

History of drag racing

[History](#)



This paper 'History of Drag Racing' is a perfect example of an essay on history. The racer's adage goes; 'it is the driver, and not the car that matters in a race.' This is why drag racing is considered an art; because only the best of the best get to prove themselves and take the leaderboards. From the film, Slingshot, it is evident that drag racing is not just about winning the race but having immense fun and blowing off steam. Although drag racing might seem dangerous to some, from its history, it is a means of getting car enthusiasts together, settling any wrangles on the track, and getting the sport on the world map.

From the film, it is clear that drag racing originated in California from the 1940s onwards. It involves mainly two contestants racing from a specified point and each is positioned next to the other on a defined length. Art Chrisman explains how the races started in the 1940s by a driver telling their colleagues how their cars were faster and this was taken as a challenge which got settled on the track. This interviewee in the film adds that back in the day when the strip was not discovered yet, they would race on the divided highway. The drag strip mentioned earlier consists of a flat and straight section of road that is mainly 0.4km (a quarter of a mile) long and has no traffic. During the races in the past, the winner was the driver who crossed the finish line first, but as years have progressed and technology has advanced, timers have been introduced, and a driver's final speed is also taken into account.

During the inception stages of drag racing, it had its fair share of criticism. There were accidents during these races and the media would take this to their advantage and tarnish the name of drag racing. Fred Larsen from the film claims that having a hot rod was disliked by nearly everyone from the <https://assignbuster.com/history-of-drag-racing/>

public to the newspapers and the police. The main goal of these critics was to get the police's attention so that these races could be banned. What the media outlets did not understand was that any publicity can be twisted to become good publicity. Also, the drag races were carried out by young guys who were driven by adrenalin. The negative press drag racing was getting was among the reasons why several individuals decided to come together and legitimize the art with paid entrance fees and handing out awards to the winners. In 1949, Bob Joehnck and the Santa Barbara Acceleration Association held the first organized drag race that had no entry fees, flag starts when racing, no ambulances, and no timing was done.

Proper drag racing history was made in Santa Anna California as Bob and the Santa Barbara Acceleration Association carried out their activities. Otto Ryssman explains how three guys namely, C. J. Hart, Creighton Hunter, and Frank Stillwell, got together and decided to conduct legal drag races and added features that Bob did not have in Santa Barbara. This is the place where official timing was introduced to drag racing as well as charging entry fees, coupled with prize money for the race winners. This was a great move as the drivers had an incentive to look forward to once they won the races; therefore, the Santa Anna drags had a huge following. Legitimizing the races was also an added advantage because there would be a police presence to ensure scuffles were dealt with and ambulances and medical personnel were on standby to help save lives.

The invention of the slingshot dragster in the early 1950s in Southern California changed the course of drag racing to date. Ryssman explains how the dragster is a specialized racing vehicle with the driver sitting between the front wheels and the back wheels, but the front wheels have an extended

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chassis to increase traction as well as balancing the speed throughout the vehicle.

In 1951, there was another landmark for drag racing when Wally Parks founded The National Hot Rod Association (NHRA). This move was similar to what Bob and Hart had started in 1949 with their legal drag races. The added advantage of having this organization was that it acted as an umbrella body that ensured the drivers were taken care of in case of an accident and offer protection from things like prosecution. In a nutshell, the body acted as the liaison between the drivers and the governing bodies. Wally Parks explains that the main aim was rebuilding the image of drag racing; that is why he preferred the name hot rod, so as to hit the critics nail in the head. With a drag racing magazine in play, Wally understood why investors shied away from drag racing and used his organization to bring in positivity to the sport, thereby attracting more sponsors, which ensured the drivers took home a considerable share in prize money.

Drag racing went on to become a world sensation by the 1960s when it crossed over to Europe. The NHRA went to England to perform exhibition matches with its top drivers like Tony Nancy and Tommy Ivo. McDonald (2011) claims that thanks to Wally Parks' idea, drag racing has managed to get an international following and it has increased its number of tracks, thereby getting to host more competitors.

In conclusion, drag racing might have started off with a bad reputation, but due to the resilience of the pioneer racers and car enthusiasts, it has turned out to be a worldwide recognized sport. Drag racing has acted as a stepping stone in vehicle invention to increase speeds and ensure safety. As it was mentioned earlier, although drag racing might seem dangerous to some, <https://assignbuster.com/history-of-drag-racing/>

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