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Speed junkies compete on local racetracks

Three great racing experiences available in Saskatoon

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Despite its size, Saskatoon has a big community of racing fans. With horse races, and drag, street legal, and stock car races taking place nearly every weekend, there's almost always a way to satisfy your need for speed.

Marquis Downs

If you're looking for something to do for free this weekend, look no further than the Marquis Downs racetracks.

Rick Fior, manager of racing at Marquis Downs, says that although gambling is a big part of the horse races, some people come out just to watch the competition.

"We cater to both crowds to come out to the track," he said. "You don't have to wager, but it's always more fun if there's a wager on."



Admission and parking at Marquis Downs is free but betting is going to cost you. Though if you're smart about it, it doesn't have to cost you too much.

Bets are placed by amount, type and program number. The minimum for a straight bet, just choosing one horse you like to win, is \$2. Minimum for box and wheel wagers, choosing a combination of horses for multiple finish positions, is \$1. Although, once you start factoring in the permutations of possible wins for box and wheel wagers, a \$1 bet is going to add up to about \$12.

Still with me?

Don't worry if you aren't. Fior says a lot of first time players find the wagering a little confusing. That's why they have an information window where you can pick up a betting guide.

While the hardcore players will know a lot of information about the horses and the riders, Fior says the big payouts end up going to people who choose horses based on phone numbers, licence plates and favourite colours.

"The guys who know a lot wouldn't have those horses in their wager," he explained.

The thoroughbred racing season is wrapping up, but gamblers have no reason to worry; the standardbred season, a style of horse-racing where the horses pull a cart rather than carry a jockey, starts on Sept. 11.

Thoroughbreds race Aug. 28 and 29, and Sept. 4 and 5. Standardbreds race Sept. 11, 12, 18, 19, 25, and 26, and Oct. 2 and 3. See marquisdowns.com.

Saskatchewan International Raceway

Apparently, you can get involved with street legal racing even if your car is a Hyundai Accent.

"It just has to pass a basic safety inspection," said Trevor Jacek, Saskatchewan International Raceway (SIR) president. "There probably has been someone that brought an Accent. I don't know if there's been many minivans but it could be the family minivan."

The point is to go as fast as possible, legally and safely.

Built in 1966, SIR is the oldest continuously running track in Western Canada. The track features drag racing and street legal racing. The street legal racing was introduced during the '90s to help curb illegal street racing.

For Jacek, who also races at the track, it's all about the excitement of the races.

"It's exciting to watch," he said. "We had cars doing zero to over 300 kilometres per hour in six seconds. It's unfathomable until you see it. It's a thrill to watch."

Apparently, the thrill is contagious. Jacek says there are a lot of families out on the track, sometimes with three generations racing together. Jacek has been racing since he was 16, and his nine-year-old son is in the track's Jr. Dragster program.

Upcoming races are on Sept. 12, 13, 20, and 27. Tickets are \$5 to \$25, depending on the race. See racesir.com.

Auto Clearing Motor Speedway

Saskatoon's stock car racing is in the midst of finals, so now may be the best time of the year to check it out.

While the Auto Clearing Motor Speedway is no NASCAR, it's still an exciting time.

"It definitely grows on you once you learn the personalities and who's in the race car," said spokesperson Herman Hordal. "There's a lot more to it than going round and round."

The Auto Clearing website claims Saskatoon has the largest motor sports following in Western Canada, and the speedway has the community to prove it. The track is owned and operated by volunteers in the Saskatoon Stock Car Racing Association, also known as the Bridge City Speedway.

"Probably it's the fastest growing family sport in North America and Canada," said Hordal. "You really can come out as a family and enjoy it. It's affordable and what we find is a lot of the kids and families will get their favourite drivers from meeting them in person."

On Aug. 29, the speedway is raising money for cancer awareness. They have given the Canadian Cancer Society 250 tickets, and the society gets to keep whatever money they raise. There will also be donation boxes available at the race.

Check out races Aug. 29, and Sept. 5, 12, 19, and 27. Tickets are \$13 to \$16, with family packages available. See autoclearingmotorspeedway.ca.

