

## History of Watkins Glen International®

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With its rise from ragged infancy in 1948 to its position as America's premier racing facility surely qualifies The Glen as an astounding and unlikely success story, which continues to be written over 60 years later.



Law student Cameron Argetsinger dreamed of bringing European style competition to the village where he spent his summer vacations and he drew up a challenging course that encompassed asphalt, cement and dirt roads in and around the village of Watkins Glen. The dream became reality on October 2, 1948, "The Day They Stopped the Trains," in the first post-World War II road race in the U.S. For five years, the top names in American sports car racing visited the small village and huge crowds came out to watch them race.

Competition moved to a temporary course in 1953, and 2.3-mile permanent circuit was built in 1956. The following year, The Glen hosted its first professional race, a NASCAR Grand National Stock Car event won by Buck Baker over Fireball Roberts. True international competition began in 1958 with the running of a Formula Libre race.

The Formula 1 stars all visited The Glen in 1961 for the first Watkins Glen U.S. Grand Prix, which would be a fall tradition at the circuit through 1980. Innes Ireland won the inaugural running, with great drivers such as Clark, Hill, Stewart, Lauda, Fittipaldi and Hunt among the winners of later Grand Prix.



The circuit itself was expanded in 1971, as the seventies brought a wide variety of competition to The Glen, including the Can-Am, Trans-Am, Six Hours, Formula 5000 and CART Indy Car Series. Race

winner winners included many of the top names in international motorsports, including Mark Donohue, Mario Andretti, Jody Scheckter and Bruce McLaren.

Alan Jones' victory in the 1980 United States Grand Prix at Watkins Glen marked the close of an era. Financial difficulties led to the Watkins Glen date being dropped from the Formula 1 schedule and as a result, the bankrupt track closed following a CART race in 1981. Over the next two years the track fell into disrepair, hosting only a few non-spectator SCCA weekends. Corning Enterprises, a newly-chartered subsidiary of Corning Glass Works, purchased the track in early 1983 and formed a partnership with International Speedway Corporation forming Watkins Glen International.

The Glen reopened on July 7, 1984, with Al Holbert, Derek Bell and Jim Adams winning the inaugural Camel Continental at the renovated facility. On August 9, 1986, fans witnessed Tim Richmond's triumph at the return of the NASCAR Winston Cup Series. The Bud at The Glen grew to become New York State's largest motorsports event and saw some of NASCAR's finest take

the checkered flag including, Martin, Wallace, and in 1998, Jeff Gordon, won his second consecutive Glen race before a record crowd.

In 1991, Terry Labonte won the first NASCAR Busch Grand National race at the Glen beginning an impressive streak of four wins in six years, including three consecutive wins in '94 through '96. His three year win streak ranks him with other Watkins Glen three-time winners: Formula One ace Graham Hill, SportsCar drivers Al Holbert and Derek Bell and Winston Cup driver Mark Martin.

1992 saw a major reconfiguration of The Glen's back straightaway. The addition of the Inner Loop increased the length of the long course to 3.4 miles and the short course to 2.45 miles. The new turns enhanced competition while adding quality spectator viewing. The Glen cemented its distinction as North America's fastest road course when Davy Jones won the pole for the Camel Continental IX with a fast lap of 150.334 mph on the reconfigured 2.45 mile short course.

In 1997, International Speedway Corporation, whose holdings include Daytona International Speedway, Talladega Superspeedway, Darlington Raceway and Phoenix Int'l Raceway, became sole owner of the historic road course, exercising a stock option buy-out of Corning Incorporated. The sale completed Corning's mission of rebuilding the race track while revitalizing the Southern Finger Lakes Region.

In addition to holding major NASCAR and SCCA events, Watkins Glen International also hosts one of the nation's premier vintage events, the U.S. Vintage Grand Prix. This event was the climax of the 50th anniversary season, returning many of the original cars and drivers to the original 6.6-mile street circuit through the village during the Grand Prix Festival Race Reenactment.

1998 saw a first time combination event featuring the Lysol 200 NASCAR Busch Series and the Bully Hill Vineyards 150 NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series as the "Festival of Speed and Sound" weekend at Watkins Glen International. A weekend filled with great racing and live musical entertainment.

In addition, Frontier Corporation (now known as Global Crossing), a nationally known communications, cellular phone and electronic media company headquartered in Rochester, New York, became the new sponsor of NASCAR's biggest event in New York, The Frontier @ The Glen, NASCAR Winston Cup event in 1999 for a three year deal designed to showcase talented, cutting edge competition on The Glen's historic course.

Fans that attended NASCAR Winston Cup Series races in 2000 and 2001 saw two unforgettable finishes. In 2000, Steve Park held off Mark Martin to capture his first ever Winston Cup victory and shared his emotion with the fans, celebrating on top of his car on the frontstretch. Then, history was made in 2001 with Jeff Gordon's remarkable seventh road course victory, setting a NASCAR Winston Cup record.

Watkins Glen International celebrated the 50th anniversary of road racing in Watkins Glen during the 1998 racing season. Throughout fifty years of change, Watkins Glen has embodied more than giant crowds and great speeds. The racing community continues to return to Watkins Glen for broader reasons. Watkins Glen has become a racing institution, the premier road racing facility in the United States.

2005 marked the largest capital improvement project at the track since the addition of the "boot" in 1971. It also marked the return of a major single-seat open-wheel racing series to the track with the Inaugural IndyCar Series race on September 25, 2005. Tony Stewart captured his second consecutive victory at The Glen and his third in four years. He joined Mark Martin and Jeff Gordon as the only drivers to win at least 3 NASCAR NEXTEL or Winston Cup races at The Glen. 2005 also marked the first time the NASCAR Busch Series and NEXTEL Cup Series competed on the same weekend.

2006 marked the 20th Anniversary of NASCAR NEXTEL Cup Series racing at The Glen, the 25th Running of the Sahlen's Six Hour of The Glen and was filled with plenty of racing action. Kurt Busch and Robby Gordon banged their way to a thrilling finish in the NASCAR Busch Series Zippo 200 and Kevin Harvick captured his first career road course victory in the NASCAR NEXTEL Cup Series AMD at The Glen. 2006 also saw The Glen host the North American debut of the 2007 Porsche 911 Turbo. The Glen holds historical significance for the famed automaker as it was the site for the North American debut of the first 911 Turbo during the Six Hours of The Glen in 1974. The Zippo U.S. Vintage Grand Prix continued as the largest vintage event in the United States for the fourth year in a row and celebrated the 40th Anniversary of Can-Am and Trans-Am. The Glen was the only location in the country that both groups were honored during the same event. Capital Improvements continued at the famed road course for the third year in a row. Turns 1, 5 and 6 were repaved and drainage issues around each turn were also corrected.

2007 marked the 50th Anniversary of NASCAR's debut at The Glen which was also the first professional race to be run on the permanent 2.3-mile road course. Fans at the Camping World Grand Prix witnessed Scott Dixon tie Formula 1 legend Graham Hill as the only men to win three consecutive major open wheel races at the historic road course and saw Tony Kanaan and Sam Hornish, Jr. clash on pit road following the checkered flag. The fireworks continued during the Centurion Boats at The Glen with Kevin Harvick and Juan Pablo Montoya getting into a shoving match in Turn 1 during the race and Tony Stewart claiming his fourth victory at The Glen following a spin by race leader Jeff Gordon with two laps to go. This race was selected the best NASCAR Sprint Cup Series race of 2007 by Sports Illustrated. The year ended with the demolition of the iconic Press Tower which was built in 1971.



2008 marks the 60th Anniversary of the first race held in the streets of Watkins Glen. The season long celebration will include the announcement of the top driver from each of the six decades that make up The Glen's history and will conclude with the U.S. Vintage Grand Prix. Capital improvements that will be completed during the year will be the new, state-of-the-art Media Center and the addition of two pit boxes to bring the total on pit road to 43.

2008 marked the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the first race ran through the streets of Watkins Glen. The season long celebration included the selection of the top driver from each of the six decades that made up the racing history in The Glen and honoring them with the title *Driver of the Decade*. Those honored were Phil Walters (1948-1957), Graham Hill (1958-1967), Sir Jackie Stewart (1968-1977), Al Holbert (1978-1987), Mark Martin (1988-1997), and Tony Stewart (1998-2007). These six drivers also composed the inaugural class inducted into the newly started *Legends of The Glen*. History was made in 2008, when Kyle Busch captured the Centurion Boats at The Glen and with it became the first driver in NASCAR history to claim three road course victories in a single season. Prior to the beginning of the season, the capital improvements project at The Glen continued with the completion of the new, state-of-the-art Media Center and the addition of two pit boxes which brought the total on pit road to 43.