

admission and inviting customers to drop by their nearest dealer for a test drive of any new Honda and a chance to win a luxurious Indy weekend for two. Customers who test drove any new Civic automatically received two complimentary passes to the Saturday and Sunday races. Customers who simply dropped in to purchase Honda Indy tickets received a complimentary paddock pass. ■

Canadian Tire restarts its engines

CANADIAN TIRE IS RETURNING to its knitting. Quoting a company press release from April 7 announcing the retailer's strategy for the next 3 to 5 years, "[the] cornerstone of Canadian Tire's core business is automotive. It is a key differentiator and source of competitive advantage."

With a renewed focus on the automotive business necessarily comes a turbocharged motorsport sponsorship program, which now includes both the Toronto and Edmonton Honda Indy races.

"It's called Canadian Tire, as our CEO says," quips Rebecca Mills, Manager of Automotive Communications. "We kinda do automotive! We're getting back to what our customers expect of us as the country's largest automotive retailer."

In terms of sponsorship strategy, the difference may be one of degree. Canadian Tire has always been an important motorsport sponsor, titling the NASCAR Canada series since its inception, for instance.

"Going after this level of sponsorship and this diverse platform of sponsorship puts us back in front of the key racing activities for the season," says Mills. "It brings us back to the forefront."

Mills promises that the brand will activate extensively onsite. In Toronto, Canadian Tire will name Pit Row and will also name one of the companion races, the Canadian Tire Jumpstart 100.

Canadian Tire will have a distinctive presence on Thunder Alley, on the Toronto racecourse's straightaway. Mills won't reveal details but, says Mills, "obviously, cars will be involved. We do have a heritage with race cars."

Because a NASCAR Canadian Tire Series race is also part of Honda Indy Toronto weekend, Canadian Tire will be bringing its NASCAR activation program to the race. A range of activities will take place outside the gate, including displays of the Canadian Tire racecar, a driver appearance if possible, an enter-to-win contest offering three trips to the Ron Fellows Driving School in Las Vegas, a pit-stop challenge and a photo-op in the winner's circle.

Point of purchase activation will likely leverage the NASCAR Canadian Tire Series. Canadian Tire is the official retailer in Canada for NASCAR-branded merchandise.

Racing legend dons Canadian Tire colours

The other big race coming up this summer is the Napa Auto Parts 200. The race is the premier NASCAR race in Canada, and it is scheduled for Montreal August 28 and 29. That race will feature not only the return of prodigal son Jacques Villeneuve to the track named after his father, but also arguably Canada's most successful auto racer, Ron Fellows.

Fellows will be driving a Canadian Tire sponsored car in the race. ■

Toronto welcomes tall ships

CANADA DAY WEEKEND 2010 saw Toronto enthralled by the **Redpath Toronto Waterfront Festival**. Last July, Redpath had just signed as title sponsor of the festival and its flotilla of Tall Ships. Lea Parrell, President of **Harmony Marketing**, basked for a moment in that success then hit the phones to fill her sponsorship roster.

It went well. Mindful of an economy still in the early stages of recovery, Parrell cut her asks and sought a smaller roster of sponsors who would support the environmental messaging around the festival. In addition to Redpath, corporate partners for this year are Desjardins Group, Mazda, Gourmet Cuisine, Porter Airlines, Queens Quay Terminal, Tilley Endurables, Toronto Port Authority, Amsterdam Brewing, Vincor and Ontario Place. Most of the major sponsors have been given an identifiable and relevant asset to own. Those sales put Parrell ahead of her prudently conservative budget.

Parrell had hoped that with the prominent role taken by environmental group Great Lakes United in the Tall Ships Challenge that is at the centre of the festival, other environmental groups would be encouraged to join the festival as sponsors. It didn't happen.

"The environmental organizations just don't have the money," she discovered quickly. But rather than shut them out, Parrell hit upon an elegant solution: an environmental village, sponsored by Toronto entertainment weekly **Now Magazine**, where environmental groups could display their messaging at a nominal and easily-affordable cost.

Interestingly, Parrell found that the environmental theme of the festival seemed to scare off a few corporate prospects. It appears that corporations have learned that they must first get their own environmental house in order before trumpeting their green credentials through sponsorship. For the future of "green" sponsorship, it's a hopeful sign. Brands are learning that they should, indeed, walk the talk.

Media, on the other hand, have been beating at her door. Media sponsors have ponied up more than \$1 million in media value, way ahead of expectations. Parrell cites the uniqueness of the event to Toronto and the spectacular visuals it affords as reasons for the media frenzy.

There's also another factor, one that could not have been planned for. Toronto is badly bruised from the **G20 Summit**. The meeting itself effectively sealed off the city from its waterfront for two weeks. And for two days, the city's face was unfamiliar and ugly. To the media, and to its listeners, viewers and readers, a successful waterfront festival is something that everyone wants. It's Toronto's coming out party. ■

