

# Honda's Racing Heritage

Racing is ingrained in the corporate culture of Honda, in a way unlike any other major automotive manufacturer in the world. A former racer himself, company founder Soichiro Honda believed in competition – at the highest possible levels – as a means of improving his company, its people and its 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 50 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 reigned supreme at the Indianapolis 500, claiming nine consecutive victories between 2004 and 2012. Dario Franchitti recorded the company's ninth consecutive victory 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.

Scott Dixon's drive to the IndyCar Series championship for Target Chip Ganassi Racing was the highlight of the 2013 season, and Honda's ninth drivers' crown since joining the IndyCar Series in 2003. Ryan Hunter-Reay became the 10<sup>th</sup> Honda-powered victor at Indy in 2014, with rookie Alexander Rossi scoring Honda's 11<sup>th</sup> victory last May at the historic 100<sup>th</sup> running of the Indianapolis 500.

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 incredible Twin Ring Motegi circuit. With multiple layouts and facilities – including the first American-style 1.5-mile superspeedway in Asia – Motegi hosted the country's first CART race in 1998 and hosted either a CART or an IndyCar race 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>.**