

## BUMPER CARS

# A Successfully Modern Take on Old-fashioned Fun

For more than 80 years, bumper cars have been a staple attraction at amusement parks and FECs. At one time, bumper cars were considered an adult ride because of height and weight restrictions, but now, new designs have made bumper cars easy and safe to operate for almost all age groups.

A leading company behind the new generation of bumper cars is Ride Development Company, or RDC, of Independence, Ore. Known for its engineering innovation, RDC has customers in 43 states and 26 countries. The company has earned six patents and offers gas-powered, electric and battery-operated bumper car models – all of which require minimum space and are capable of running on different surfaces including asphalt, concrete and grass.

Comparing RDC bumper cars to the old-fashioned ones is like comparing apples to oranges. The RDC cars are about complete control. The cars have two drive wheels, which gives the driver the control to spin and maneuver. The way the driver sits, with legs apart, also allows more control and less jolting too.

RDC cars are also equipped with a protective

high head rest and an innertube bumper that allows air to displace so the jolt of a bump is not on the body. RDC cars can be driven by children

and adults but some operators opt to have both the Mark VIII car, which fits drivers of all ages, as well as the Bump-A-Bout that accommodates ages 3 to 9.

As Director of Operations for Pacific Park at the Santa Monica Pier, **Dana Wyatt** remembers when he first brought up the topic of RDC cars to the

corporation that owns the park two years ago. Since Pacific Park is on a historical pier, there were doubts about going with a newer designed bumper cars. Once he saw the cars, he knew he made the right decision.

"The cars were unbelievable. They were visually attractive and we saw results almost immediately," Wyatt noted. "I would say that with the RDC cars, we saw about a 34 percent increase in ridership on the bumper cars. We have 16 of the electric Mark VIII car for adults and we also have 10 of the Bump-A-Bouts for the younger children."

Wyatt also likes that the cars require no real employee training. An attendant just needs to make sure everyone is buckled in before hitting



*Young guests at Pacific Park at the Santa Monica Pier in California enjoy Bump-a-Bouts bumper cars from Ride Development Company (RDC). "Pacific Park is open 365 days per year, and it welcomes 4.5 million guests annually. That is a lot of use but all our maintenance is just about wear and tear – nothing major. These are great cars," said Director of Operations Dana Wyatt.*



*Denise Ralph, general manager for Adventure Village in Hamilton, Ontario. "We have had the bumper cars since 2002. I went to IAPPA and saw RDC there, and I knew we had to have the cars. We have eight cars and they more than hold their own when it comes to popularity."*

BY DONNA CAVANAGH

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the start button. He is also impressed with the durability of the cars, which require basic maintenance.

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**Jim Mastroianni**, owner of Glenville Sportplex, in Glenville, N.Y., purchased six gas-powered bumper cars from RDC in 2005.

"I love the gas powered bumper cars. I am an engine-type of guy and these are great," he explained. "I don't like changing batteries or



*A Slumdog Millionaire cast member rides a bumper car at Pacific Park. Photo by FabianLewkowicz.com.*

having to do a lot of maintenance and the gas powered cars are perfect for my needs."

Mastroianni was drawn to the gas-powered cars because he already had, on his site, nine-horsepower go-karts. The five-horsepower bumper cars seemed a great fit for the six-acre complex, which offers a variety of attractions including an

18-hole mini-golf course, a 19-station bankshot basketball court plus batting cages, a small golf driving range, a go-kart racing track and a full snack bar.

"I knew I wanted the gas-powered cars, and they are such a hit with my guests here. It used to

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be with the old-time bumper cars that kids would whine because they had to sit with an adult and they couldn't drive the car, but not with the RDC cars. Everyone can drive the cars, and instead of crying and whining, I hear giggling and laughing – the kids are spinning because the cars can spin 360 degrees. It's just so much fun."

Mastroianni acknowledged that the bumper cars have impacted sales and increased his private party bookings as well. The addition of the bumper cars added a new dimension to the Sportsplex and made it a destination spot for both young and old.

"With the bumper cars, we can accommodate any age group, which helps our business continue to grow," he said. "We have

birthday parties, corporate events, business meet ups – people enjoy the atmosphere here."

Another advantage of the gas-powered bumper cars is that they are very low maintenance, and they require almost no employee training.

"Since there is no such thing as 'bumper car jams' with these cars, there is no need to teach an employee how to back up the cars and get them on their way again as the old bumper car systems had to do. With these cars, drivers go left, right or they can just stay where they are and spin around – whatever makes them happy."

For more than 16 years, **Denise Ralph** has served as general manager for the three-acre Adventure Village in Hamilton, Ontario,



*Adventure Village guests riding bumper cars. "The Krazy Kars are one of the big reasons why people book parties here too. They were indeed a great investment," the facility's general manager said.*



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which is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. Adventure Village offers guests a variety of attractions including 18-hole multi-level miniature golf, Grand-Slam Batting Cages, Rocky Mountain Climbing, a mining camp, a game room and Krazy Kars, which are gas-operated bumper cars furnished by RDC.

"We have had the bumper cars since 2002," Ralph noted. "I went to IAPPA and saw RDC there, and I knew we had to have the cars. We have eight cars and they more than hold their own when it comes to popularity."

What drew Ralph to the gas-powered cars was that even small children could participate in this activity that required very little training to get it started.

"The old bumper cars were not fun for small

children. They couldn't drive. And if you could drive, you could only go one way, and there were pile ups that made it impossible to go anywhere until an attendant unblocked everyone. But with the RDC cars, it's an entirely different ride."

Ralph agreed also that the cars required no extensive training from employees.

"It takes about a half hour to explain to an employee how they work and that's it," she said. "There is nothing for an attendant to do except watch the drivers have some fun spinning or turning in all directions. The Krazy Kars are one of the big reasons why people book parties here too. They were indeed a great

investment." 📌

*(For more information, circle 240 on card.)*



*Even younger children can drive the gas-powered bumper cars at Adventure Village.*