



Irish & British Drift Championships

• India Speedweek • Mille Miglia

ONE MIGHT WONDER how VP Racing's partnership with the Irish and British Drift Championships came about, and what the company hopes to gain from it. The relationship began this past January at Autosport International, an annual motorsports trade and consumer show in Birmingham, United Kingdom, that attracts several thousand overseas visitors alongside scores of attendees from across Europe.

"VP was introduced to Dave Egan the president of both the Irish and the British Drift Championship (IDC, BDC) at the show," explained Marc Wesler, VP Racing Fuels International Sales Manager. "We decided the opportunity to partner with the IDC and the BDC was an easy decision. The level of competition, the marketing reach, the atmosphere were all reasons to become part of a growing form of motorsports in both Ireland and the UK.

"The most obvious reason was that these are just people who are passionate and obsessed about the drift lifestyle, and it's that same passion and obsession that consumes us at VP," added Wesler. "The series is a perfect fit for our international growth strategy."

VP does not treat this new partnership any differently than those it's developed with US-based series, Wesler added.

"Honestly, we do not believe there to be too many differences," he told us. "The IDC and BDC have specific, measurable goals they wish to attain, and we hope, as both a fuel provider and a marketing partner, that we can do that.

PRI's international spotlight begins in England and Ireland, where a pair of drift series are attracting international attention; continuing on to the air strips of India—where drag racing rules the motorsports scene; and finally to the undulating back-country roads of Italy for its legendary 1000-mile road rally.

"One of the nicest things about our partnership with a professional-level drift series is that it's not like servicing your typical championship-level series, and that's a good thing."

An interesting point about VP Racing Fuels is that it does not view itself as simply a fuel company, but rather as a business infused with championing lifestyle elements. "We feel that our company vision lines up well with that of the drift community," Wesler said. "We don't just make fuel for the sake of making it. Every gallon we blend is intended to win and be the best in the industry. It's that culture of doing things at an elite level, the 'can't wait to get to the race track' passion that lines up well with the drift community."

The Irish series looks to crown two champions annually. Eighty

competitors in two categories contest the 2017 Link Engine Management Irish Drift Championship with five, two-day events at three different venues throughout Ireland, while the 2017 Mick's Garage Irish Amateur Drift Championship attracts 54 competitors, and will crown a victor after four events held at Mondello Park Donore in Naas, County Kildare, Ireland.

New on this year's IDC and BDC schedules is the launch of a four-round Super Series combining British and Irish competitors and venues.

If transatlantic drifting is something you want to learn more about, Cian Leonard of Zigen Promotions Ltd., located in Enfield, County Meath, Ireland, advised, "Anyone who wishes to discuss business opportunities with either the Irish, or British Drift Championships, just like VP Racing Fuels have this season, please contact the IDC and BDC at info@idcnation.com, or info@thebritishdriftchampionship.co.uk, and a member of our team will come back to you with all available advertising options as soon as possible."

Each year, both the IDC and BDC open up a set number of primary and secondary partnership opportunities for companies such as VP Racing Fuels, as well as a single title partnership opportunity—should one be available. "For any company wishing to advertise through either the IDC or BDC, and at our events, these opportunities present the best option for companies to come on board with either, or both, series. And although base primary and secondary packages are available, these packages can in some instances be tailored to suit the needs of the companies," said Leonard.

India Drag Racing & Speed Week

India Speed Week essentially grew from the success of The Valley Run Series, which brought drag racing back to the Indian motorsports scene in 2013. The event attracted some 380 participants, including exotic vehicles such as Mercedes-Benz AMG, Y2K, Rolls Royce, Bentley, Ferrari, Lamborghini, Porsche, and Nissan GT-R, joining 11-time World Drag Racing Champion Rickey Gadson for a two-day festival of speed.

"The Valley Run has now reached a cult status," said Rongom Tagore Mukerji, director at India-based event and promotions company Elite Octane Inc. "We need three full days to host various Federation of Motor Sports Clubs of India (FMSCI) classifications.

"This led to the India Speed Week team asking us to execute Eastern India's first

drag race in Kolkata during December 2016," Mukerji continued. "The landmark event brought together a mix of film stars, super cars, super bikes, auto manufacturers and unique displays."

The Valley Run's fifth edition—the first of a three-round Drag Race Cup series—was held in March of this year, on the Aamby Valley City Air Strip in Pune. It attracted more than 600 racers that joined wheel standers, celebrities, extreme drifters, off-roading, and even some water sports exhibitions. Rickey Gadson's Drag Racing School debuted there at the same time.

All this pulled 12,000 spectators through the turnstiles—impressive when you consider that no dedicated drag strips exist in India, and event production is costly to organize on air strips.

"Runway production cost deterred many others from executing drag racing events," revealed Mukerji. "Smaller events cropped up and helped to promote the sport, but lacked the safety features and adherence of the rules set by the FMSCI, the national motorsports governing body.

"Elite Octane organized drag racing events for additional clients starting in 2015," he continued. "We expanded to Delhi, Goa, Mumbai, and Kolkata—as one annual event wasn't enough to quench their thirst for speed."

These drag racing events, combined with the FMSCI National Drag Racing Championship, now dominate the Indian scene. Everything from stock vehicles with minimum modifications to highly modified cars with roll cages and aftermarket turbochargers show up on the starting line.

Classes defined by displacement, as well as other modifications outlined in supplementary regulations, were developed to attract a huge range of vehicles competing in six two-wheeler categories, and four car categories in two classes: open and series cup.

The Drag Race Cup is open to both professional racers and amateur drivers. Single event participants are also welcome to take part in only one of the three FMSCI sanctioned rounds.

"The number of powerful cars and bikes on city streets is increasing daily.



Night racing, street racing, unofficial and uncontrolled drag racing events claim hundreds of lives in India each year," Mukerji explained. "India Speed Week aims to curb speed-related accidents and deaths by giving vehicle owners [the opportunity] to prove their racing skills in a safe and respectable manner."

Parts suppliers interested in doing business with the Indian drag race market will find Elite Octane eager to help. "We can provide contacts with Indian manufacturers, tuners and participants," offered Mukerji. "There is a huge untapped base for supercharger kits, aftermarket exhausts, filters, ECUs, and performance engine components to partner with tuners across India."

Mille Miglia

This hard-charging, difficult, 1000-mile road rally race is organized chaos, Italian-style, with emphasis on style.

Each May, the small town of Brescia in

the Lombardi region of northern Italy, not far from Lake Maggiore, hosts cars that most will only see in museums, car shows, or at auctions.

Without question, it is architecture on wheels. The original, non-stop race version began in 1904, with 77 entries, until the Italian government halted all racing on public roads in 1957, when crashes and casualties became untenable.

Reborn in 1977 as a rally interwoven with assorted controlled time trials, it remains the toughest of endurance races, enthralling participants and onlookers worldwide. Entries for 2017 hailed from five continents and 39 countries, totaling 705 (among them, 49 Americans took the wheel).

Arguably, the 90th running of the Mille Miglia could be termed a "classic crush" of 450 historic cars. Nearly 100 were titled between 1927 and 1957, and six teams were comprised of all-female competi-



tors driving such brands as Abarth, Alfa Romeo, Bugatti, Fiat, Mercedes-Benz, and Triumph. The oldest entry was a 1927 Lancia Lambda VII series.

Another 150 cars—produced after 1958—took in the Ferrari Tribute to Mille Miglia and the Mercedes-Benz Mille Miglia Challenge—reserved for mostly modern cars.

The slowest cars head out first, passing through nature reserves and historical town centers to the Adriatic coast, through the Republic of San Marino, winding up and over the mountains into Rome, before turning back north through another series of panoramic mountain passes and then returning to Brescia 1000 miles later.

Every skill level, from professional racer to rank amateur, can be found on the grid. It's where Roger Penske drives—remember, this is May—and he, like every other, is guided by thousands of red arrow road marker signs.

Here, oil is in the blood, so who is to say if it is olive or fossil? Indeed, wine and food may be the engine of Italian life, but cars are inextricably linked with this salubrious symbiotic relationship, which includes a Catholic priest blessing the entire grid with holy water.

Spectators are plentiful along the route. Schools are closed and thousands of chil-

dren line up for miles; many call out the make and model of cars as they pass by.

No advertising is allowed on the vehicles, but there are business partner and sponsor options.

"Mille Miglia is a result of the contamination of futurism, and the ability of drawing

sponsors, products, services), confirming a reputation in keeping with our history, and the expectations we project.

"We hope that the Mille Miglia can become an international platform able to create value for our country, our community, sponsors and licensees who

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inspiration from art must be the means of communicating the brand," espoused Alberto Piantoni, managing director of 1000 Miglia Srl, in Italy. "The race, the way to experience it, and the world of travel seen as an experience that encompasses aesthetics, sports and values, will be the space where physical and virtual communities meet.

"Our brand requires positioning consistent with every aspect (communications,

travel on this amazing voyage with us," Piantoni concluded.

At any given race, the grid is estimated to represent a minimum of 200 million Euros, a combination of Touring, Grand Touring, Utility, Production Sport, Sport, Super Sport, and Race Sport classes.

"Companies interested in the Mille Miglia should begin their inquiry with an email to info@1000miglia.it," said Andrea Paladino, spokesperson for 1000 Miglia. 