Andretti and Marcus Ericsson Drive Allegra Into Indianapolis 500

Even at the Indianapolis 500, it takes more than slapping a logo on a race car for a brand like Allegra to emerge from the pack.

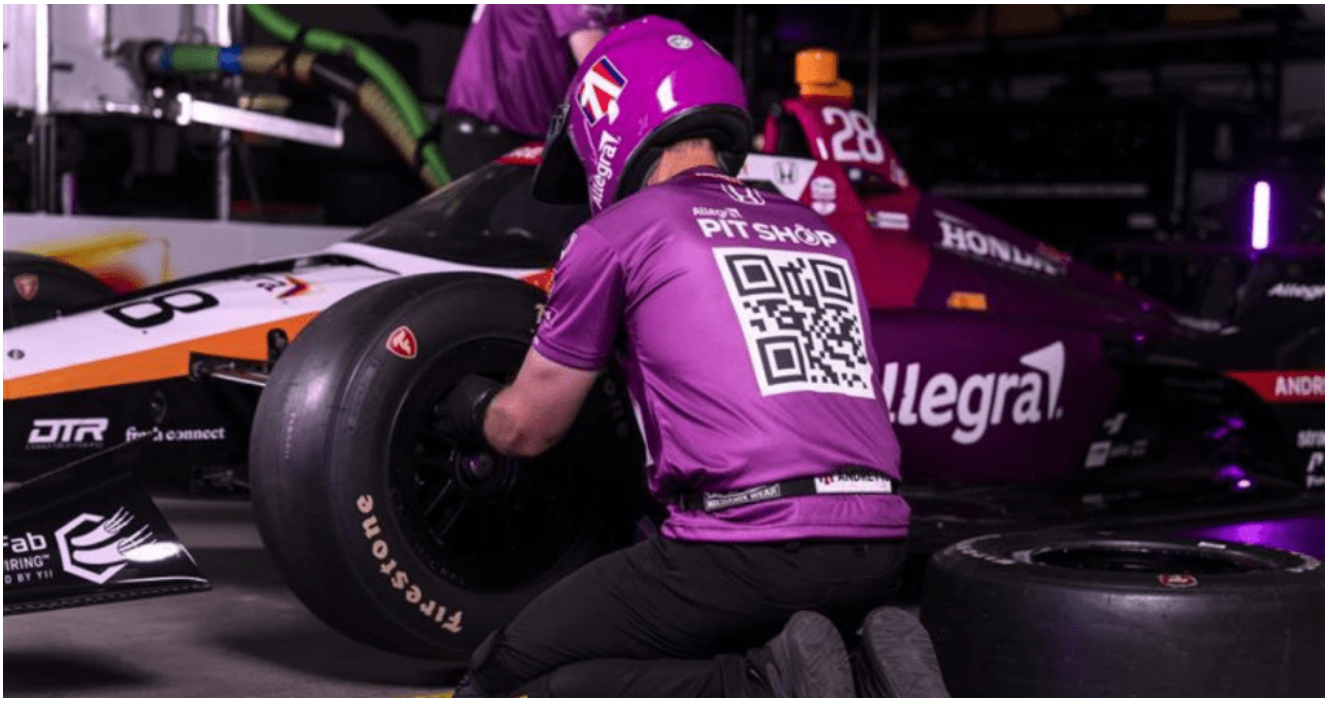
The Sanofi-produced over-the-counter allergy medication doesn't get much return from having its trademark shade of purple simply make fast left turns in Indianapolis on Memorial Day weekend. Instead, the brand drilled a bit deeper for the race's 109th installment, bringing 2022 Indy 500 winner, 2023 runner-up, and allergy sufferer Marcus Ericsson into the fold to share his story and add some depth to the sponsorship.

When you're an allergy pill claiming a non-drowsy formula and "0% brain interference," there are few stronger tests of your brand thesis than having it quell allergies at a clear-headed 220 miles per hour.

"I have a strong brand, and I want to make sure that my partners can take advantage of that, and we can sort of win together and both have benefits from the partnership," Ericsson told ADWEEK from the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. "I always try to make sure that happens, and hopefully, having a strong month of May and winning the race will make it an even better partnership. I think the Allegra car will look pretty good in victory lane in a couple of weeks."

Meanwhile, when fans watching the race at Indianapolis Motor Speedway—tuning into the race on Fox on May 25—see Ericsson pull into the pits, they'll get a chance to play around with the Allegra Pit Shop. His team at TWG Motorsports' Andretti Global has outfitted its pit crew in purple jumpsuits with QR

codes on the back, allowing fans to scan the codes and win prizes, including a trip to an upcoming race.



Andretti Global pit crew are part of partner Allegra's Indy 500 campaign.*Scott Heins.*

The Andretti family began its Indianapolis 500 legacy when Mario Andretti won the 1969 installment. As a team owner, Andretti has won six races since 1995—a total that's still second overall in Indy 500 history to reigning champion Penske's 20. If there was any trepidation about how racing professionals working for a family with that racing pedigree would react to purple gear and QR codes on their backs, it disappeared once the cameras arrived.

"We had a photo shoot/media day with the pit crew, and we were probably not nervous, but it's like, OK, who's going to want to do that?" said Jill Gregory, president of Andretti Global. "We couldn't keep these guys off camera: They are like, 'Finally, someone's paying attention to us.'"

Even before or after the race, fans get a chance to test their reflexes with a tire-changing game that measures their reaction time and offers discounts to those who sign up.

“It comes down to the nature of the partnership. It was very natural for the three parties, and this is where the magic happens,” said Samuel Morisse, vp of Allegra Brand North America. “We want to make sure people connect that the brand is supporting the notion of performance. It’s about the natural connection between the Andretti team and what they do, and the brand into what it allows them to do.”

On the right track

Gregory noted that Andretti brings its own brand equity into any partnership. The family is synonymous with racing in the United States and has been name-dropped in hip-hop lyrics for generations. When it partners with a brand, even to bring new, younger fans into racing, it’s looking for a sponsor that complements the legacy.

Andretti has paired financial firm Gainbridge with its driver Colton Herta for several years now. For Kyle Kirkwood, they’re putting electronics giant Siemens on his car for this year’s Indy 500. While there are tire makers and tech companies that are more endemic racing sponsors, Gregory said not all of them immediately spring to mind in May when the flora is in full bloom.

“I’m actually an Allegra user. If you can hear, I’ve got a little scratchy throat today, and that’s not just because we’re meeting today. I was already a user, but I thought, ‘Why can’t we bring an allergy brand like Allegra into it?’” Gregory said. “When we really looked at our portfolio, we looked at Marcus, and he is very focused on mental clarity, preparation, and attention to detail. To me, those were all things that made sense for the Allegra brand.”

Allegra’s Morisse, meanwhile, said that the brand had only inched into racing in previous years through a partnership with Kroger in NASCAR. In his seventh IndyCar season and

second with Andretti, Ericsson and his team presented a unique opportunity.

Ericsson has led 43 laps in his Indianapolis 500 career and was a lap away from his second-consecutive win in 2023 when current champ Josef Newgarden took the lead with half a lap to go and started his bid for three Indy 500 wins in a row. Having won the race before and having come so close to winning it again, he’s aware of how much better the milk tastes from the top spot on the podium and how much more fun the porch parties can be after a victory lap.

Allegra tied its marketing story with Andretti and Ericsson together with allergies, but it’s a winner’s clarity that’s getting them across the line together.

“It makes a big difference being a winner, for sure. My schedule for the month is pretty packed. Every day, it’s a lot of things going on, and I enjoy that because I want to be an ambassador for this amazing race,” Ericsson said. “But of course it’s a balance as well, because I want to win another 500, but that’s where you know you need to be good at putting that aside and being focused.”

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