



Gateway Motorsports Park announces first St. Louis Speed Festival

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MADISON - Gateway Motorsports Park owner Curtis Francois and Verizon IndyCar Series driver James Hinchcliffe today formally announced the inaugural St. Louis Speed Festival. The weeklong Speed Festival, which will start on August 19, will kick off the inaugural INDYCAR Bommarito Automotive Group 500 presented by Valvoline on August 26 at the 1.25-mile oval in Madison, Illinois.

The announcement was made during a St. Louis Sports Commission meeting at the Missouri Athletic Club and was met with resounding support from the commission's executive members.

"The people of the St. Louis region do an incredible job of hosting first-class national events," said Francois, who acquired Gateway Motorsports Park (GMP) in 2012. "With the Speed Festival, we want to capture the magic of the playoff atmosphere we see with the Blues and Cardinals and events such as the Winter Classic and NCAA games that take place here each season."

Francois' vision, since saving the racing facility, was to bring the biggest motorsports events to the region and engage the entire community in the thrill and excitement of racing. The St. Louis Speed Festival is an essential component of Francois' long-term plans.

The Speed Festival is comprised of seven separate and unique events leading up to the Bommarito Automotive Group 500 presented by Valvoline. The festival is modeled after the Indy 500 Festival held prior to the Indianapolis 500 each year.

"The timing of the INDYCAR race is perfect because it fell in line with several non-racing events with which we had already been involved," said Gateway Motorsports Park Executive Vice President and General Manager Chris Blair. "We have worked closely as a sponsor of the Collinsville American Cancer Society golf tournament and we recently began hosting events with Big Shark Bicycle company, the producers of the Go! St. Louis Marathon and our local Cars & Coffee St. Louis group. In addition, our great relationship with the St. Louis Cardinals and Ballpark Village made it very easy for all of us to work closely together, and this approach will allow for a solid foundation to grow the event year after year."

Understanding that building a week-long festival from scratch is a major undertaking, GMP officials enlisted the help of former Anheuser-Busch sports marketing director Larry Albus to assemble a steering committee of community leaders from both Illinois and Missouri. The group is comprised of members of the St. Louis Sports Commission, area colleges, downtown St. Louis civic leaders and local media.

"We have plans to engage as many people as possible in the Speed Festival celebration, even if they never buy a race ticket," continued Francois. "Sports fans of all ages love being involved in the fun of big-time sports like this, even if they don't go to the game or event itself. It's going to be exciting for everyone just to be a part of great events we will hosting all week."

Francois expects more events will be added over the next several months, as details are being finalized.

2017 ST. LOUIS SPEED FESTIVAL EVENTS

Saturday, August 19 -- The Speed Festival begins at Gateway Motorsports Park with the GO! St. Louis Run at the Raceway. Events include a 5k run/walk, one-mile fun run and beer relay. The Run is expected to attract several thousand runners.

Sunday, August 20 -- Cycle the Raceway with Big Shark Bicycle and Cars & Coffee St. Louis. GMP will host several hundred cyclists for the Big Shark race as well as a

special edition of Cars & Coffee St. Louis that regularly attracts more than 700 cars and thousands of spectators.

Monday, August 21 -- Karting for Kids. The Gateway Kartplex will host a corporate karting challenge in which area businesses participate in team competition as a charity fundraiser.

Tuesday, August 22 -- The St. Louis Cardinals are hosting an INDYCAR Theme Night presented by Gateway Motorsports at Busch Stadium on August 22. Includes fan giveaways, driver appearances and on-field racing activity between innings.

Wednesday, August 23 -- The long-standing American Cancer Society Golf Tournament. Conducted on two courses, including Gateway National, which is adjacent to the speedway.

Thursday, August 24 -- INDYCAR Fan Fest will feature driver appearances, a pit stop competition and hauler parade.

Friday, August 25 -- Miller Lite Carb Day. Practice and qualifying for the Verizon IndyCar Series, Indy Lights and Pro Mazda Series as well as post-race festivities at the track and nearby Ballpark Village.

Saturday, August 26 -- The St. Louis Speed Festival concludes with the inaugural Verizon IndyCar Series Bommarito Automotive Group 500 presented by Valvoline. Support races include the Pro Mazda and Indy Lights Series.

In addition to America's best drivers, the inaugural Bommarito Automotive Group 500 presented by Valvoline also will draw competitors from Australia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, France, Japan, New Zealand, Spain, United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom.

Tickets for the inaugural Bommarito Automotive Group 500 presented by Valvoline may be purchased online at www.gatewaymsp.com/indycar/ or by calling the GMP ticket office at [\(618\) 215-8888](tel:6182158888). Tickets start at just \$35. Kids 15 and under are free (general admission) with a paid adult.

For more information on Gateway Motorsports Park, please call [\(618\) 215-8888](tel:6182158888) or visit www.gatewaymsp.com. Follow GMP on Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and Instagram.