DECEMBER 2024

THE SHOP

For performance, restyling & customization professionals

TOWING & HAULING

ICE UPDATE

LAP AFTER LAP

The circle track market stays consistently strong

CUVS

CONTENTS

THESHOP // December 2024 // Volume 27 Number 7

FEATURES

BUSINESS

6
CREATING A WELL-ROUNDED MARKETING STRATEGY, PART II
Tips for helping your shop stand out in a crowded online marketplace.
By Barry Alt

PERFORMANCE

12
LAP AFTER LAP
The circle track market stays consistently strong.
By John Carollo

20
FLYING HIGH
Regal Roadsters is looking for someone to build on its 43-year legacy.
By Maura Keller

24
PARTS INTO ART
Katie Buttera uses her love of racing as inspiration for AppleGirlArt.com.
By Tony Thacker

28
THE CONTINUING ROLE OF INTERNAL COMBUSTION ENGINES
Arguments supporting ICE's staying power.
By Jef White

30
PERFORMANCE PRODUCTS
Stock your shelves with these go-fast components.

ON THE COVER
The circle track market continues to find its groove, offering shops a chance to serve serious repeat customers. *See article on page 12.* (Main photo by MRamy Images, copyright Rock Art Ltd./courtesy Precision Epoxy; inset photo courtesy aFe POWER)

PAGE 32

RESTYLING

32
CROSSOVER APPEAL
The versatility of today's CUVs make them ideal platforms for accessorization.
By Jef White

40
YES OR NO: THE TOWING AFTERMARKET
Understanding what it takes to help customers hitch up & go.
By Jef White

46
YOUR FINAL SALE
Steps to smooth the process of selling your business.
By Josh Poulson

48
RESTYLING PRODUCTS
Parts to accessorize any ride.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

50
EV ROUNDUP
Recent happenings in the world of electric vehicles.

DEPARTMENTS

DRIVER'S SEAT 4
AFTERMARKET ALLEY 53
AD INDEX 55
ONE MORE THING 56

PERFORMANCE

Regal Roadsters p. 20 / Parts Into Art p. 24 / ICE Update p. 28 / Products p. 30

LAP AFTER LAP

The circle track market stays consistently strong.

By John Carollo

Another circle track racing season has come and gone, and just like drivers and crew members, shops that serve the market are always seeking ways to improve consistency.

Winter build season is a great time to take stock of what's working, what can be tweaked and what's to come. Checking in with like-minded professionals can help identify trends and sort through the clutter.

We've put together a collection of information regarding current market happenings and opportunities professionals may want to pursue. But first, let's start with some insights from a pair of industry suppliers closely watching the circle track market with an eye on ways to help shops take full advantage.

MORE TO LEARN

It may be human nature to want to take a moment to relax after a grueling oval track season, whether your customers ride the asphalt or the dirt. But, with competitive edges extremely thin, now's also the time to brush up on the latest innovations to help your customers start next season strong.

"The old adage of, 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it' doesn't always hold true," notes Bob Florine, executive vice president at ARP. "Racers should and do always look to improve."

And that means aftermarket shops and builders need to do the same to keep pace with an ever-evolving industry.

"There continues to be technological improvements in engines and chassis development, resulting in performance increases and elevated stresses on products such as fastened components," Florine notes.

Mike Ramy, owner of Precision Epoxy Products, agrees that technological advancements have revolutionized circle track racing.

Bridgestone Americas and Penske Entertainment announced a long-term extension to Firestone's role as the exclusive tire supplier of all IndyCar-sanctioned racing. (Photo courtesy Bridgestone Americas)

LAP AFTER LAP

The agreement will keep Firestone as the sole tire supplier for all NTT INDYCAR SERIES races, the INDY NXT by Firestone developmental series and the annual Indianapolis 500. (Photos courtesy Bridgestone Americas)

"Gone are the days when race preparation and vehicle setup were done by good ol' boys using 'X' marks on the shop floor for grain scale placement and strings for wheel alignment," he says. "In the modern circle track scene, from local Saturday night races to top-tier competitions, staying competitive requires keeping abreast of the latest technologies. This necessitates the use of proper tools, skilled technicians and readily available in-house resources."

Taking advantage of professional offerings such as flooring products can elevate shops to another level, opening doors to attracting more serious racers as repeat customers.

"Shops new to circle track racing, whether on dirt or asphalt, might not realize that achieving the optimal and consistent setup requires working on a flawless surface," Ramy reveals. "That's where the significance of a high-quality surface plate comes in. A perfect surface enhances all aspects of car setup, including scaling, weight distribution, alignment, ride heights, suspension geometry, bump steer and so on."

Knowing your stuff is the most important attribute to connecting with circle track racers, the suppliers agree. But a close second is creating trusting relationships with customers looking to build fast friendships.

"Racing has always been a 'people sport,'" Florine reveals. "Get out to the track and interface with the competitors. It means so much to them that you are taking the time to visit with them and tend to their needs."

Only someone like you who knows what it takes to race consistently can understand and relate to what they're going through, observes Ramy, mixing the desire for top equipment with the realities of budget constraints.

"Shops seeking to attract circle track enthusiasts must recognize the impact of escalating costs on the typical weekend racer," he says. "The inability to afford certain items does not diminish a true racer's drive to chase their passion. In fact, this drive is often intensified by the competitiveness and the tangible chance of victory."

A full-service shop, then, can attract a broader customer base by offering more than just parts sales.

"It should also provide the necessary tools, equipment and technical know-how to assist customers with race vehicle preparation and setup," Ramy continues.

Of course, the parts are important, too. From ARP, some to keep an eye on are engine fasteners (head and main studs, rod bolts, etc.) and wheel studs.

"They are manufactured in-house from heat-treated 8740 chromoly that's rated at

To build a customer base, hit the track and interface with competitors. (Photo courtesy ARP)

LAP AFTER LAP

Staying competitive in the modern circle track scene requires keeping abreast of the latest technologies. (Photo courtesy Precision Epoxy Products)

190,000 psi tensile strength," Florine notes. "The threads are rolled (not cut) after heat-treat, which provides significantly increased fatigue life, and cadmium plated for extra durability. They are available for press-in or screw-in applications, as well as a Sprint car-style drive pin."

Meanwhile, Ramy points to the Precision Epoxy Set-Up Surface Plate, a tool perfected for and used by leading teams in NASCAR, IMSA, IndyCar, F1 and NHRA, as well as in aerospace and metrology applications.

"The epoxy surface plate is an indispensable setup tool that completes your shop, ensuring all other setup tools function optimally," he explains. "It boasts superior flatness and aesthetics and it won't flex with temperature changes or sag under its own weight."

The company also offers a Steel Plate Mounting Platform for shops requiring a dual-purpose steel plate for setup and fabrication tasks.

PART OF THE COMMUNITY

One thing to know about your racing customers is that while drivers can be fierce competitors on the track, after the checkered flag falls they are one big family, supporting each other and their communities.

This spirit of giving was on display in full force following the recent dual disasters of Hurricanes Helene and Milton. As an example of racing enterprises supporting their neighbors, Ryan Pritt wrote about how Hendrick Motorsports employees came together to help out with Hurricane Helene relief efforts.

"Humanitarian and charitable initiatives are in the DNA of Hendrick Motorsports and Hendrick Automotive Group, thanks to the longtime efforts of Rick Hendrick. From cancer research to disaster relief efforts, the owner, chairman and CEO leads by example," Pritt wrote. "Certainly, it starts at the top, and never has the trickle-down effect been on display more than when teammates throughout the company stepped up to aid victims of Helene."

The racing organization joined Charlotte Motor Speedway, North Wilkesboro Speedway, NASCAR and other teams throughout the sport to gather and send truckloads of vital supplies including water, diapers, clothing and food to those in need.

Meanwhile, Dave Dudley, the organization's vice president of flight operations, directed the company's two helicopters for special flight missions in coordination with Samaritan's Purse, while Brandon Black, Hendrick Motorsports' transportation coordinator, helped organize things on the ground, providing a truck for internal donations and joining caravans taking supplies from donation hubs in Charlotte to North Wilkesboro.

"We're incredibly proud of our aviation team and all of our teammates who have volunteered and donated," says Jeff Andrews, president and general manager. "The impact of Hurricane Helene has been truly devastating, and our neighbors in western North Carolina face immense challenges in rebuilding their homes and communities. It's been inspiring to see the relief initiatives across the NASCAR industry, and we intend to continue supporting these efforts as long as the critical need exists."

Meanwhile, shop owners and aftermarket professionals in need of assistance following the hurricanes can reach out to the Automotive Aftermarket Charitable Foundation (AACF).

For the past 65 years, the AACF has provided support to those within the aftermarket industry and their families during times of hardship and challenges. Forms and more information are available online at aftermarketcharity.org/get-help.

65 YEARS AACF

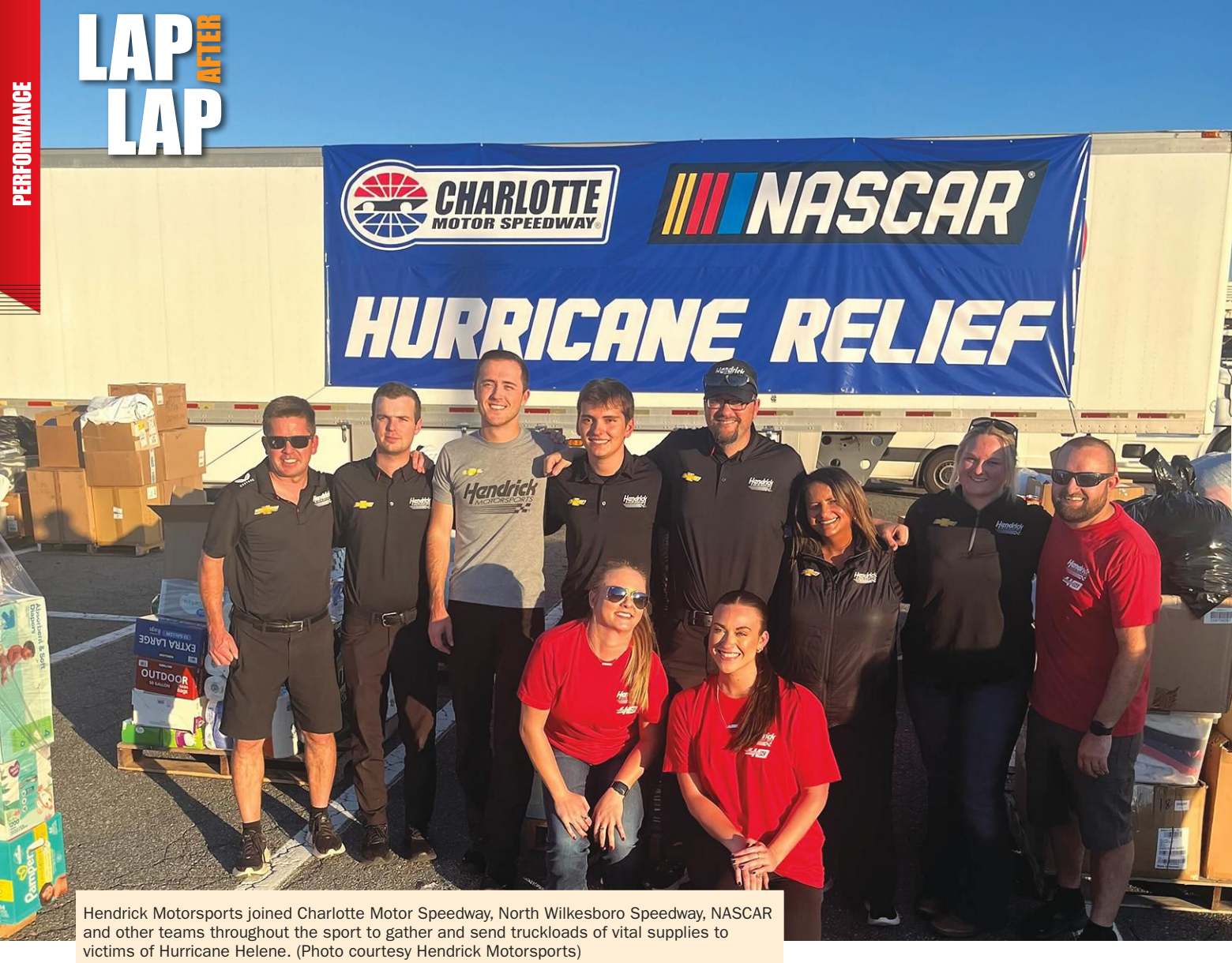
LET'S WORK TOGETHER

Partnerships are also an important part of circle track racing, as shown by the recent announcement by Bridgestone Americas and Penske Entertainment of a long-term extension to Firestone's role as the exclusive tire supplier of all IndyCar-sanctioned racing.

The agreement will keep Firestone as the sole tire supplier for all NTT INDYCAR SERIES races, the INDY NXT by Firestone developmental series and the annual Indianapolis 500.

Firestone is currently in its 25th consecutive season as the exclusive tire supplier for the series, and officials say the extension reinforces Bridgestone's ongoing commitment to driving innovation through motorsports. The Firestone brand's open-wheel racing history dates back more than a century.

"At Bridgestone, motorsports are our passion—always have been and always will be. This is particularly true for our Firestone



Hendrick Motorsports joined Charlotte Motor Speedway, North Wilkesboro Speedway, NASCAR and other teams throughout the sport to gather and send truckloads of vital supplies to victims of Hurricane Helene. (Photo courtesy Hendrick Motorsports)

brand, which has been part of world-class racing since winning the first Indy 500 in 1911," says Paolo Ferrari, executive chairman and CEO, Bridgestone Americas. "We believe motorsports are the ultimate challenge for premium performance and a proving ground for advancing in our goals towards sustainable innovation. Our relationship with the NTT INDYCAR SERIES has been a critical part of these efforts, and we are proud to keep driving forward together."

Through the Firestone brand, Bridgestone has worked closely with the NTT INDYCAR SERIES and partners across the paddock to help advance developments in more sustainable racing.

Bridgestone incorporated certain materials made from hard-to-recycle plastics and palm oil waste residue in Indy 500 race tires in 2023 and 2024. The company has also used guayule-derived natural rubber in the sidewall of alternate race tires the past two seasons.

Bridgestone's motorsports initiatives are aligned with the company's long-term sustainability goals, officials add, and demonstrate alignment with IndyCar's efforts to work toward making the sport more sustainable.

"Our relationship with the team at Bridgestone continues to set an industry standard for success and innovation," says Roger Penske, chairman of Penske Corporation. "Firestone has been a foundational partner for our sport, from the very first Indy 500 to now, playing an integral role in the development of the NTT INDYCAR SERIES and its highly competitive racing. We're extremely proud to carry this long-term partnership forward into a very exciting and productive future together."

The long-term extension includes Firestone's role as presenting sponsor and sole tire supplier of the top-tier development series, INDY NXT by Firestone. The brand signed as presenting sponsor in 2023 to help the sport develop the next generation of racing talent and engage new audiences.

The agreement also renews Firestone's status as official partner and tire supplier of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, the largest spectator sporting facility in the world.

PRI SHOW RACES BACK TO INDY

One way to catch up on the latest trends, industry education and new products in the circle track market is to attend the PRI Show, billed as the "world's largest gathering of motorsports professionals."

Set for Dec. 12-14 at the Indiana Convention Center & Lucas Oil Stadium, the PRI Show has offered a chance for peer-to-peer connections since 1988, serving as the industry's platform for innovation, net-

The PRI Show brings thousands of stakeholders from across the world together to drive innovation, fuel business growth and celebrate the passion of racing. (Photo courtesy Performance Racing Industry)

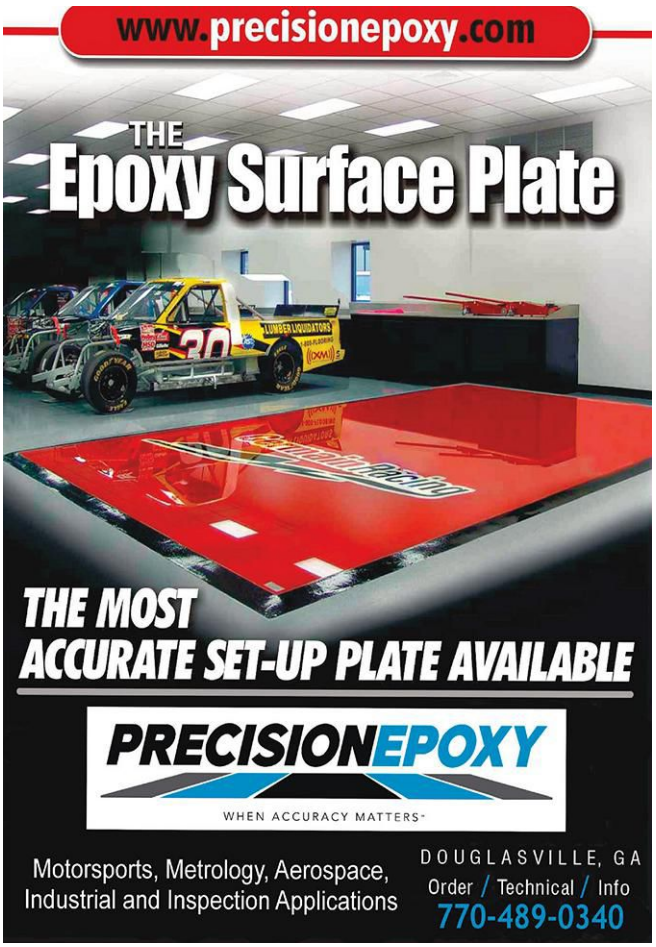
working and business development. From manufacturers, retailers and race teams to track operators, sanctioning bodies, promoters, and media, the event brings together thousands of stakeholders from across the world to drive innovation, fuel business growth and celebrate the passion of racing, according to officials.

"With a legacy dating back to 1988, the PRI Show is more than just an exhibition and more than just a trade show—it's the pulse of the motorsports industry," says Mike Good, PRI president. "Whether you're involved in drag racing, Sprints, stock cars, open wheel or off-road, this event is where business gets done, relationships are built, innovation comes to life and the future of racing is shaped."

Officials outline the 2024 PRI Show as featuring:

- Over 1,000 exhibitors across more than 1 million gross square feet of exhibit space showcasing the latest in performance products, equipment and services.
- Exclusive educational sessions offering insight on motorsports trends, marketing strategies and technological advancements.
- Networking events designed to connect professionals from every corner of the industry.
- PRI SIM Racing Arena, expanded this year to 40,000 gross square feet, spotlighting 11 sim racing equipment makers and e-racing series.
- Grand Opening Breakfast starring motorsports and action sports icon Travis Pastrana and hosted by Ralph Sheheen.
- PRI Podcast Studio offering top industry podcasters filming and broadcasting.
- Featured Products Showcase highlighting the newest and most popular motorsports products.
- T.O.P.S. HQ (Track Operators, Promoters and Sanctions) presented by myracepass.com, the headquarters for track promoters, operators, and sanctioning body leadership and staff.

Several key racing organizations also hold their events in conjunction with the show each year, including Women in Motorsports North America (WIMNA), Race Track Business Conference (RTBC), International Council of Motorsports Sciences (ICMS), and the American Engine Rebuilder Association (AERA).

"This collective presence highlights the event's role as the central hub for motorsports and underscores the critical role it plays in shaping the future of racing," show officials state.

For more information visit pri2024.com/attend. ***TS***