



Pit Notes

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Media Contact: Tip Nunn // Tipnunn@comcast.net // 303.526.0994

Al Larsen // Al.Larsen@andrettigreen.com // 727.898.4639 x222

Honda Grand Prix of St. Petersburg – Friday, April 3 through Sunday, April 5, 2009

The New Sound of IndyCar Racing Debuts at the Honda Grand Prix of St. Petersburg

Repeat visitors to the Honda Grand Prix of St. Petersburg will quickly notice one big change for 2009: a quieter, sweeter sounding Honda Indy V-8 engine. Don't worry; the normally aspirated, 650-horsepower powerplants still sound like proper racing engines turning in excess of 10,000 rpm. But the ear-splitting and sometimes painful roar of years gone by has been replaced by a mellower note in 2009.

"We've replaced the former exhaust system on the engines with a completely new design. It gives them a much sweeter sound," said Roger Griffiths, Race Team Manager for Honda Performance Development, the official racing arm of American Honda. The IRL engines have always made a piercing noise, and when Honda joined the League in 2003, its power plant was just as ear-splitting as all the others, thanks to the rulebook at the time. But in more recent years, Honda has been supplying engines to the entire IndyCar Series field, so in 2007 HPD began investigating ways to make the sound more "fan friendly" without impacting performance.

"Honda was the prime mover in working to get a more acceptable level of exhaust noise, and embarked on a fairly extensive R&D program in 2008," said IndyCar Senior Technical Director Les Mactaggart said. "It sounded favorable and a big improvement over what we had, and hopefully it will give us the opportunity to make the cars more fan-friendly at the areas where the spectators are in close proximity to the track (such as St. Petersburg, Edmonton and Toronto)." "We ran the silencer for the first time in a test session at Phoenix, and it worked so well, I immediately called [former HPD President] Robert Clarke, who was in Japan," Griffiths recounted. "It was 3 a.m. [there] and I woke him up. I held my cell phone out by the track and asked him if he could hear the engine, and he said he couldn't.

American Le Mans Series Launches New Website

The American Le Mans Series launched its new website (www.americanlemans.com) last week.

With an enhanced digital Series strategy in place, the new site will be more "friendly" to fans and media alike. The features archived audio and video, an enhanced Live Timing and Scoring interface, a fully searchable and complete news archive, a new roster of online contributors from throughout the paddock and an expanded level of event-related content, including records and statistics, driver biographies, images and more.

Three Questions with American Le Mans Series Driver Scott Sharp

What is the best part about racing in the American Le Mans Series?

SS: "The best part about racing in the American Le Mans Series is the technology and the action. These are some of the most sophisticated cars in the world and the American Le Mans Series allows manufactures a lot of freedom to develop new technology. So, very advanced. Also, with four different classes running, there are always battles and action going on - great for the fans."

What is the best part about living in Florida?

SS: "I love warm weather. So, the opportunity to be in a lot of sun and warmth and close to the water - it doesn't get any better."

What is the best part about racing with David Brabham?

SS: "David is a fantastic teammate; the best I've ever had. He's been running these types of cars and these tracks for over ten years. So he's vastly experienced and everything is open between us....so there is great communication that permeates the whole team."

Did you know . . .

The Acura Sports Car Challenge at the Honda Grand Prix of St. Petersburg is the first, and one of only two, American Le Mans Series races run on temporary streets circuits in 2009. The other street course is the Grand Prix of Long Beach, which is also held in April.