

Beating the clock – and the tank

By Jennifer Johnson - Photos by Randall Bohl

Ford Motor Company gave Phoenix-area fans, and potential customers, a chance to get behind the wheel of its latest products with its second EcoBoost® Challenge consumer drive tour, which launched in mid-April at the University of Phoenix Stadium in Glendale. It was the first time the tour has stopped in Arizona. The tour will make an additional 11 stops through July 2014.

The EcoBoost Challenge gets consumers behind the wheel of some of Ford's most popular vehicles on three closed-course tracks, including back-to-back drives with competitor vehicles. More than 28,000 people took part in last year's EcoBoost Challenge, for a fun and

free chance to test drive Ford's hottest new cars, truck and utility vehicles.

Several hundred Ford enthusiasts braved unseasonably warm temperatures in April to check out the Arizona event. Cristian de la Fuente, Ford Hispanic spokesman, former *Dancing with the Stars* contestant and telenovela star, attended the EcoBoost Challenge, got behind the wheel on the courses and met with local fans.

EcoBoost Challenge participants competed against the clock in a Fiesta ST, trying to score the best course time. The fastest participants who competed each hour were called back to compete against each other for the best time. Attendees

were also treated to the thrill of hot laps with a professional driver in the Focus ST.

"My son definitely enjoyed the hot laps in the Focus ST. We had been reading about the vehicle's performance capabilities, but we got a chance to experience it firsthand, which was pretty cool," said Christina Woolsey of Gilbert, who brought her 13-year-old son Anthony out to the event.

Ford also appeased hybrid fans with a course designed to put the Ford C-MAX Hybrid through its paces against the competition—namely the Toyota Prius. Ford's EcoBoost Challenge course pitted the Ford F-150 against the Chevy Silverado, the Ford Escape against the Honda CRV and the Ford Fusion against the Toyota Camry.

"Whether it's our EcoBoost or electrified products, there's no better way to experience the quality, innovation and fun of the Ford lineup than to get in the driver's seat," said Imran Jalal, Ford Escape brand manager, who flew out to Phoenix to kick off the event. "The EcoBoost Challenge lets consumers expe-

Ford's EcoBoost Challenge event cruised into the University of Phoenix Stadium in April to kick off the 2014 national tour that pits EcoBoost-equipped vehicles against competitors in three different driving courses.

rience for themselves the technology that helps us deliver better fuel economy and a more engaged driving experience than the competition."

By combining advanced engine technologies such as turbocharging, direct injection and variable valve timing, Ford designed EcoBoost engines to help customers conserve fuel without sacrificing power. In North America, EcoBoost sales make Ford the leader in turbocharged direct-injected gasoline engines in its core high-volume passenger vehicles, such as Fusion, F-150 and Escape. By the end of 2014, more than 90 percent of Ford's North American lineup will be available with an EcoBoost engine.

The EcoBoost Challenge tour runs through July, and more information can be found at ecoboostdrive.com. ■

