, but at a more convenient time. Castroneves joined the cast of 12 celebrities – as one of only two professional athletes – and began rehearsing with Hough while the IndyCar Series season was winding down.

The Team Penske driver initially was out of his element among the entertainers (actors, singers and models), most of whom had picked up at least some rudiments of dance with their stage/TV training. Castroneves quipped that he would need his "helmet and safety gear" to dance because of some missteps while practicing with Hough.

But the couple immediately clicked, which assisted Hough, a 19-year-old dynamo who ▶

VIDEO EXTRA

Watch Helio and Julianne as they dance their way across the Yard of Bricks at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway



VIDEO EXTRA
DANCING WITH
THE STARS

"It's not only about dancing, it's about popularity"

Helio Castroneves



JMS Photo

teamed with Ohno to win the title six months earlier, in coaching the novice. She could laugh with and at Castroneves' peccadilloes and loose command of English. He could be his cut-up self in the studio while soaking up steps in a matter of days. One thing was clear from the outset – while there was open communication, Castroneves wasn't the one at the wheel.

"He had to give that control to me and give that trust and he ended up doing that, and we've become such good friends now," Hough says.

Says Castroneves, the better for taking a back seat: "At times, she had been trying to push me to my limit, and I'd say it's now a little beyond my limit. But that's the type of the dance; there's not much you can do about it. It's a team, and we work together."

WHATEVER "IT" IS, HE'S GOT IT

"No question it's a challenge," Castroneves said after the initial live show in which couples perform a ballroom routine seeking to entice high scores from the three-judge panel and votes from the TV audience. "No question it's difficult. But no question it's a lot of fun, too."

Exuding what stage actors/dancers call the "It" factor – stage presence and personality that engages the audience – Castroneves was an instant hit with the viewers/voters. Safe to dance at least a second week, Castroneves could allow his charisma to flow through the footwork.



Courtesy ABC

His dancing may have been near-perfect, but his engaging smile and chemistry with Hough were key in Castroneves winning the mirror ball trophy

"You don't have to start out as a fantastic dancer," judge Carrie Ann Inaba says. "It's all about giving your heart and soul to learning to dance."

Adds judge Bruno Toniolo: "It's a very honest show. [Contestants] really have to put their heart and soul in it. They can't get away with publicity and spin. The public will see something very, very real."

The 20 million-plus demographically diverse viewers discovered the appeal previously afforded mainly to IndyCar Series event ticket holders and TV audiences. Suddenly, the novice hooper and his mentor were being touted as one of the favorites to waltz off with the mirror ball trophy.

"I always knew he had a lot of moves. I just didn't know he had dance moves," says Team Penske owner Roger Penske, who cheered during one of Castroneves' performances and booted the judges' scores while in the studio audience in mid-October.

HEART AND SOUL INTO EFFORT

Each week Castroneves gained confidence and competency with the choreography. Not surprisingly, after receiving a perfect 30 score for the Quickstep in week eight and following up with two more solid efforts the next week, the couple reached the finals. After singer Marie Osmond was eliminated, a "dance-off"

between Castroneves and Spice Girl Melanie Brown would determine the champion.

Both couples received three sets of 10s. So it came down to the voters' total of phone, text messaging and online voting from the previous night's performances. Castroneves' enthusiasm that had resonated with the viewers for the past 10 weeks was his ace in the hole.

"It's not only about dancing, it's about popularity," says Castroneves, obviously more savvy about the entertainment business than three months earlier. "That's what I'm actually very happy about."

Less than 24 hours later, in a quiet moment during a whirlwind talk show tour that celebrated his celebrity in a different forum, a haggard Castroneves reflected on his IndyCar Series off-season odyssey.

"The competition was physically and mentally hard. [as] was the level and difficulty of the choreography. And being in L.A. for two months was hard," Castroneves sums up. "But hard work has always been part of my strength and it paid off on the dance floor."

"I always say, if you put your heart and soul into something, and you work hard, you can do anything."

With that thought, Castroneves can put his aching feet up without guilt and gaze at the Indianapolis 500 trophies reflecting in the mirror ball. ■



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Yes.
It's *that* bright.

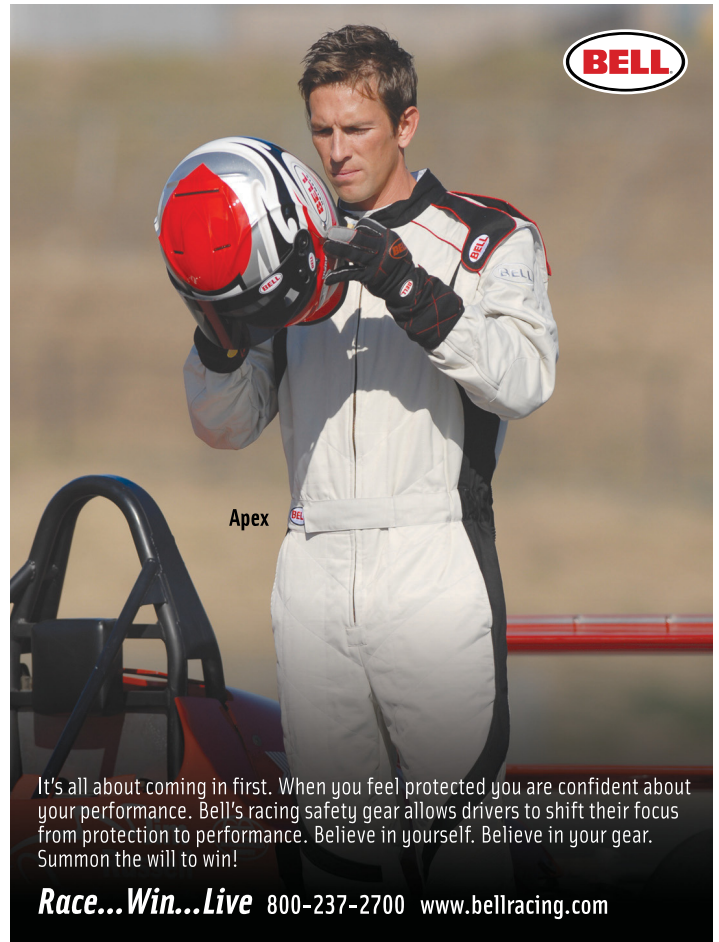


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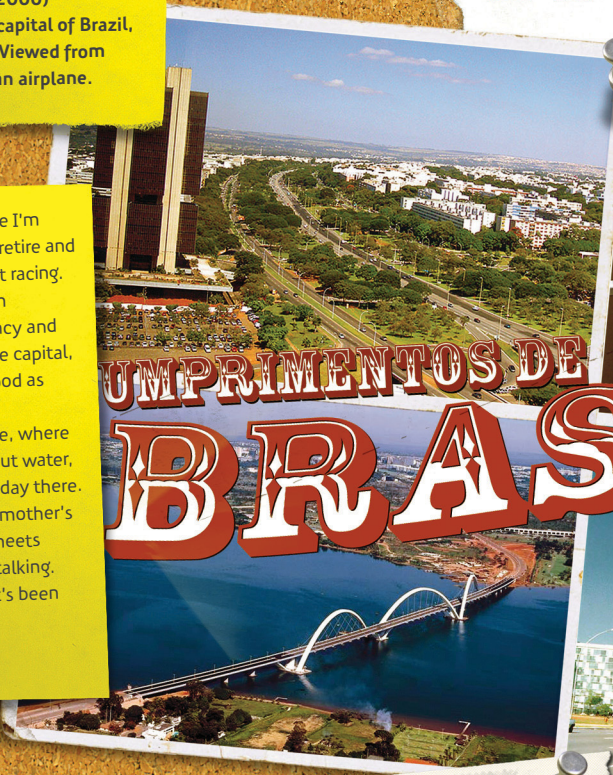
HOME

SWEET

HOME

VITOR MEIRA, PANTHER RACING
BRASILIA, BRAZIL. Pop: 2,051,146 (2000)
FACTOID: Brasilia was planned as the capital of Brazil, and was incorporated April 22, 1960. Viewed from above, the core of the city resembles an airplane.

I was born and raised in Brasilia, and that's where I'm going to return to. That's the place I'm going to retire and where I'll spend the part of my life when I'm not racing.
It's a very quiet city. They just came out with research that Brasilia has the best life expectancy and the highest quality of life. Not only that, it's the capital, so it's pretty well maintained and security is good as well. I like the city.
The place I like the most is Parque da Cidade, where you can run, you can bike, you can have coconut water, you can relax a lot, you can spend your whole day there.
My other favorite place would be my grandmother's house. The second Sunday the whole family meets there to have lunch and spend the afternoon talking.
I also like the kart track, the same one that's been here forever in Juara.



UMPRIMENTOS DE BRASILIA

Local Girl Wins at Circleville



SARAH FISHER, DREYER & REINBOLD RACING
COMMERCIAL POINT, OHIO. Pop: 776 (2000)
FACTOID: The annual Commercial Point Grand Prix kart race raises money for the fire department.

The village of Commercial Point, where I grew up, still doesn't have a stoplight; but a new elementary school building has replaced the old one. I stopped over the Thanksgiving holiday to check in on the body shop where my karts, sprint cars, midjets and first IndyCar Series car were painted. The local kart track, Circleville Raceway Park, where my mom and I raced is still in operation and continues to develop champion racers. There is also an annual Commercial Point Grand Prix street race that I raced in as a junior in high school.

They may have a nomadic spirit, traveling the country and the world in search of racing glory. Many have uprooted themselves far from where they grew up to live and work in a foreign land, and even then spend much of their time living out of a motor home in places like Homestead, Milwaukee, Fort Worth and Sonoma.

Still, there's always a place an IndyCar Series driver calls home. It might be where they grew up, or a new place they've adopted as their own. Whichever, that locale holds a special spot in their hearts. What follows is several of the IndyCar Series drivers talking about that special place, or sometimes places, they call home.

DARREN MANNING, A.J. FOYT RACING
KNARESBOROUGH, ENGLAND. Pop: 14,740
FACTOID: Home of the oldest chemist shop (pharmacy) in England, opened in 1720.

I grew up in Knaresborough, England, a beautiful old market town on the River Nidd in North Yorkshire. It has a big castle (and no, not every town in England has a castle) on a steep hill that overlooks the town. There are lots of picturesque old bridges in the town, which dates back to the time of William the Conqueror (1066 A.D.).

Mother Shipton's Cave is where the witch Mother Shipton was born in the 15th century. Her Petrifying Well and Dripping Cave is a great attraction - people put things in it and they turn to stone. It has to do with the high mineral content (lime) in the water; but back in the 1400s, people thought it was witchcraft.

As a kid I would spend a lot of time on the river, boating and swimming. Now when I go back, I spend time with my family. Loving golf as I do, I play it with my dad and uncles at Flaxby Park or Rudding Park. I'll drop into a pub now and then for a pint of beer. Knaresborough has about 50 pubs and I've probably had a pint in all of them at one time or another.



KNARESBOROUGH CASTLE [disused] - Knaresborough, North Yorkshire, Englandshire

DAN WHELDON, TARGET CHIP GANASSI RACING
ST. PETERSBURG, FLA. POP: 249,090 (2004)
FACTOID: Home to the Honda Grand Prix of St. Petersburg, round 2 of the IndyCar Series

When I first moved to the U.S. in 1999, I lived in St. Petersburg, Fla., because the team I drove for was based there. I made some really good friends who I kept in touch with after I moved away when my racing career took me to other places.

When I became established as an IndyCar Series driver, I moved back to St. Pete because I loved it so much. I love the warm climate and being near the water. Things have changed since the time I first came here eight years ago. There are more nice shops and restaurants downtown. It's a great place to call home. One of my favorite places to go to is the restaurant in the Vinoy. The Vinoy is an old, elaborate hotel with a lot of history in St. Pete. Every Sunday they have a gourmet brunch with seven or eight stations of the most delicious food and the best part...a chocolate fountain dessert bar! I have been to some really nice places, but nothing beats Sunday brunch at the Vinoy.



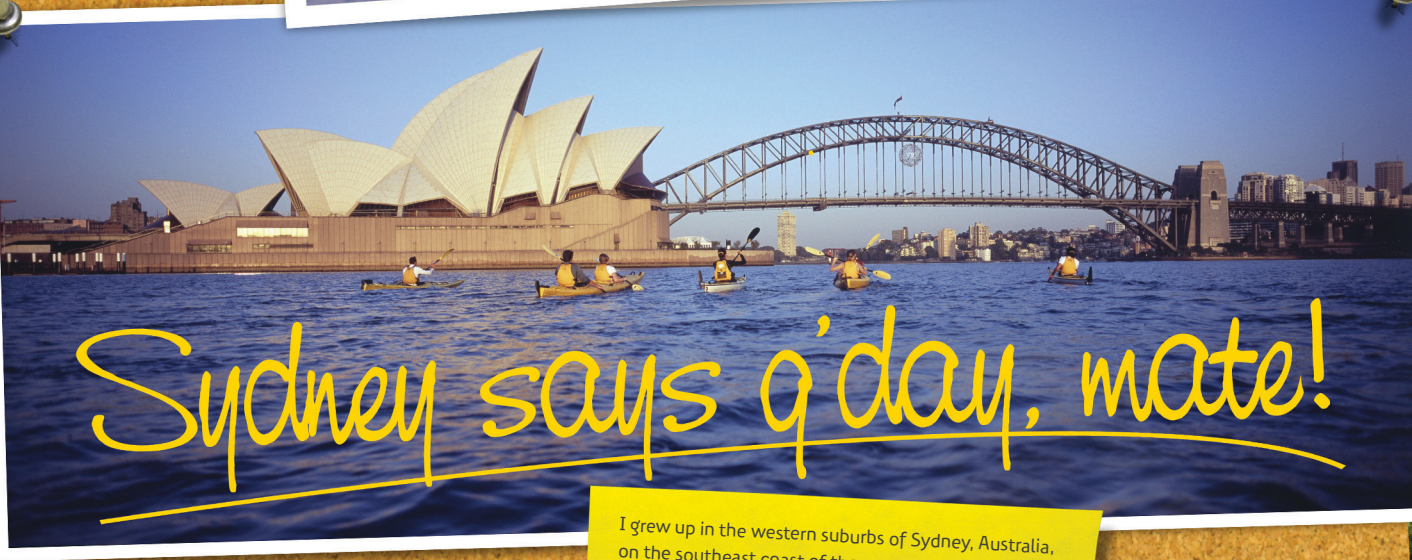
SUN 'N' FUN IN ST. PETE



Ft. Lauderdale—Venice of America



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Sydney says g'day, mate!

RYAN BRISCOE, TEAM PENSKE
SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA. Pop: 4,119,190
FACTOID: The region has been populated for at least 30,000 years.

I grew up in the western suburbs of Sydney, Australia, on the southeast coast of the country. I've traveled extensively throughout the world, and on a sunny day, I think Sydney is one of the most beautiful cities anywhere. Unfortunately, because of my busy racing schedule, I'm only able to get back home once or twice per year. I definitely regret not being able to spend more time there.

When I do make it back to Sydney, I like to spend time with family and friends in the Darling Harbour area. There are many restaurants and shops that I like to frequent, with Nick's Seafood Restaurant being my favorite. I also enjoy spending time at the beach. Even though Bondi Beach is a big tourist destination, I like to spend time there because it provides some great people watching. Speaking of views, that's one of the best things about the city; from the famous opera house to the many harbors, there's no shortage of beautiful scenery.

PHOTO GALLERY
HOMETOWNS
CLICK HERE

RYAN HUNTER-REAY, RAHAL LETTERMAN RACING
BOCA RATON/FT. LAUDERDALE, FLA.; DANA POINT, CALIF.
 Dana Point Pop: 25,110; Ft. Lauderdale Pop: 185,804
FACTOID: Ft. Lauderdale is home to 42,000 yachts and 100 marinas and boatyards

moment I am lucky enough to say I have two towns; I spend quite a bit of time in South Florida, currently live in Southern California. the time I was five I lived in Boca Raton, however, to school and pretty much grew up in Ft. Lauderdale. Florida is known for its weather and water and here I'm all about the water. You will most of me scuba diving, fishing, or just hanging out on with friends. There's nothing better than a day boat followed by a stop off at Ft. Lauderdale's Port Raw Bar.

Dana Point, Calif., is located halfway between Los Angeles and San Diego right on the coast. It's a small town where everything closes at 9 p.m. and I love it. Dana Point is known for its weather and surf, so once I can take full advantage of the situation. I'm sure you can see the pattern here.

DANICA PATRICK, ANDRETTI GREEN RACING
ROSCOE, ILL. Pop: 6244 (2000 - now estimated at 10,000)
FACTOID: Roscoe is a suburb of Rockford, Ill.

My hometown is Roscoe, Ill., which is between Rockford and Beloit, Wis., and about an hour-and-a-half from Chicago. It's a pretty small town, but it was a good place to grow up. I still like to go back and see some of the familiar faces there, but I obviously don't spend as much time there as I used to.

A couple of my favorite places in Roscoe are the Whiffletree Tavern and the Zazu Gift Company. Every year on the night before Thanksgiving, I like to head to the Whiffletree for a little while because a lot of people who I know end up there that night. Everybody is home for the holiday and it gives us a chance to get caught up and share a few laughs. Zazu's is a great place for me because they have a lot of little knick-knacks to pick up. I like picking up little things to help decorate around the house and that place is great for that.



me and my friends in Roscoe, Ill.



ISLE OF MAN  UNITED KINGDOM

ALEX LLOYD, TARGET CHIP GANASSI RACING
DOUGLAS, ISLE OF MAN, UNITED KINGDOM
 Pop: 26,218 (2006)
FACTOID: Capital of the Isle of Man

My hometown in the Isle of Man is Douglas. The whole island is only 30 miles by 14, so it's very small. The island is situated in between Ireland and England. The scenery is spectacular and it is a very relaxed, quiet place. It, unfortunately, has the typical English weather, maybe not so much rain but certainly as cold year 'round.

The Isle of Man used to be a vacation spot for people in England, but now it is mainly famous for the Isle of Man TT race. It is a motorbike race around the streets. The roads are left as they would be year 'round and thousands of people come each year to watch. It is highly dangerous and equally spectacular.

The island was a place I lived throughout my teenage years and my parents still call it home today. It is a great place to visit and most people say it's like going back in time 20 years, with steam trains and water wheels a common sight on the Isle of Man.



"Whichever Way I Am Thrown I Will Stand"



END OF A

In a different world, one might never have seen a career; in this one, nobody expected t

By Jeff Olson

Back in the heat of the season, in the heat of Richmond, the rumor stood up and found its legs. If you believed the buzz, Sam Hornish Jr. was about to leave his open-wheel days behind and climb through the window of a stock car. After much hemming and hawing and partial denials and delays in the official announcement, he did it, moving across the shop floor at Penske Racing headquarters in Charlotte to the stock car side.

NASCAR was never really a secret with Sam Hornish Jr. The moment word leaked in 2003 that he might be joining Roger Penske's team, the assumption took on a life of its own. Eventually it happened, and Hornish is preparing for the Daytona 500, not the Indy 500, in 2008.

But he'll always carry a piece of Indy with him.

"I could always go home and retire or do whatever I wanted to do and know that I won the Indianapolis 500," he says wistfully. "It was 100 times more than I ever thought I was going to accomplish in my life, and I can be proud of that."

Meanwhile, Dario Franchitti also is heading to NASCAR, but he took an altogether different tack to arrive there. His interest in NASCAR was played close to the vest, and when news leaked before the IndyCar Series finale in September that he was on the verge of signing with Chip Ganassi - his rival in open wheel - it was greeted with stunned silence. Dario Franchitti, Indy 500 winner and the man who was about to claim the IndyCar Series championship, the guy who seemingly had no interest in NASCAR, was about to put a roof over his head.

"I can't think of a better way to sign off of a



Michael L. Levitz/LAT

PHOTO GALLERY
DARIO FRANCHITTI
CLICK HERE

Goals achieved, Dario feels free to try new pursuits in motorsports

ACT ONE

*...have come to an open-wheel
...the other to leave it for stock cars*



Donald Miralle/Getty

Sam earned three titles, but the Indy win put the crown on his career

10-year career with a new team," he says of winning the 500 and the championship in 2007. "It allowed me to go off on a new challenge. I got to do that and now I can look back with pride on what happened. There is no 'what might have been.' I've done it."

Same for Sam. Without his championship/500 season of 2006, he might not have considered branching out. But the time was right, the goals had been accomplished, and the move was made.

"I feel that I've done a lot more than I ever thought I would do or accomplish," Hornish says. "It's time to try something different. Good, bad or indifferent, this is the choice that we made and hopefully it will be the right one."

The reaction to the moves proved predictable. If the past two winners of the Indy 500 and the IndyCar Series move to another form of racing, then something must be wrong, right?

Wrong. If anything, it shows the strength of the IndyCar Series, both drivers say. Their goals, first and foremost, were to win the Indianapolis 500 and the series championship. Attaining those goals allowed them to consider a different challenge, to consider taking their careers in a different direction, to consider their legacies.

"There is a misconception that I left the IndyCar Series because there was something wrong with it, and there really is not," Franchitti says. "It was time for that new challenge. It was time to start a new adventure. I was looking for that, but there is nothing wrong with the IndyCar Series. In fact, it's one of the greatest series in racing."

They were, as race car drivers go, at the ►



PHOTO GALLERY
SAM HORNISH
CLICK HERE

Robert Laberge/Getty



Paul Weibey/LAT



F. Peirce Williams/LAT

“I’ve got my face on the trophy. All of it is a bonus”
Sam Hornish Jr.

opposite ends of the spectrum. Hornish grew up in small-town Ohio, was discovered at a young age and won 19 IndyCar Series races in eight years – all on ovals. Franchitti was born in Scotland, emerged from the ranks of classically trained European road racers, and was considered unflappable on road courses. One a phenom and oval specialist, the other not arriving in the IndyCar Series until just recently.

Still, both credit the series with being their most credible break to date.

“I wouldn’t be the same person if it wasn’t for this series,” Hornish says. “I never would have had the opportunity to drive at the Indianapolis 500 if it wasn’t for the [IndyCar Series] and the split between the two series. I believe I’ve done a lot to benefit them and they’ve done a lot to benefit me as well. It was a great partnership. For me, it was time to move on and try something different.”

Franchitti’s entrance wasn’t quite as splashy as Hornish’s. He was already established in CART, having tied Juan Pablo Montoya for the 1999 championship – losing it on a tiebreaker. When Team Green restructured itself as Andretti Green Racing and moved from CART to the IndyCar Series in 2003, Franchitti went along somewhat reluctantly. He’d never been big on oval racing, wasn’t sure if it was his cup of tea.

Until he won an IndyCar Series oval race, of course. In 2004, after an injury kept him out for some time, he won a race at Pikes Peak International Raceway. At that point, he

started to enjoy going around in circles.

“It was at Pikes Peak where the light bulb went off and I thought, ‘Ooh, that was fun. I can do this,’” Franchitti says. “In 2003, I didn’t get to compete at Indy because of my back. When I came back in 2004 the cars were different from what I was used to, but with Tony Kanaan there helping out and Bryan Herta, that helped me a lot. From that point I enjoyed it, I enjoyed being in Indianapolis and started to understand what it would mean to win the Indy 500.”

“In 2005, we went to road courses, too, and it was like, ‘OK, now we’re talking.’ That spread of short ovals, road courses and Indianapolis really made the series good. I still don’t enjoy the mile-and-a-half pack style of racing. That was my least favorite part about it.”

Rivals in the IndyCar Series, they will once again be fighting each other – and 41 seasoned stock car drivers – in NASCAR

A road racer by experience, Dario found a home on the ovals



Danell Lingham/Getty

Yet that was Hornish’s specialty, the mile-and-a-half, side-by-side circus. He leaves the series having won three of the four closest finishes in history. He transformed his oval-racing gift into success at Indy and, after his disappointment in this year’s race, knows just how fleeting and fickle Indianapolis can be.

“I know how difficult it is now to win one Indy 500,” Hornish says. “Everything has to fall into place and go your way. As fast as we were in the race, we couldn’t make it happen. It started raining at the wrong time.”

“I’ve got the one; I got my face on the trophy. All of it is a bonus.”

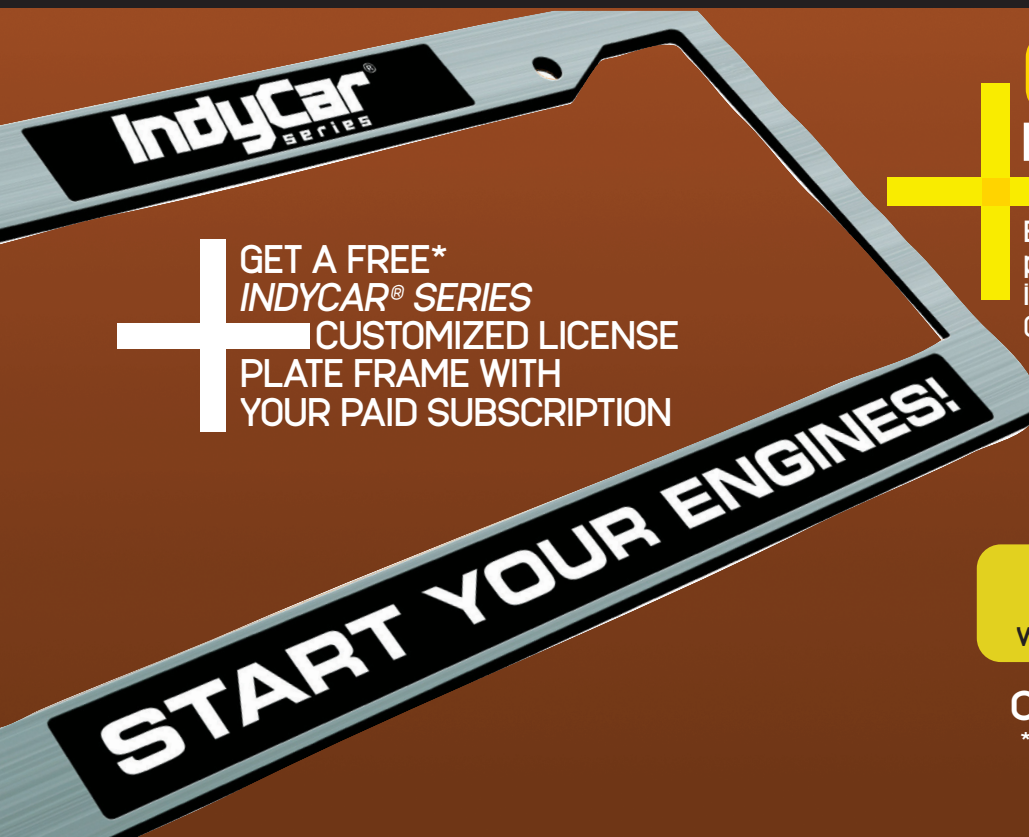
It’s all a bonus for Franchitti, too. His home has a room devoted to racing lore and memorabilia, where his trophies are displayed among other items celebrating the history of motorsports. To Franchitti, a student of racing history, adding his name to the list at Indy inspired awe.

“To get my name and face on the Borg-Warner Trophy with those other people, it’s humbling,” he says. “It’s the highlight of my career. Because of the way the race ended with the downpour of rain, I had to make sure I got back to the finish line. When I saw the way the rain was coming down when that caution started, I thought we had this thing in the bag. Then I had to bring it to the finish because the car was hydroplaning a lot. Until I crossed the finish line, I wasn’t sure it was ours.”

But ours it is, for both of them. And it always will be. ■

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PADDLE TO THE METAL

New technology in the IndyCar Series equals less fatigue, fewer mistakes, reduced costs and improved safety

By Richard S. James Photos Paul Webb

Some of the changes coming into the IndyCar Series cars for 2008 seem like they're all about making the drivers' lives easier, making their jobs a little less difficult. The reality is anything that takes some effort away from the guy or girl behind the wheel is a safety issue. The less fatigued a driver is during the course of a race, the less likely he or she is apt to make mistakes. That reduces the chances that a driver will take one of his competitors out of the race, or be involved in a solo crash.

Two of the new technical advancements for 2008 – paddle shifters on the steering wheel and variable ratio steering – are designed to do just that, reduce driver fatigue. The third, Zylon panels bonded to the inside of the chassis, aim to reduce the chances of debris penetrating the cockpit in case of an accident.

The paddle shifters, where shifting is done by pulling paddles behind the steering wheel rather than pushing or pulling a gear lever, has been a common request from drivers who have enjoyed the technology in other race cars. It also has the added benefits of removing the shift linkage and gear lever from the cockpit, giving the driver one less thing to hit in an impact; reducing wear and tear on the drive train, saving teams money; and keeping the driver's hands on the wheel.

"It makes the car easier to drive," says Scott Dixon, who tested the system fitted to his Target Chip Ganassi Racing Dallara-Honda at the Barber Motorsports Park road course in October. "It's not as demanding physically; you're more relaxed in the car. All you have to



remember is how many gears you have to go down and pull the lever.

"I think in terms of safety and technology, it's definitely the right way to go."

The system doesn't require any internal modifications to the gearbox, explains Andrew Heard, vice president of Xtrac, which developed the system with Megaline, the same company that engineered the shifting mechanism on the Audi R10 and Porsche RS Spyder sports cars.

"It's an electro-pneumatic system, so it's shifting gears by air," says Heard. "Internally, we don't change the transmission at all; we're replacing the shift linkage from the driver to the transmission with an air cylinder in the sidepod of the car. It's a compressor, reservoir and ECU which controls the system and talks back and forth to the engine ECU. There's a valve block on top of the transmission which distributes the air to the shift cylinder and the blipper for downshifts.

"The driver has paddles on the steering wheel; one does upshifts and the other does downshifts. He pulls it and it just takes care of it all. Just four components, really."

The simplicity of the system appears to enhance the reliability.

"It's just run flawlessly from the start," says Heard. "The intention is that once it's on all the cars, there won't be any session-to-session or race-to-race tuning needed. It will learn what ratios are fitted in the box, so there's little tuning needed from the team."

One advantage to the system is it reduces the chance for driver error – no missed shifts, no over-revving the engine, a mistake that can get real expensive, real fast.

"The big benefit to the teams is that the system is intelligent and it won't allow you to shift down if the engine speed is too high," explains IndyCar Series Senior Technical Director Les Mactaggart. "It should save the teams money, because it prevents a driver

"In terms of safety, it's the way to go"

Scott Dixon

from downshifting prematurely and over-revving the engine. Because if you over-rev the engine by a significant amount, that engine has to be replaced.

"When a driver selects a gear, it cuts the engine and allows the gearbox to shift. Equally so, on the downshift, it monitors the gears and the RPM, and only allows the change when it's safe to do so. Because it's so positive, it actually extends the life of the gearbox components as well."

The system, first tested on Dixon's car just before the Barber test at Indiana's Putnam Park road course, might take some getting used to, Dixon says. He noticed some things he hadn't previously.

"The biggest thing I've had to come to grips with is my head moving from the aggressive shifts that it has," he says. "But I think the difference there is, when you had the stick, you were pulling on it and moving other parts of your body, so maybe you didn't notice it."

The other new component tested at Barber – which had seen some use in practice sessions during the latter part of last season – is variable ratio steering, designed to require less steering effort on road courses and, again, reduce driver fatigue over a long race.

"Definitely you can feel it, especially in the high-speed turns," says Penske Racing driver Helio Castroneves, who tested the new

**INDYCAR TECH
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system back to back with the old one at Barber. "I ran the whole session in the end without huff and puff. I really like it. It always helps when you have a consistent car, or can make yourself consistent."

Although it has been referred to as "assisted steering" by some, it's a mechanical system exactly as before, explains Mactaggart. The pattern of the teeth on the steering rack is different, and the pinion configuration is slightly altered. The ratio changes through the range of travel of the steering rack, so as a driver turns into a corner more, the steering effort reduces.

While use of the paddle shifting system will

be mandatory with the exception of the Indianapolis 500, Mactaggart says the variable ratio steering will be optional.

The third technical innovation for 2008 is the bonded Zylon panels in the cockpit, a step that Formula 1 and GP2 have already taken. Zylon is a polymer manufactured by Toyoba Corporation that has high tensile strength and flame resistance. The intention is to reduce the risk of cockpit penetration by debris in an accident.

Two other improvements are in the works, but probably won't be ready for 2008. One is an attempt at making the cars a little quieter. "We haven't made enough progress to give a definitive answer as to whether we'll have it for next year or not, but the development is ongoing," says Mactaggart. The other area undergoing study is the seats, and the safety aspect of driver position in the cockpit.

"The seat program is continuing," relates Mactaggart. "We've got a fairly intensive test program at the moment. We've identified some changes we need to make to the structure of our test seating to make sure we get more consistent results with our sled testing. We hope some of the data we get in the near future will give us information to improve the structure of our seats."

All these advancements are pointing toward the next generation of IndyCar Series machinery. The series has stated its intention of



(Top) Helio Castroneves tested the variable ratio steering at Barber, and pronounced it good. (Above) Paddle shifters apparently don't prevent brake lockup...

going to an all-new car in the next few years, and these improvements pave the way for the technology to be applied to the next chassis.

"Obviously none of these components are related," says Mactaggart. "But we feel we have a very reliable product, and incorporating the gearshift now allows us to perfect it over the next season, so when we introduce a new car, it's not a factor in terms of reliability. For us, it's stage introduction so we can control cost and we can control the technical input. We can monitor the effect of those parts individually rather than have a whole new package at once and deal with a multitude of different problems." ■

"The big benefit is the system is intelligent"
Les Mactaggart



THE GRIP OF WINTER

Words by Jeff Olson Photo by Paul Webb

Scott Dixon barely had time to get home to New Zealand before he had to get back stateside for a tire test. Likewise, Tony Kanaan held new son Leonardo for not quite as long as he would have liked before jetting off to another test session. Helio Castroneves was barely done dancing before he was back in the car.

Uh-huh, you guessed it. He was testing tires.

But all those off-season tire tests actually lead to something beyond racing. While teams and drivers are turning laps to help Firestone

engineers come up with suitable tires, the technology developed by IndyCar Series testing is reaching the marketplace.

Firestone tires featuring long-link carbon are beginning to show up on passenger cars, justifying one of the primary reasons Firestone is involved in the IndyCar Series – to apply technology gleaned from racing to street tires.

"There are technologies that transfer from the world of racing tires to the world of passenger tires," says Al Speyer, executive director of Firestone Racing. "For example,

long-link carbon is used in racing tires to resist heat buildup. That same long-link carbon is used in passenger tires to provide longer wear and enhanced wet traction."

Long-link carbon has been part of Firestone Firehawk racing technology for some time. It reduces the trade-off between wet traction and wear, giving consumers a tire that's soft enough to provide excellent traction in wet conditions while not wearing out too quickly.

Firestone's off-season tests are used primarily to help the company develop racing tires that fit the racetrack. Firestone builds tires specifically for each track, and even the slightest variable – temperature, downforce, track surface – can cause a major change in the tire Firestone provides.

"There are always small changes that are made to the race car's aerodynamics, the engines, and even the track surface itself," Speyer explains. "All of these factors affect the tires' performance, so ongoing testing is a key activity in our minds."

The ultimate goal, of course, is to sell tires to the public. That goal easily could be accomplished simply based on Firestone's track record; but the Nashville-based company wants instead to improve its consumer product by applying the advancements learned from racing.

"Some of the oval tracks on the IndyCar Series schedule produce the most stress on racing tires in any type of motorsport competition anywhere in the world," Speyer says. "So while we enjoy a great reputation, a lot of continuous hard work goes on behind the scenes to make it work properly." ■

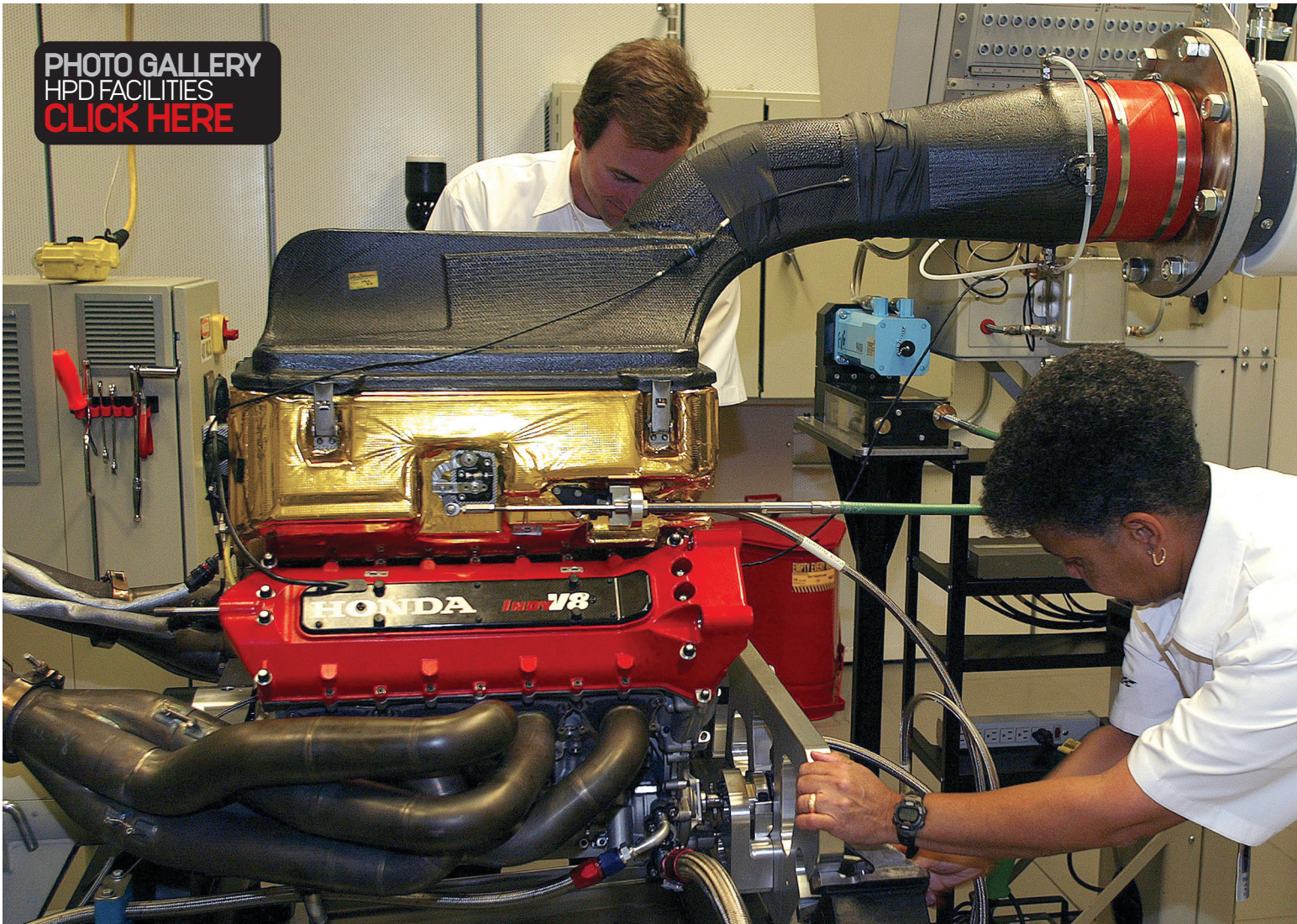
VIDEO EXTRA

See the long version of Firestone's *Ode to Racing* commercial below



VIDEO EXTRA
FIRESTONE'S
ODE TO RACING

PHOTO GALLERY
HPD FACILITIES
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DAY OF THE DYNO

In the off-season, HPD gets a lot of bench time to prepare for the challenges of the season ahead

Words by Richard S. James Photos courtesy Honda

It would be easy to assume that, as the sole engine supplier in the IndyCar Series and with a proven, reliable package, Honda Performance Development would look at the time between the checkered flag at Chicagoland in September and the green at Homestead in March as a nice long vacation. However, engines are never perfect, and with new technological developments on tap for the coming season, there's a lot of work to be done.

Roger Griffiths, race team technical leader for HPD, says that in this off-season they've been working on three key areas: further enriching the ethanol engine package, reducing the noise volume of the engine, and

implementing the new semi-automatic shifting system with paddle shifters.

"One of the things that came up is the way ethanol works with this engine," says Griffiths. "We had a lot of experience with methanol, but not much with ethanol. Part way through the season we came up with some issues and had to step back from allowing the teams to use their own mixtures. We've been on the dyno to come up with what the mixture specifications were. Then we had some teams testing at Homestead, running the mixtures and getting feedback."

Griffiths explains that at the start of the season, the teams had eight fuel/air mixtures, all programmed by Honda, from which to

choose. The differences were fairly small to begin with, and all in a narrow window, so he says they will likely end up with five mixtures in the end.

"We need to make sure that when the driver changes the fuel mixture, it doesn't hurt engine performance," he says.

Noise is another issue HPD engineers are tackling. "We'd like to have the opportunity to take the series to some venues that have more stringent sound requirements," Griffiths notes. One key in limiting noise, as IndyCar Series Senior Technical Director Les Mactaggart has pointed out, is to not give teams another area of development at which to throw money looking for a performance advantage.



“We’ve been on the dyno to come up with mixture specifications”
Roger Griffiths



“In 2005, they ran a small silencer which had a 2–3dB effect. We’ve been looking at making further improvements to the exhaust silencing on the cars. We’re working concurrently with our ALMS program and they have rather stringent requirements. We’ve used some of the ideas to try and quiet the IndyCar Series cars. We’ve run on the dyno and gathered quite a bit of noise data on the engine. We’ve got a track test coming up where we’ll review how we’ve done with the silencer project and then a decision will be made whether or not this is something the IndyCar Series wants to introduce for 2008,” Griffiths says.

Perhaps the biggest project HPD has in the off-season is working with gearbox manufacturer Xtrac and Megaline, the supplier of the system, to implement the paddle shift system into the IndyCar Series machines. HPD must be involved because the software in the paddle shifter integrates with the engine. The shifting system both cuts engine power on upshifts and brings engine revolutions up on downshifts.

“There’s quite a bit of work to implement a

system such as this into an open-wheel car. It’s not just take something off the shelf, bolt it to the car and run,” Griffiths explains. “If you want to do a really nice installation and have the system work as well as everybody hopes it will, it’s a lot of work. It involves both the design specifications and the coding of the software that goes into the engine control unit and also into the gearbox control unit, because those two are communicating on a pretty regular basis.

“There’s been a lot of work looking at the wire looms on the car, how best to integrate the Megaline system into the Honda wiring looms. All the time bearing in mind that we don’t want to make this prohibitively expensive for the teams.”

Despite Scott Dixon being fairly happy with the system during testing at Putnam Park – a mere six weeks after the first serious discussions between the parties involved – and Barber Motorsports Park, development of the system is ongoing. Griffiths notes that HPD is still looking at how to control engine speed to make the shifts not only fast, but smooth as

(Opposite) HPD technicians hook up a Honda Indy V8 to the dynamometer, where every parameter will be measured (above left). It all takes place at HPD’s facility in Santa Clarita (top right), where many of the engines are checked (top left) and built (above)

well. Then comes more testing with more cars because, as he notes, they need to develop a system for all drivers, not just one.

Beyond what’s new for the coming season, there is always enough work to occupy any off-season. Reliability work is continuous, Griffiths says, noting that HPD has already won a 2008-spec engine on the dyno with tests exceeding the 1400 markers that HPD sets for its engines. He also says that HPD asks the teams to grade its performance each season, adding that it’s key to customer support.

“In among all this we have a bunch of tidy-up administrative work we like to do, just to prepare ourselves for the next season. We write up team manuals on how to work with Honda and how to work with the engine. There’s also things that come up during the course of the season that you don’t have time to react to, things that when we get some time, we look at fixing these little issues, which makes life for the trackside engineer a little easier and a little more efficient,” Griffiths says.

“And we like to try to get a little holiday as well.” ■

A WINNING CURRICULUM

The Panther Education Center will use motorsports to build science, math and language skills

By Dave Lewandowski

U.S. Department of Education reports roll onto Don Stinson's desk like waves, depositing hard statistics that will impact the next generation of the American workforce. The fact that almost a million students annually drop out of school is equally astounding and perplexing in this technological and tutor-laden age.

However, some of the reasons identified are decades old – curriculum lacking real-world relevance and presented in “chalk and talk” methodology used for the past century.

Who knew that a lunch conversation between Stinson and high school classmate John Barnes, co-owner of Panther Racing, would be the catalyst for an innovative learning experience with potential long-term benefits?

Soon, another wave of material – this time positive – began to cross the desk of the superintendent of the Municipal School District of Decatur Township (Ind.).

The Panther Education Center was conceived, and when its doors open it will inspire and challenge middle school students to think beyond the textbook.

“We were talking about Indy car racing and about the Challenger Learning Center that the McCullough family has put together around the space industry and the curriculum involved in it,” Barnes says. “We both said, ‘Why not make something like this around our industry?’ The importance of the motorsports industry needs to be shared with the community.

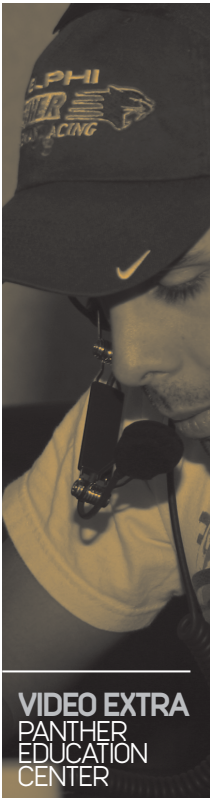
“Motorsports touches everyone, whether it is

the mirror on Ray Harroun's car or the tire development that Firestone does or the engine development that Honda does. But the man on the street doesn't see that. Especially kids don't. They don't understand that motorsports is an unbelievable opportunity for occupations. The average income is probably \$80,000, with so many diverse opportunities – from engineering and aerodynamics to fabricators and logistics and financial planning people and mechanics and painters and truck drivers. All those industries are wrapped into one thing – our sport.

“We wanted to make sure we could get our arms around kids and say, ‘Look, guys, here's a 55-year-old fart [referring to himself] who has made a living in this industry for 40 years and has done very well. You can do the same

VIDEO EXTRA

Take a virtual tour of the Panther Education Center and the things it will offer students



VIDEO EXTRA
PANTHER
EDUCATION
CENTER

thing.' Not everyone is Tiger Woods or Michael Jordan. They think everyone with the driver is part of his entourage. It's not that way. It's a family and everybody depends on everybody else. We wanted to show this and build an education program that is relevant to education today."

A three-hour field trip will immerse groups in the excitement of the IndyCar Series through an interactive educational and entertainment experience that models how a race team utilizes principles of science, math, language arts and technology. Students will become race engineers, mechanics, logistic and financial planners and media and communication specialists. Collaboration, teamwork, communication and critical thinking are essential in the performance of the teams.

"We want to make sure it has the sizzle, because that's what's going to draw the kids in," says Jane Barnes, CEO of the Panther Education Center. "There's a big push in education to do it differently than it's been done in the last 40 years in the industrial age of education. There is a lot of hands-on, interactive, inquiry-based, project-based learning, and this falls right into it."

Students enter an orientation room to review the program and receive an overview of how to interact with the computer software before forming two teams that comprise disciplines of:

students use measuring devices and tools to complete their assignment. They also collaborate with engineers as they develop a "build sheet" and serve as the pit crew during the virtual race.

► **LOGISTICS AND FINANCIAL PLANNING**

Students work within a budget to complete tasks such as selecting a driver to designing the race car. The travel coordinator will research airline, hotel and rental car prices and determine the most cost-effective travel plan and budget. The team manager will map out the best travel plan for the transporter and budget equipment for the race.

► **COMMUNICATIONS**

Students share information about the team,

fuel mileage and mechanics will make front-wing adjustments.

At the conclusion, everyone enters Victory Circle for a commemorative photo.

"When a student can get involved and have the experience with other students, good things happen," Stinson said. "If we truly believe every child can learn and every child can be successful in our school system, we have to do business differently. (The Panther Education Center) provides an information-age approach to learning where students can be successful."

The curriculum was developed by decorated educators Sue Keene and Jon Temple, who, for the past 15 months, have been integrated into Panther Racing's IndyCar



"When a student can get involved, good things happen"

Don Stinson

"We want to make sure it has the sizzle"

Jane Barnes



Screen shots of the Panther Education Center software show what students will be working with

► **ENGINEERING**

Students will use mathematics and physics principles to test wing angles on computer simulators. They will determine the best tire settings using their understanding of centripetal force and friction to create the car's setup. They also will collaborate with mechanics to determine pit stop strategies, calculate and monitor fuel needs, and track weather conditions during the virtual race.

► **MECHANICS**

After learning principles of aerodynamics,

driver and sponsors by creating multi-media publications. They also conduct a live press conference to introduce the driver and provide interviews and commentary during the virtual race.

Preparation culminates in the race room, where students will watch a race simulation on a large screen. Each team will have two pit stops during which students will utilize what they learned in their departments to improve the car's performance. Engineers will calculate

Series and Indy Pro Series operations.

"They are the ones who give the merit and value to it when it's being examined as a viable place to bring students," says Jane Barnes. "They have matched the curriculum with state and national standards in science, technology, engineering and math. They know what makes it click."

"If it's going to be successful, it has to be something that is shown to have value. That superintendents and teachers see the value and are willing to spend what tiny budget dollars there are now for field trips to the Panther Education Center. This is something that's more engaging and, 'Oh, I just learned something, too.'"

"I think we've all been at school at some point in our lives and have just gotten through a class thinking, 'I just want to get this over with. I will never use this again and not apply it.' I think being exposed to a program such as the PEC will allow kids to think differently about math and science and technology skills that they may be learning now, but see little relevant use for in real-life skills." ■

MORE INFO
Panther EC



WHAT'S IN A NAME?

If you're a racer with the last name of Andretti or Unser, it can mean a lot – or nothing at all

By Tim Harms

In the last 50 years, seven Unsers and five Andrettis have combined to make 119 starts in the Indianapolis 500. They're not through. The next generation from both families is set to cut their teeth in the Indy Pro Series in 2008.

If Adam Andretti and Al Unser III feel pressure to produce success similar to their famous relatives, they certainly don't show it.

"I think as a race car driver, if your last name is Andretti, or if it's Hornish, or if it's Castroneves, or whatever your last name is, they all share a common thread," says Andretti, who is the nephew of 1969 Indianapolis 500 winner Mario Andretti and cousin of Andretti Green Racing co-owner Michael. "They all probably put more pressure on themselves to win and perform, because that's what they're there to do, than any name could put on them."

"I always get that question," says Unser, the grandson of four-time Indy winner Al Unser, son of two-time winner Al Unser Jr. and grand-nephew of three-time winner Bobby Unser

"My answer is the same – 'I've always been an Unser. I don't what it's like any other way.'

"It doesn't transform into pressure for me, but more of a desire to do well. If any pressure gets to me, it's the pressure I put on myself. It doesn't come from anything else other than my will of wanting to do well."

Both have learned the hard way that having the right last name doesn't automatically translate into sponsorship or fully funded rides. Andretti, who will turn 29 in March, hasn't competed in a full season of racing since 2002. Unser, 25, turned in his last full campaign – split between two series – in 2004.

"[The last name] creates opportunities with sponsorship – people want to see me," says Unser. "I might not be running in the top five, but they'll still show my car every now and then."

"But, at the same time, I need to perform. I need to do well. If I don't, they dismiss me a little bit quicker than someone who's just starting out. You're going to have



Al Unser III – "Just Al," please (No. 12 below) – is following in father and two-time Indy 500 winner Al Unser Jr.'s footsteps



Phillip Abbott/LAT

Shawn Payne/JMS Photo

Shawn Payne/JMS Photo



Steve Snoddy/TMS Photo

good races and bad races but, with the last name being Unser, for some reason you're always supposed to have good races.

"I watch them do it to [third-generation driver] Marco [Andretti] all the time. It's his second year in the IndyCar Series, and they kind of ripped him a bit this last year. He had a great year his first year, his rookie year; but you're going to have down times, you're going to have tough times. That's just the way any driver is going to have it, but with the extra attention that you get, it just shows more when you're having a down time."

Says Andretti: "My cousin Michael said it years ago, 'When you're an Andretti and you win a race, it's expected of you. The fans and owners, the whole group looks at you, 'Well you should've done that, you're an Andretti.' But when you don't win the race, they wonder why. 'He's an Andretti, he should be winning.' That's probably the biggest challenge; you're not given a learning curve when you have this name. People automatically think that you should be going out there and performing right off the bat."

Fortunately for Andretti and Unser, both have found sponsors not only willing to back them in full-season efforts in the Indy Pro Series in 2008 but also with an eye on the future. Andretti has spent the past several months since his series debut at Chicagoland in September looking for the right team to partner with.

"I'm looking forward to next year in the Indy Pro Series so much because we're going to go out there, we're going to get a full season under our belt, and we're going to show, if

there are any naysayers out there, that this is what we've been capable of the whole time," Andretti says. "I think this is our opportunity. I'm telling people the whole time, throughout this, that this is my shot. I'm at an age right now where this is probably my last shot to get to the IndyCar Series, to the Indianapolis 500 and the whole goal where I want to be.

"This is taken very seriously, and this is more than just a one-year plan here. We're looking hard at the future. We have great backing. I can't say enough about the sponsors that we have - Brunton Vineyards, Rev It Up Racing, Brimstone Dynasty, Terra Nova Industries. These are great individuals who have committed to next year."

Unser, who made four starts with Playa Del Racing in 2007, signed a deal to return to the team in 2008 during the Chicago race weekend.

"I'm extremely excited to be connected with Playa Del Racing and Ethos Fuel Reformulator for this next year," Unser says. "They've brought me on. I'm one of a few drivers in the Indy Pro Series who didn't have to bring money, and that's so huge for a driver to have a team that has faith in you.

"I moved to Las Vegas in June and got my deal wrapped up, made the announcement in Chicago. Since then, I've been training in the gym. It's an incentive to wake up every morning and go, 'OK, I'm going to be in a race car soon. I need to go work on my shoulders or go work on my neck or something like that.'

"I'm to the point now, I'm 25 years old, it's go or no-go for me basically. Either make it happen, or I've got to try something else. We're going to make it happen." ■

PHOTO GALLERY
FAMILY TIES
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Shawn Payne/TMS Photo

His father Aldo's racing career was cut short by an accident, but thanks to uncle Mario and cousin Michael, Adam Andretti has a lot of expectations on him because of his last name



Chris Jones/TMS Photo

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The Stars of Karting series provides the breeding ground for greatness

Words/Photos: KartSport Magazine

It's nearly impossible to list any of the prominent names in motorsport without following their early roots to the battlegrounds of kart racing. Marco Andretti, Danica Patrick, Helio Castroneves, Sam Hornish Jr., Jeff Gordon, Kimi Raikkonen, Fernando Alonso, Juan Pablo Montoya; all of them and more cut their teeth in the karting ranks during the formative stages of their careers. They learned the importance of mental discipline, shifting, late braking, passing and all associated basic fundamentals during their stints in karting, and this form of racing has become the de facto training ground for up-and-coming champions of motorsport.

That trend did not escape the notice of the IndyCar Series; enter the Snap-On Stars of

Karting series. Formed in 2000 as the brainchild of Bryan Herta and his longtime karting mentor Hollis Brown, the North American-based series was formed in order to create a well-publicized training ground for the future open-wheeled heroes of tomorrow. And with the power-to-weight ratio of a shifter kart in the same ballpark as the top levels of motorsport, the two founders asserted that karters could make the jump into open-wheeled racing much more quickly than previously thought. The evidence was immediate; early champions of the fledgling series were none other than A.J. Allmendinger, Scott Speed and Bobby Wilson.

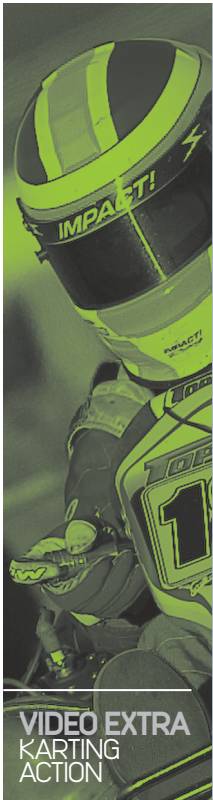
In 2005 the IndyCar Series signed on as the presenting sponsor, and the relationship has

blossomed ever since. It created a previously unexplored plateau of exposure for the national karting scene, and the IndyCar Series got the first level of a feeder system that creates a pipeline for young racers in search of open-wheel glory.

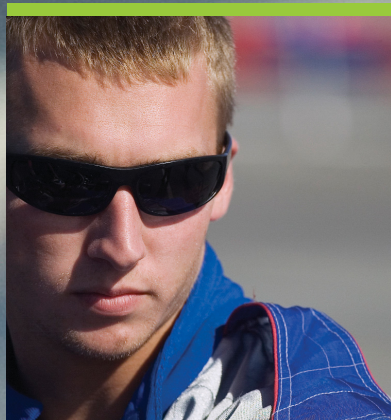
That includes racers like Kyle Wiegand of Greenwood, Ind. Long a fixture on the Stars of Karting scene, the 21-year-old Wiegand has earned a well-deserved reputation for being a tireless worker and obsessive pursuer of perfection. Throughout the Midwest, he's become one of the most respected and admired karters of the region with a loyal fan base to boot. Those who are close to him are immensely fond of him, mainly because his work ethic is second to none, his quiet ▶

VIDEO EXTRA

Watch Stars of Karting action to see why it's such a great training ground for budding racers



VIDEO EXTRA
KARTING
ACTION



“Driving a shifter kart has been invaluable”

Kyle Wiegand





determination is addictive, and because he expects so much of himself, Wiegand is one of those people you only encounter every once in awhile, who is so brutally hard on himself that anything short of absolute excellence simply isn't acceptable. In the world of motorsport, perfection means winning.

His personal drive and the chops he'd been learning on the Stars of Karting tour recently drew the attention of Indy Pro Series owner Steve Eppard. Having spotted the young driver at the New Castle Motorsports Park kart facility owned by former IndyCar Series competitor Mark Dismore, Eppard then watched Wiegand drive to victory at this year's Rock Island Grand Prix.

"The Rock Island Grand Prix has been around for 14 years and is one of the top karting events in the country," says Eppard, who grew up in the area. "Not only do a lot of superstars of karting compete in the event, but so do a lot of guys who are now racing cars."

By virtue of his Rock Island win, Wiegand

Racers like Kyle Wiegand (186) learn racecraft in an extremely competitive environment in the Stars of Karting series

found himself testing for Eppard's SWE Racing Indy Pro Series team. In one fell swoop, and giving credence to the original vision put forth by Herta and Brown, Wiegand went from his 45hp shifter kart to a 420hp race car.

"Kyle has been very impressive," Eppard says. "It started at the shop. After we finished the seat fitting, I left for a while to take care of some business. I came back and Kyle was still sitting there in the car. He told me was getting comfortable with it, visualizing driving it. He's a very focused and determined individual."

Wiegand's test was an obvious success. In just his second stint, he shaved more than three seconds off his lap time and was running as quick as more experienced drivers.

"No doubt, the level of competition in the Stars of Karting is very strong, and the competitive environment has been good preparation for the highest levels of racing," says Wiegand. "Driving a shifter kart against some of the best racers in North America has

"Kyle is a very focused individual"

Steve Eppard

been invaluable for the development of both my mental and physical skills, both of which will serve me well in the Indy Pro Series and hopefully one day, the IndyCar Series."

It was this exact scenario that had been envisioned when the IndyCar Series began its sponsorship of the Stars of Karting. By supporting an environment that allows young racers to develop their skills and catch the eyes of professional car racing teams, the IndyCar Series gains direct access to these karters while providing opportunities to nurture one of the more coveted and increasingly rare commodities in open-wheel racing: home-grown American talent. ■

Alex Lloyd, Ed Carpenter and Tony Kanaan have all joined the babies club. **What are their thoughts on fatherhood?**

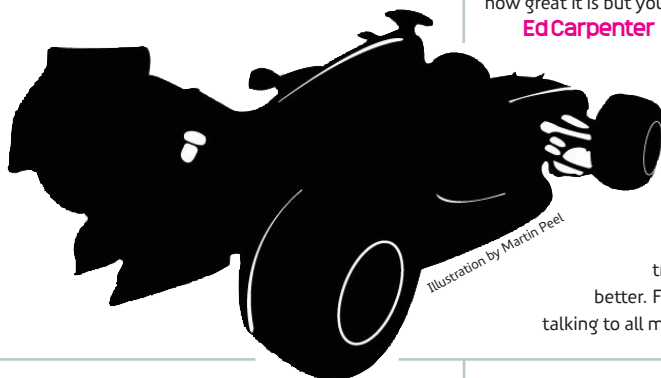


Illustration by Martin Peel

"Fortunately, she was born in the off-season so we have a little bit of time to get used to it and figure out how having a baby works because it's certainly new to me. I've been pretty lucky because she's been well-behaved so she isn't what I was like as a child from what my mom says. I've been told by everybody I've spoken to that you get that overwhelming sense of responsibility from the moment she's born. It's certainly a good thing because I have no excuses now not to win; there's not just me or Sam I'm racing for. There's more reason to go out there and work harder, train harder. It's given me more motivation toward the future. It's all been pretty natural. It's been a pretty smooth transition. There wasn't any sudden, 'Oh, my, I can't handle all this.'" **Alex Lloyd**

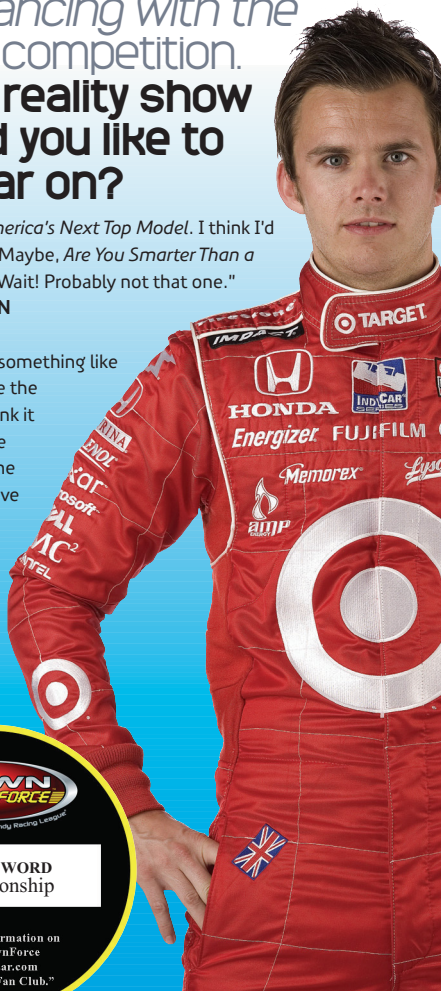
"There are still as many things I want to get done during the day, but now I don't usually get them all done. It changes your priorities a little bit, changes your routine. Everyone talks about how great it is but you really can't understand until you experience it for yourself." **Ed Carpenter**

"Instead of buying watches and things for me, I think I'll be buying watches and things for him. I can see myself looking at karts, driver shoes, footballs [soccer balls] and stuff. My life has changed but I don't think I can really describe the feeling. People who have kids know what I'm talking about. I thought I knew, but I did not. Once I held my kid for the first time, it was better than winning any championship. Life has changed; our priorities as a couple. All the traveling we used to do as a couple now you have to plan your travel a lot better. For sure, I'm still getting adjusted. I'm not the first driver to have kids, so I'm talking to all my old friends and finding out what they do." **Tony Kanaan**

Helio Castroneves won the *Dancing with the Stars* competition. **What reality show would you like to appear on?**

"Definitely *America's Next Top Model*. I think I'd do fairly well. Maybe, *Are You Smarter Than a Fifth-Grader*. Wait! Probably not that one." **DAN WHELDON**

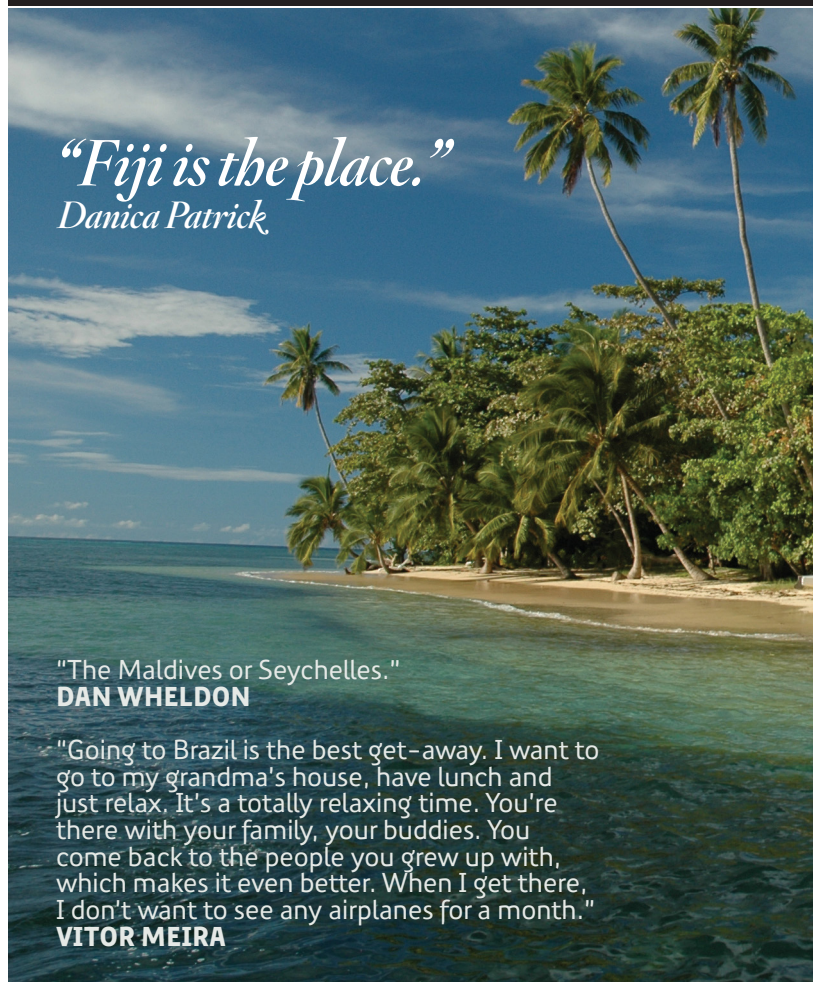
"I think I'd do something like *Survivor*. I love the outdoors. I think it would be quite challenging, the things they have to do." **SCOTT DIXON**



Michael Levitt/LAT

There's not much off-season anymore, but while it's here... **WHERE DO YOU LIKE TO GO TO GET AWAY FROM IT ALL?**

"Fiji is the place."
Danica Patrick



"The Maldives or Seychelles."
DAN WHELDON

"Going to Brazil is the best get-away. I want to go to my grandma's house, have lunch and just relax. It's a totally relaxing time. You're there with your family, your buddies. You come back to the people you grew up with, which makes it even better. When I get there, I don't want to see any airplanes for a month."
VITOR MEIRA

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ILLUSTRATION BY MARTIN PEEL

favorite things *Holiday Edition*

It's the holiday season...Santa Claus has his list, we have ours. Into which column – naughty or nice – we and some of the IndyCar Series drivers fall, we're not exactly sure, but whether we pass Kris Kringle's quality-control check or not, we all still want stuff, and we'll have our wish list ready either way. So we asked some drivers what's on their list.

Our wish list? We're just hoping for a 2008 IndyCar Series title fight as exciting and close as last season. We wish for no more flying cars, and no pit lane scuffles. Oh, and sunny skies over Speedway, Ind. – if not for the whole month of May, at least on May 25.

For you dear readers, we wish only impact-free passes on your way to the checkered flag.

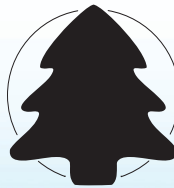
Dan Wheldon

An Indianapolis 500 victory in 2008 would be a nice gift. I guess my stocking won't be so interesting this year...Just a good time with family and close friends, that's the main thing, because being away you don't get to see them that much. It will certainly be nice to see them after what was a difficult season.



Danica Patrick

Let's just say, in the house where the Christmas tree will be...I hope there's a lot of people because it's more fun. I don't need anything; I'm spoiled and I buy myself whatever I feel like. I don't skimp on anyone or anything, I have everything I need, and family is the best.



Helio Castroneves

Hopefully health and a good 2008, and that Indy 500 win that we're looking for again.



Ryan Hunter-Reay

A new shortboard [surfboard], and a win for the Miami Dolphins.



Vitor Meira

More overall grip. That's all I want in my life. More grip and more horsepower, that is what is on my wish list.



Tony Kanaan

I would say a carbon-fiber stroller for my son...that would be cool; paddle shifting for my race car, because I'm getting old and I'm making a lot of effort to upshift; to win the Indy 500; and have another child.



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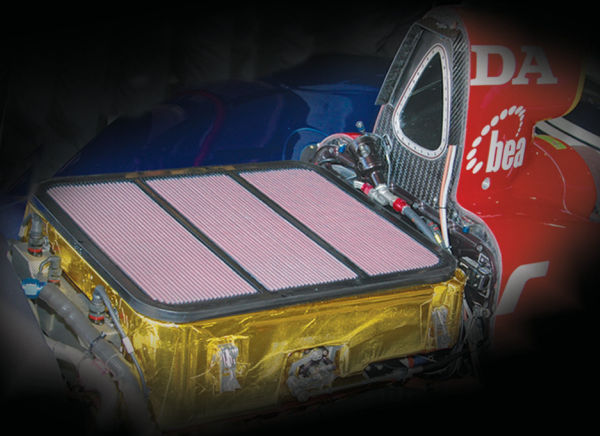
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