

Auto racing Continues Its Fast-Paced Tradition During the Fair

High octane, fast-paced auto racing for fans of everything from sprint to stock cars returns to the Imperial Valley fairgrounds March 1-10 with the start of the 2024 California Mid-Winter Fair & Fiesta, this year titled Red, White & Moo.

The racing events, held at the fairgrounds' Imperial Valley Raceway, are led by the California Mid-Winter Fair Heritage Foundation, which has been organizing the races at the fairgrounds since the foundation held its first 500-Heritage race for local racers eight years ago.

The race line up is as follows:

- Friday, March 1: So Cal Lightning Sprints, Imperial Valley Pure Stocks, So Cal Dwarf Cars (grandstands open at 5 p.m., races begin at 7 p.m.);
- Saturday, March 2: So Cal Lightning Sprints, Imperial Valley Pure Stocks, So Cal Dwarf Cars (grandstands open at 4:30 p.m., races begin at 5:30 p.m.);
- Wednesday, March 6: Imperial Sport Compacts (grandstands open at 5 p.m., races begin at 6 p.m.);
- Friday, March 8: Imperial Valley 360/410 Sprint Cars, Southwest Ecotec Midgets (grandstands open at 5 p.m., races begin at 7 p.m.);
- Saturday, March 9: Imperial Valley 360/410 Sprint Cars, Southwest Ecotec Midgets (grandstands open at 4:30 p.m., races begin at 5:30 p.m.);
- Sunday, March 10: Imperial Valley Sport Compacts, Go-karts (grandstands open at 1 p.m., races start at 2 p.m.).

Four of the six races can be attended with no additional charge beyond admission to the fair.

The only races with an additional charge are on March 8 and 9. The cost for those 18 and older is \$5, plus an additional processing fee, to purchase a ticket online or, \$7 with no additional processing fee if purchasing a ticket at the race. There are no charges for those under 18.

The additional charge for the March 8 and 9 races is to cover costs associated with all of the racing events and the purse provided to the race winners.

“With the revenue we get from our sponsorships and from ticket revenues for the two races, it helps us provide the rest of the races at no charge,” said Greg Jackson, the foundation president. “This is our way of giving back to the fair and to the community.”

Jackson said whether a long-time fan of racing or just interested in an exciting sporting event, all of the races offer a thrilling time for everyone who attends.

For those unfamiliar with the racing events, here's a breakdown of the different race cars.

- So Cal Lighting Sprints (part of a San Diego racing club) have 1,200 cubic centimeter engines (CC engines) mounted into a “midget” chassis. These cars have an option to run wingless or winged and hit speeds upwards of 70-80 miles per hour.
- So Cal Dwarf Cars are 5/8 scale models of vintage cars from 1928 to 1948. They have full steel roll cages, and sheet metal bodies, and are powered by four-cylinder motorcycle engines. They are capable of speeds over 100 miles per hour on the straightaway.
- Imperial Valley Pure Stocks are domestic rear-wheel-drive complete-bodied cars from 1965 to present. These cars provide an example of grassroots racing.
- Imperial Sport Compacts are three or four-cylinder front-wheel drive compact cars that also represent an example of grassroots racing. The car's interior is gutted for safety and weight reduction. Safety equipment such as a roll cage is installed.
- Imperial Valley 360/410 Wingless Sprint Cars are part of the sprint car family. They weigh 1,400 pounds (including the driver) and can achieve speeds over 140 miles per hour.
- Southwest Ecotec “Midgets” are small with a very high power-to-weight ratio and typically use four-cylinder engines. They originated in the United States in the 1930s and are raced on most continents. Similar to the Sprint cars and Lighting Sprints, these cars are open-wheel cars. This means all four wheels are exposed, not covered by fenders or a body.

Auto racing has been a part of the California Mid-Winter Fair & Fiesta for more than 50 years and Alan Phillips, chief executive officer of the fairgrounds, said it remains an important attraction for the community.

Jackson added, “Racing has a long history in the Imperial Valley, and we are proud to carry on that heritage for the families attending the fair.”

To purchase tickets for the March 8 and 9 races online, go to the fair’s website at www.ivfairgrounds.com and see that page for ticket information.

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