

Firebird Raceway 2011 Schedule

Elevation of NHRA Arizona Nationals to Playoff Race and two Lucas Oil Off Road Races highlight busy 2011 calendar

Long the star of Firebird International Raceway's early season, the 2011 NHRA Arizona Nationals moves to fall, ensuring the race a spot in the six-race Points Countdown—the sport's equivalent of championship playoffs.

After its Firebird Raceway December debut on a newly remodeled off-road track, the Lucas Oil Off Road Racing Series returns in March for the first of two 2011 races at Firebird. The year also includes two Lucas Oil Drag Boat Series events, the annual Monster Trucks event, and the Super Chevy Show, which returned to Firebird in 2010 after a nearly eight-year hiatus. The action begins in early February and continues all year.

February 17-20: NHRA Division 7 Series Opener

Teams look for early-season momentum at one of the largest events in the country, in classes from Alcohol Funny Cars to Gas, Super Street and more.

March 19-20: Lucas Oil Off Road Racing Series

Short-course off road racing with West Coast influence, LOORRS brings intense four-wheel door-to-door action.

March 27: BUGORAMA

America's longest-running VW event: drag racing, the world's largest VW-only swap meet, show & shine, more.

April TBD: AHDRA Nationals

All-Harley Drag Racing Association: 15 different classes from 230-mph Top Fuel bikes to ET class.

April 30: NAPA Auto Parts Monster Truck Nationals

One of Arizona's largest fields of Monster Trucks, competing side-by-side in all-out freestyle competition, plus some of the world's fastest jet cars at almost 300 mph.

May 27-29: Lucas Oil Drag Boat May Fest

The liquid quarter mile at Firebird Lake plays host to the first of two visits from the Lucas Oil Drag Boat Series.

October 14-16: NHRA Arizona Nationals

A critical Points Countdown race toward determining 2011 world champions, with Top Fuel, Funny Car and Pro Stock divisions. NHRA's motorcycle class also debuts.

October 29-30: The Super Chevy Show

Hot rods and customs, a huge vendor midway, hundreds of show cars, and awards from *Super Chevy Magazine*.

November 17-20: NAPA Auto Parts World Finals

Firebird Lake hosts the end-of-season showdown in the Lucas Oil Drag Boat Racing season as Top Fuel Hydros, Top Alcohol Hydros, Pro Modified, Pro Gas Flats and more battle it out at nearly 250mph.

December 10-11: Lucas Oil Off Road Racing Series

After opening their season at Firebird, the daring competitors of the LOORRS will end their season at Firebird as well. Championships are decided as the dirt flies.

For more information, visit firebirdraceway.com. ■



Phoenix International Raceway track paving project follows February races

NASCAR facility's first major project since 1990 "to make a good thing even better"

Phoenix International Raceway is undergoing the NASCAR facility's first major track paving project since 1990. Construction begins in March with the removal of the facility's current racing surface and the subsequent installation of a new surface to go with a series of changes designed to promote side-by-side racing. While maintaining the integrity of PIR's oval—including the 1-mile distance—the slight configuration changes will produce a racier track with average speeds expected to increase two to three miles per hour. The project is slated to conclude in September.

The project includes removal of 684,000 square feet of asphalt from the current surface, followed by installation of a new four-layer asphalt and aggregate surface including 7,000 cubic yards of concrete, 600,000 pounds of metal reinforcement, 70,000 cubic yards of import fill and 23,000 tons of new asphalt. Other adjustments include: • Widening the front stretch from 52 to 62 feet; • Reconfiguring pit road with the installation of concrete pit stalls; • Pushing the dog-leg curve between Turn 2 and Turn 3 out 95 feet; • Tightening the turn radius of the dog-leg from 800 to 500 feet; and • Implementing variable banking to ensure the immediate use of two racing grooves, including 10-11 degree banking between Turn 1 and Turn 2; 10-11 degree banking in the apex of the dog-leg; and 8-9 degree banking in Turn 4

Favorite moments on the old pavement: In honor of this major upgrade, motorsports media nationwide were asked to pick the top six defining NASCAR events at PIR. Fans were asked to choose their own top moment, with the winning memory to be announced during February pre-race ceremonies. The final media selections were as follows, with #4 announced as the fan favorite just as we went to press:

1. The Intimidator takes Phoenix: Nov 4 1990: Dale Earnhardt brought the No. 3 GM Goodwrench Chevrolet to PIR's Victory Lane for the first and only time with a narrow .53-second win over Ken Schrader in the 1990 Checker 500.

2. Martin wins closest race in PIR history: Oct 31 1993: Mark Martin won the closest Sprint Cup event in PIR history on Halloween, edging Ernie Irvan by .19 second to win the Slick 50 500.

3. Hamilton brings the 43 back to Victory Lane: Oct 27 1996: The late Bobby Hamilton won the Dura Lube 500, taking owner Richard Petty's iconic No. 43 car to Victory Lane for the first time since the King's final Sprint Cup win in 1984.

4. Fan Favorite: Gordon ties Earnhardt: Apr 21 2007: Jeff Gordon opened the 20th season of NASCAR racing at Phoenix with a thrilling win in the SUBWAY Fresh Fit 500™ that tied him with Dale Earnhardt on Sprint Cup career wins at 76. Gordon celebrated with a victory lap while holding a "3" flag out of his driver's side window in honor of Earnhardt.

5. Johnson dominates the desert: Nov 15 2009: Jimmie Johnson won his third consecutive Chase for the Sprint Cup event at Phoenix and fourth race in five tries at PIR, propelling him to a then-record fourth consecutive Sprint Cup.

6. Edwards sweeps away the competition: Nov 14 2010: Carl Edwards owned the November 2010 NASCAR weekend in Phoenix, setting a Sprint Cup qualifying record before sweeping both the WYPALL* 200 Nationwide Series race and the Kobalt Tools 500 Sprint Cup event. He celebrated not only with his traditional back-flip (twice), but also partied with fans in PIR's Bryan Grandstand.

Buy a collectible chunk of the old pavement: After demolition, genuine pieces of PIR's old racing surface will be available for fans to purchase. Visit PhoenixRaceway.com/repave for details. ■

