

In and Around Naples  
**A Series of Presentations  
 for the Collier County Library  
 by Paul Pacter**

**Swamp Buggy Races**

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**Swamp Buggy Races**  
**Website:** [www.swampbuggy.com/](http://www.swampbuggy.com/)  
**Where:** Florida Sports Park, 8520 Rattlesnake Hammock Rd, Naples 34114.  
**Get There:** Just east of Collier Blvd. Turn on Lord's Way. Free parking.  
**When:** First full weekend in November. Last full weekend in January. First full weekend of March.  
**Admission:** Sat 11am to 5pm is trials \$10. Sun 10:30am-5:30pm is races, \$17.

**What:** Naples is the only swamp buggy race track left in the USA. Mile O' Mud. For over 70 years. About 18 inches of water (much deeper in the 'slip holes').  
**Track mimics the Everglades terrain.**  
**Six categories of buggies:** Ranging from standard Jeeps with snorkels to giant monsters with NASCAR racing engines.

**What is a swamp buggy:**  
 Swamp buggy is a purpose-built or modified motor vehicle that can move about on dry land, shallow mud, sand, shallow water, and sometimes deep mud. Designed for fun or racing.  
 – 4, 6, or 8 cylinder.  
 – 2 or 4 wheel drive.  
**Generally 2 or 3 buggies race at a time. More for Jeeps.**

**Some Examples:**

**Glades Buggy**  
 Large rear tires.  
 Sits low in the water.

**Palm Beach Buggy**  
 High raised platform on 4 large tires.



**Two More Examples:**

**Jeep with air-cooled engine**

**NASCAR engine**

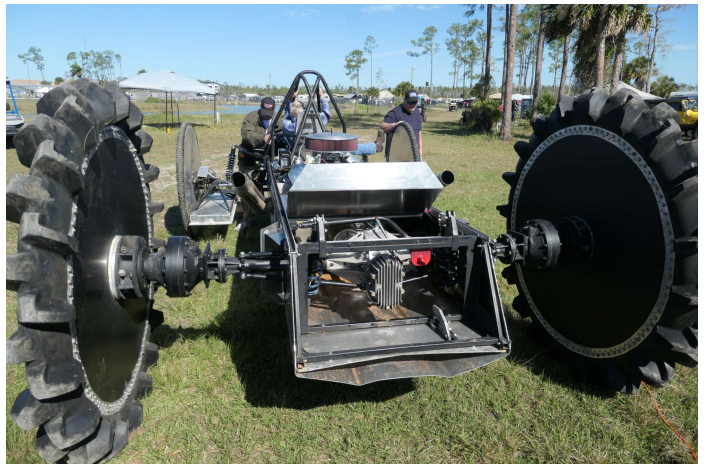


**The water is generally 18 inches deep, mud base, but there are some sink-holes that can submerge the buggy completely.**




**Drivers must be 18 (16 for the air-cooled and jeep classes).**  
 There are strict, written rules.  
**All buggies are inspected before and after the race.**  
**Gasoline is also inspected after the race.**  
 Track record is about 48 seconds. Of course jeeps, air cooled, and 4-cylinder engines are a lot slower.

Naples Sports Park  
Home of Swamp Buggy Races





Equipment problems are much more common than crashes.





**Edward H Frank (born 1902) moved to Arcadia 1914, Bonita 1921, Naples 1927.**

**Opened Naples's first garage (on 5th Ave) and first restaurant.**

**Built the first swamp buggy 1919 for construction in swampy terrain and hunting.**

**This buggy, built in 1920s, is at the Collier County Museum.**



**Sign in Freedom Park**

The property that you are currently standing on once looked much different from the view you see today. At one time nearly the entire property was covered in citrus groves. It was planted prior to 1928.

**Fleischmann (1900-1968)**

A Vacationer to Naples Visionary

Mr. K. Fleischmann, whose grandfather established Fleischmann Yeast, came to Naples from Cincinnati as a winter visitor in 1946. This first visit led to his notable projects throughout the city, such as the Third Street South Shopping District. Fleischmann purchased the northern-most portion of Freedom Park in 1928.

**Swamp Buggy**

In 1918-1919, combining parts from a Model-T Ford and a bucket seat from a WWI airplane, Ed Frank created the first swamp buggy. Over the years, he improved the design using airplane tires and incorporating four-wheel drive with interlocking front and rear wheels.

This photo appeared on the front page of the Collier County News in 1948 and signified the birth of the Swamp Buggy Races. Left to right: Paul Frank (Ed's son), Henry Espartero (Ed's brother-in-law), Ed Frank & Roy M. Sperry (the longest serving mayor from 1967-1971).

Photo Courtesy of the Naples Historical Society.

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Collier County

**Let's hope that property development does not overtake the last Swamp Buggy Race Track in the USA.**