

LET THE GIRLS ROCK AND ROLL AT INDY

The
good
news:



There is a full on female racing team about to run the Indy 500 in about an hour and a half. The effort is awesome. Hopefully transformational. For any interested, this is a must read ESPN article by Alyssa Roenigk:

Roughly 30 laps into Sunday's 105th running of the Indianapolis 500, driver Simona De Silvestro will pull into pit lane. In the six seconds it takes to refuel her No. 16 Paretta Autosport Chevrolet, her crew will swap out four Firestones, adjust the front wing and attend to the Aeroscreen windshield on her IndyCar. Typically, teams want pits that are flawless, fast and fade into the noise of the race.

But the Paretta team expects to attract attention. Because for the first time in motorsports history, four of its seven over-the-wall pit crew members will be women. De Silvestro's two spotters will be women. Two of her engineers, including a Data Acquisition Guy, will be women. And every front office role at Paretta Autosport – from business operations to public relations to merchandise and marketing – is filled by a woman.

"It's important to me that the bigger message is this isn't women at the expense of men," says team owner Beth Paretta, whose vision to create a coed race team has been six years in the making. "I'm trying to expand the grid."

During the team's first outing at the Indy 500, Paretta hopes young girls see ponytails fly over the wall during pit stops and women engineers communicating from the timing stand. She also wants the novelty to wear off quickly: "My hope is that in five years, us being a team of mostly women is the least interesting thing about us."

Women have run Indy before. The famous and first was Janet Guthrie. Then through Danica Patrick, who actually finished on the podium once. Danica was a fine driver, and earned the rides she got. But, for my limited money, the best was always Lyn St. James. Lyn could drive any race car, anywhere, anytime. She was all that. If Lyn had the equipment Patrick was afforded, she might well have a Borg Warner trophy in her living room.

That is the current, and the history, you might wish to have been different. But times ARE different, and excellent inroads are being made, even if slowly. The Paretta effort is a significant part of that.

The bad news:

Simona and Paretta made the field for today's race, but barely. She qualified in P33, the last position on the outside of the last row. Unlike F1, such is not a death knell for a driver at Indy. We shall see how it all works out, and all hopes for well. De Silvestro can drive. There may be shakier equipment in the field. But what an awesome movement, and may it well continue.