

Star Power Versus Horsepower

Stars And Pros Hit The Fast Lane For The Toyota Pro/Celebrity Race

(NAPSA)—Danny McKeever, championship racer, veteran instructor and renowned stunt driver, has had many loves in his life, but none is a match for his long-standing love affair with motorsports. After a long and prosperous racing career, McKeever turned his passion for the fast lane—also the name of the racing school he owns and operates—into an opportunity to teach others. In 1986, he became the official chief instructor for the Toyota Pro/ Celebrity Race, part of the Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach, training every participant for this coveted annual charity event.

Since its inception in 1977, the Toyota Pro/Celebrity Race has grown into the largest, longest-running corporate-sponsored celebrity racing event in the world. The historic 10-lap race takes place every April on a 1.97-mile circuit through the streets of downtown Long Beach, Calif.

The charity event benefits the Children's Hospital of Orange County and Miller Children's Hospital in Long Beach. It pits high-profile celebrity personalities against professional drivers. Keanu Reeves, Adrien Brody, Cameron Diaz, George Lucas, Ashley Judd, Jay Leno, William Shatner, David Hasselhoff and Patrick Dempsey are but a handful of the more than 540 celebrities who have revved their engines for the admirable causes.



Keanu Reeves accepts the trophy for the “Celebrity” category at the 2009 Toyota Pro/Celebrity Race. The race is the largest, longest-running corporate-sponsored celebrity racing event in the world that raises donations for the charity “Racing for Kids.”

According to McKeever, racing is a humbling experience, especially the first time on an actual racetrack. “The straightaways and turns go by in a blur as the car bounces around and the wind blows past the open top,” he says. “It’s definitely an adrenaline rush.”

To hear the roar of the engines as cars thunder past awestruck fans...the thrill...the excitement—

“no wonder celebrities are attracted to the electrifying world of race-car driving,” he adds. McKeever has learned that the drivers who come out on top are not necessarily the fastest out of the gate in practice. Rather, it’s the drivers who excel at focusing on learning the techniques. “Race-car driving is a mental exercise,” he says. “Perhaps the biggest lesson is to find your limits and stay within them.”

The allure of fast cars and high-performance racing is stronger than ever in Hollywood, driving film, television and sports stars alike to the thrill of the Toyota Pro/Celebrity Race. As head instructor, McKeever is challenged every year with turning more than a dozen celebrities—most of whom have no racing experience at all—into bona fide race-car drivers in just four days.

People often ask McKeever how celebrity drivers compare with drivers who are professional athletes in terms of natural ability. With a smile, McKeever replies that athletes have coaches and actors have directors, so both respond well to a guiding force. But make no mistake, he adds, “they take their craft very seriously, and there are no large egos on the track.”

To learn more about the Toyota Pro/Celebrity Race, go to www.toyota-racing.com/motorsports/pro_celeb/index.html.