

The first event at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway was a helium gas-filled balloon competition

On Saturday, June 5, 1909, more than two months before the oval racetrack was completed, June 5, 1909, the first competitive event took place at the Indianapolis race track.

Carl Fisher, President of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and his fellow investors organized the first National Championship Gas-filled Balloon Race in an effort to start recovering their investment, as the completion of the race track was still a couple of months away.

Three competitors took to the air at 3:45 PM with six more following at 5:00 PM.

John Berry and Paul McCullough won the first U.S. National Balloon Race. The race covered 377.9 miles from the Indianapolis Motor Speedway in Indianapolis to Fort Payne, Ala. They won both the distance race and the endurance race – at 35 hours.

