Infineon Raceway to Host First-Ever Indy Racing League Road-Course Event

SONOMA, Calif. — World-class open-wheel racing will return to the Sonoma Valley for the first time in 35 years in 2005 as Infineon Raceway will host the IRL IndyCar® Series, it was announced Tuesday, August 3 by raceway officials.

Infineon Raceway will be part of history as this will mark the first-ever road-course event since the inception of the IRL IndyCar Series® in 1996. The IRL will feature two road courses in 2005, the other being Watkins Glen (N.Y.).

"Even with all our facility improvements and the terrific range of events we host, there has remained one glaring hole on the Infineon Raceway schedule," said Steve Page, president and general manager of Infineon Raceway. "This track will be an incredible venue for the IRL IndyCar® Series, and we look forward to offering Northern California fans the widest variety of motor racing available anywhere."

Page added that discussions have already begun with several companies who have expressed interest in sponsorship of the event, which will take place the weekend of Aug. 26-28. Additional support series will be announced at a later date.

The IRL will use a modified version of the road course that will feature The Chute, which is used in the NASCAR NEXTEL Cup Series, as well as modified sections at Turn 9 and Turn 11. Infineon Raceway will also complete minor runoff and barrier enhancements to accommodate the IRL. The IRL main event will be contested over a 10-turn, 1.77-mile road course; this will mark the first time this version of the circuit has been used.

"Infineon Raceway's debut on the IRL IndyCar® Series coincides with the IRL's 10th anniversary, and we are excited to return Indy-style racing to the Northern California region as it meets one of the IRL's primary goals to bring the IndyCar Series to new markets for both sponsors and fans," said Ken Ungar, the IRL's senior vice president of business affairs. "Choosing Infineon Raceway was easy, as we discovered that fans in the region get our sport, follow our sport and support the IndyCar® Series on television."

The last major open-wheel race at Infineon Raceway took place in 1970, when Dan Gurney took the checkered flag in the USAC IndyCar 150. That field also included names like Mario Andretti, Mark Donahue and Al Unser.

In 2005, the names will change to Helio Castroneves and Indianapolis 500 champion Buddy Rice, but the action will be just as exciting as the high-powered cars of the IRL challenge the twists and turns of Infineon Raceway.

"As we look ahead to our 10th year of competition, we are excited that we have the opportunity to add two historic road circuits to our schedule," said Tony George, President and CEO of the Indy Racing League. "International Speedway Corp. (owner of Watkins Glen International) and Speedway Motorsports Inc. (owner of Infineon Raceway) have been an integral part of our growth, and this is further evidence of our continued commitment to add strength and value to those relationships."

IRL race teams will get their first official taste of the 10-turn, 1.77-mile road course during a test session scheduled later this year. Race fans can also call immediately to secure the best seats for the 2005 event by calling Infineon Raceway at 800-870-RACE.



John Cardinale, far left, VP of Media/Community Relations, holds a press conference at Infineon Raceway announcing the latest addition to the track's lineup – and Indy Car event in August 2005. Left to right are Steve Page, President and General Manager of Infineon Raceway; Ken Ungar, IRL's senior vice president of business affairs; Townsend Bell, driver of the No. 2 Menards/Johns Manville Dallara/Chevrolet/Firestone; and Tony Kanaan, driver of the Team 7-Eleven Dallara/Honda/Firestone.