

PIT STOP

IndyCar site gives fans the inside track on drivers, teams and races

As America celebrates another birthday, it seems appropriate to reflect on some of the things that make it special. Of course, there's democracy, freedom and opportunity, but the July 4th weekend also will celebrate hot dogs, fireworks and going around in circles really really fast.

This weekend, IndyCar returns to Pocono Raceway after being absent for more than 20 years. The racetrack has been active with NASCAR races during that hiatus, but it was actually designed for IndyCar.

For all of you auto racing novices — like me — NASCAR uses “stock” cars, such as the Toyota Camry, Chevrolet SS or Ford Fusion. Of course, they're not really stock, they're loaded with features to improve their performance and safety. IndyCar races feature the low-profile, open-wheeled cars with fat, racing-slick tires and “wings” on the front and back. They are smaller and faster than their NASCAR cousins, and they bear no resemblance to a stock car.

Not quite up to speed

I've reviewed several major sports websites over the years — including NASCAR's — and have always been impressed with them, so I decided to check out **IndyCar.com**. While the site is solidly built and a good resource for fans, it's not as polished and engaging as some of the other sports sites I've covered.

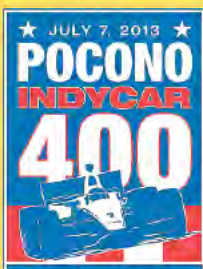
If you go

What: Pocono IndyCar 400
Fueled by Sunoco

Where: Pocono Raceway, Long Pond

When: Sunday 12:15 p.m.

Details: Live on ABC



Fans of the sport will find all of the information they're looking for on their favorite drivers or races. There's a series of red navigation tabs across the top of the home page. The Drivers tab takes you to a gallery of driver mugshots. Each driver's rank, team, car and links to social media accompany the photos. Clicking on a picture takes you to a page dedicated to that particular driver. The page features a profile, short bio, career history and stats. There's also information on the team, links to the driver's and the team's websites, and viewer comments from social media. Some drivers have photo galleries.

The Schedule tab takes you to a list of upcoming races, as well as results of past races. The date and time of each race along with the track layout, race logo and links to the track website and box office accompany each listing. Clicking on a listing takes you to a separate page with much more information on the race and track. The past race results feature the date the race was run, the top three finishers, the track layout and links to complete results and the track website.

The Statistics tab takes you to a page featuring numbers for drivers and races going back to 1996. A series of tabs and drop-down menus lets you target your data search by driver, season, year, event and more. Number crunchers will find a wealth of information to process.

There's a News & Media tab that will take you to articles on the sport and more than 100 pages of photo galleries from past events. Most of the articles also have photos. There are links to related stories in other publications, including from our own Scott Walsh on CitizensVoice.com.

No sporting website would be complete without a link to an online store, and IndyCar is no exception. You can buy hats, shirts, hoodies, models and more celebrating your favorite driver or team. If I were the cynical type, I'd say these websites existed just to sell merchandise.

On the wrong track

IndyCar.com is a little unusual in its design. It gets most of the basics right with a unified color palette and typography, and the navigation is logical and intuitive. However, typically a website's home page is the most visually appealing one on the site, with the pages getting more functional and less flashy as you drill deeper into the site. IndyCar's home page is cluttered and looks a bit dated, but as you click through to the second and third levels of the site the pages get better looking and more enjoyable.

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