

# RACE CARS, WOMEN AND PROSTATES

BY XAN OAKLEY, PCRI EDUCATIONAL WRITER // PHOTOS: LINDSAY MEGGERS

## THE MISSION

To raise awareness about prostate cancer and PSA screening, Fabio Almeida MD of the Prostate Cancer Research Institute (PCRI) has created a racing team of prostate cancer survivors. The team's cars are displayed at car shows and events across the nation, along with a no-cost PSA testing booth.

When you hear "Vintage Kart Grand Prix," you might not be thinking "prostate cancer." In early November, coworker Lindsay Meggers and I received many surprised looks when we represented PCRI at the 2016 Grand Prix of Scottsdale.

We had experienced the same surprised reactions at a Vintage Kart event in Pebble Beach, back in August. We had been invited to both events by Dr. Almeida—a PCRI board member and the Medical Director of Phoenix

Molecular Imaging (PHXMI)—to help educate men on prostate cancer, his great passion. We had wondered just what his mission to educate could have to do with cars. But at the Pebble Beach show, both Lindsay and I were overjoyed by the opportunity to represent PCRI and were more than happy to educate attendees about prostate cancer. However, I couldn't help but think: Are men going to be receptive to us? As women, we allow ourselves to talk about things like breast cancer openly. But prostate cancer tends to be a private subject for men. How could we put men at ease?

Dr. Almeida had already come up with the answer: cars—in an enjoyable setting with a different focus of interest.

The idea first unfolded when Dr. and Mrs. Cindy Almeida met with Ron Kotloff, owner of Vintage Kart Company in Mesa, which manu-

factures Vintage Mini Racers honoring cycle-cars of the past. Their cars are artfully crafted, easily drivable and immensely fun. After some discussion, the great vision of "Prostate Cancer Awareness" cars was born. The idea works. The cars capture everyone's imagination. Everyone stops and stares.

Dr. Almeida continued to think big. "Let's not just settle for showing off pretty cars," he said. "Why not enter our cars into the race?" So that's exactly what they did.

## RACE DAY: VICTORY!

The Grand Prix of Scottsdale, stylized as a 1920s Gatsby-themed event, is the hallmark event for these Vintage Mini Racers. Women are adorned in ornate headpieces, flapper dresses, pearls and ruby lips. Men don spectacular vintage suits and top hats. Glenn Mil-

(At right) Phoenix Molecular Imaging and Prostate Cancer Research Institute teams suit up for the 2nd Annual Grand Prix of Scottsdale, including celebrity racecar drivers Belinda Endress and Tommy Thompson. (Opposite page) Endress steadies the wheel as Thompson settles into the cockpit. (Center right) Endress and Thompson sign the car.

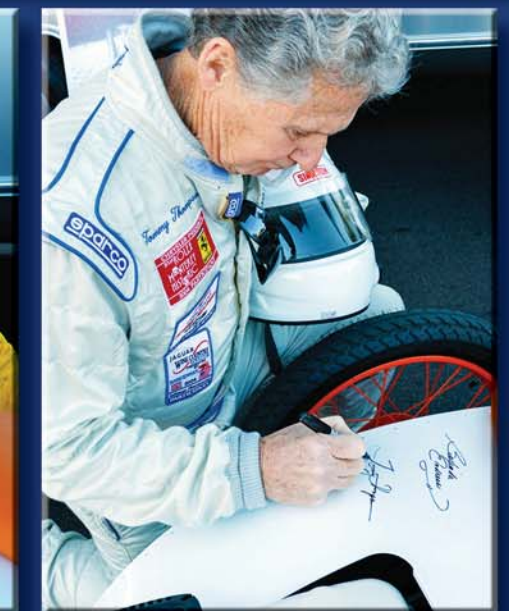
ler, Louis Armstrong, Sidney Bechet and many others sound over the speakers as all the dolled up people dance their hearts away.

On the day of the Grand Prix, 40 teams were in a competitive racing mode, each with one objective: to win the race. There are four heats in a Grand Prix. Each heat is supposed to last for 45 minutes, and the race is so intense that it's hard to keep up with everyone's times as time is deducted for all sorts of offenses on the track, but each team keeps faith that their team is in the lead. We, of course, did the same.

When the fourth heat came to an end, our team's drivers (two of whom were professional race car drivers) said they thought we might have won. I was so overwhelmed by the excitement of the intense race environment, I hadn't kept track, either. It came down to meeting at the finish line to find out. That's when the glorious moment came: it was announced that our team won the grand prize!

And through the team's victory, Dr. Almeida brought Prostate Cancer Awareness to the forefront of attention.

The Prostate Cancer Awareness karts, displaying the PCRI logo along with the logos of other prostate cancer organizations, were perfectly placed close to the stage throughout the entire event. What an icebreaker! What a conversation piece! Just like that, we



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Photo: Lindsay Meggers



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Vintage Mini Racers take over the streets of Old Town during the Grand Prix of Scottsdale. (Right) Pit stop for the blue and silver PCRI car. (Center right) PHXMI's orange and white Prostate Cancer Awareness car in the lead, on its way to victory. (Bottom left) Phoenix Molecular Imaging provided free PSA testing on site at the Grand Prix of Scottsdale. (Bottom right) PHXMI Medical Director Fabio Almeida MD shows off the race trophy.



had people talking, raising awareness for prostate cancer.

The conversations were incredible. Even people who had never dealt with prostate cancer thanked us for raising their awareness and for educating people about the disease. Many of the men had never had a PSA test. Many didn't even know what PSA stood for (prostate-specific antigen). Men came to the team's booth for no-cost PSA tests Dr. Almeida was providing.

The opportunity to share and educate on such a crucial subject was something we didn't even feel we should be thanked for; we just felt blessed to have the opportunity to help. Almost every casual conversation led to, "So, what do you do?" This gave us many opportunities to talk about PCRI, our passion in raising awareness, our drive in helping people find the best treatment options and the importance of regular PSA testing.

The PCRI commends Dr. and Mrs. Almeida and their team for their amazing win and for developing such an imaginative idea to raise awareness about prostate cancer at high profile events across the nation.

They have created an unprecedented opportunity to share invaluable information with thousands of people. Vintage Mini Racers are opening a gate to men who would have otherwise been passed by. ■



Your life could depend upon getting tested. Early detection is your best chance for a cure. Tools such as PSA tests should be part of a regularly scheduled checkup for men starting at age 40, to establish baseline information. To learn more about your prostate health and treatment options, visit [PCRI.org](http://PCRI.org). For more information on Phoenix Molecular Imaging and the Prostate Cancer Awareness race team, visit [PHXMI.com](http://PHXMI.com). You can also work to end prostate cancer through a tax deductible donation. Every dollar counts.

