

Honda's Racing Heritage

Racing is ingrained in the corporate culture of Honda, in a way unlike any other automotive manufacturer. A former racer himself, company founder Soichiro Honda believed in competition – at the highest levels – as a means of improving his company, its people and products.

"If we're going to build cars, it's better to do the hardest work now than later," Mr. Honda said when the company first entered Formula One competition in 1964. "The best place to learn is at the highest level."

More than 55 years later, Honda continues to view racing as an ideal training ground for engineers and designers. The pressures of racing challenge them, forcing them to find new solutions to problems as they arise. They also demand that you be ready on time – for the new season, for qualifying, for the race. If you can't respond quickly and correctly, you'll be left behind.

"Motorsport is a good thing. It's good for the engineers and good for the company image," Mr. Honda said. "In a race, a split second can define the entire competition. One tire length can decide whether you are a winner or a loser. If you understand that, you cannot disregard even the smallest improvement."

Finally, racing teaches teamwork. No single individual can bring success; racing is a group effort. And winning is the only standard by which you are judged.

Throughout its existence, on both two wheels and four, Honda has raced – and won – at the highest levels. From the Isle of Man TT motorcycle race (competing for the first time in 1959 and winning the top five classes by 1961) to Formula One Grand Prix (with 72 race victories, and consecutive Constructors' Championships from 1986-91), Hondas are found in Victory Lane around the world.

In three seasons of IndyCar Series competition against Chevrolet and Toyota (2003-2005), Honda compiled an unmatched record of success: 28 race wins in 49 events; two manufacturers' championships (2004 and 2005); two drivers' titles (Tony Kanaan in 2004 and Dan Wheldon in 2005); two Indianapolis 500 victories (Buddy Rice in 2004 and Wheldon in 2005); and three IRL Rookie of the Year awards (Wheldon in 2003, Kosuke Matsuura in 2004 and Danica Patrick in 2005).

Honda became the single engine supplier to the IndyCar Series in 2006, and continued in that role for six seasons, concluding in 2011. For 2012, manufacturer competition returned to IndyCar racing, as Chevrolet and Lotus joined Honda in introducing new, turbocharged V6 engines to the series.

With or without competition, Honda has reigned supreme at the Indianapolis 500, claiming 12 victories in 17 appearances at the Memorial Day weekend classic, including nine consecutive triumphs from 2004-12. Dario Franchitti recorded the company's ninth consecutive win at the Memorial Day weekend classic in 2012, the last of his 31 career race victories, which made the Scotsman the all-time winningest Honda driver in American open-wheel history.

Ryan Hunter-Reay became the 10th Honda-powered victor at Indy in 2014, with rookie Alexander Rossi scoring Honda's 11th victory at the historic 100th running of the Indianapolis 500 in 2016. One year later, veteran Takuma Sato scored a popular victory – and the first for a Japanese driver at the “500” – in 2017.

But Honda has not confined its racing programs to fielding teams and engines – the company has also had a direct role in the creation of state-of-the-art race circuits as well. Honda began construction of Suzuka Circuit in 1962, before it had even begun manufacturing automobiles. Suzuka has served as site of the Japanese Grand Prix Formula One event, MotoGP competition and an eight-hour endurance road race for motorcycles.

In 1997, Suzuka was joined by the Twin Ring Motegi circuit. With multiple layouts and facilities – including the first 1.5-mile oval in Asia – Motegi hosted the country's first CART race in 1998 and hosted either a CART and IndyCar races from 1999-2011.

Nobuhiko Kawamoto, former president of Honda Motor Co., and a Honda Formula One race engineer in the 1960s, summarizes Honda's approach to racing: "If you go racing you must win. Second is nothing. Racing is also about how you can make the best use of your time. You are responsible for time because it is shared by everyone, and how you make the best use of time is what makes you progress and makes you strong. It is also a way to train engineers to function in the most demanding environments. That was the belief of Mr. Honda, and we've achieved winning in every type of racing we have entered."

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For more information on Honda's racing programs, visit the American Honda website: <http://www.honda.com>; and the Honda Performance Development website: <http://hpd.honda.com>.

Honda Performance Development

Honda Performance Development (HPD) is the technical operations center for Honda and Acura's high-performance racing activities, including the Honda HI20TT twin-turbocharged Indy V6 engine utilized in IndyCar Series competition.

HPD also oversees Acura Motorsports' efforts in the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship, featuring the 2019 championship-winning Acura ARX-05 prototype and Acura NSX GT3; the new Honda Civic Type R and Civic Si touring cars; and a wide range of products for grassroots, club and entry-level professional racing. HPD has expanded its services over the years, and now offers a complete range of products to meet the needs of competitors at all levels of the sport.

Founded in 1993, HPD entered Championship Auto Racing Teams (CART) competition in 1994, winning its first manufacturers' and drivers' championships in 1996. Three more manufacturers' titles (in 1998, '99 and 2001) and five drivers' crowns (1997-2001) followed. No other manufacturer has matched Honda's success in Indy cars, which includes 245 victories from 446 races, 16 drivers' titles, eight manufacturers' championships and 12 Indianapolis 500 victories.

From 2006-2011, Honda served as single engine supplier to the IndyCar Series. Through six years as the single engine supplier, 98 different drivers completed 1,188,376 miles of practice, qualifying and racing with only six race-day engine failures. No race-day failures were reported for the entire 2008, 2010 and 2011 race seasons. For the same period, Honda powered the entire 33-car starting field at the Indianapolis 500. And for six years in a row – and the only six times in Indy 500 history – there was not a single engine-related retirement in the event.

In 2012, manufacturer competition returned to IndyCar, along with the introduction of 2.2-liter, V6 turbocharged engines. Dario Franchitti joined the exclusive ranks of three-time Indy winners and gave Honda its ninth consecutive '500' triumph that year.

A major milestone was reached in 2013, when Honda recorded its 200th Indy car race victory with Ganassi Racing's 1-2-3 sweep at Pocono Raceway, led by Scott Dixon and teammates Charlie Kimball and Franchitti. Dixon went on to win the 2013 IndyCar Series championship, the ninth Indy car championship for a Honda-powered driver.

Dixon scored his fifth IndyCar Series championship in 2018, as Honda drivers scored 11 victories throughout the 17-race season. Dixon and championship runner-up Rossi led the way with three wins apiece, followed by Hunter-Reay with two and single wins for Sebastien Bourdais, Sato, and James Hinchcliffe.

In 2019, Honda-powered teams and drivers combined to score eight race wins as Honda repeated as IndyCar Manufacturers' Champion. Rookie sensation Colton Herta garnered accolades with two wins in his first season of IndyCar competition; with veteran Indy 500 winners Dixon, Rossi and Sato also posting two wins each.

Sports Cars

HPD's sports car racing efforts, meanwhile, have resulted in more than 100 race victories and multiple manufacturers' and drivers' championships in prototype and GT racing. The company's modern-era sports car program ran under the Acura Motorsports banner from 2007-09, and

debuted with a LMP2 class win at the 12 Hours of Sebring. It was both the first win for HPD's LM-V8 engine and the first for an HPD engine designed and developed outside of Japan.

HPD won the LMP2 title in the inaugural 2012 World Endurance Championship and has twice won the LMP2 category at the 24 Hours of Le Mans. In 2013, HPD and Honda again swept the LMP1 and LMP2 manufacturers', engine, team and drivers' championships in the American Le Mans Series; while HPD-equipped Strakka Racing claimed the LMP1 class win at the 24 Hours of Le Mans for private team entries.

In January 2016, HPD claimed its first overall victory in the Rolex 24 at Daytona International Speedway, partnered with the Extreme Speed Motorsports team. Additional race wins at Sebring, with ESM, and at the season-ending Petit Le Mans, with Michael Shank Racing, secured the North American Endurance Championship for Honda.

The Acura brand returned to IMSA competition in 2017, with the Michael Shank Racing organization fielding a pair of Acura NSX GT3s in the highly-competitive GTD category. Over the past three seasons, the NSX GT3 has found increasing success, with Meyer Shank Racing and drivers Mario Farnbacher and Trent Hindman claiming the 2019 IMSA GTD championship; while RealTime Racing drivers Dane Cameron and Mike Hedlund won the Pro/Am drivers' title in the SRO Blancpain GT World Challenge America.

Acura returned to the Prototype category in the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship with Acura Team Penske in 2018, winning at Mid-Ohio in a strong debut season for Acura and Penske. Last season, the Acura Team Penske duo of Cameron and Juan Pablo Montoya reigned supreme, scoring three wins (at Mid-Ohio, Detroit and Laguna Seca) en route to a sweep of the IMSA DPi Manufacturers', Drivers' and Team championships.

Grassroots Motorsports

In 2009, HPD announced a new Grassroots Motorsports initiative, introducing a new engine for the popular Formula F category. Other programs have followed, including the establishment of F4 and F3 training series in the USA; expanding Honda support for karting, quarter midget, NASA and SCCA Club Racing; and developing the Honda Civic Type R, Civic Si and Fit for a variety of racing categories. HPD continues to explore additional ways to assist amateur and entry-level professional racers in achieving their motorsports goals.

HPD Today

Today, HPD operates out of a multi-level, 123,000-square-foot Research & Development facility in the northern Los Angeles suburb of Santa Clarita, California. HPD's headquarters includes engine design facilities; comprehensive engine R&D operations; prototype and production parts manufacturing; race-engine preparation and rebuilding areas; a material analysis laboratory; quality-control inspection areas; five engine dynamometer test cells; a machine shop; an electronics lab; a parts center; administrative offices and multiple meeting/conference rooms.

After joining the company as its first associate and General Manager in 1993, Robert Clarke served as president of Honda Performance Development from 2005-2007. Previously, HPD was headed by Thomas Elliott (1993-2002) and Yasuhiro Wada (2003-2004).

From 2008-2012, Erik Berkman, one of Honda R&D Americas' most experienced project leaders, served as HPD president. In 2012, Art St. Cyr, chief engineer for automobile development at Honda R&D, took over as HPD President, succeeded by Honda R&D's Ted Klaus, who took over the reins at HPD in April of 2019.