



AN ELECTRIFYING EXPERIENCE:

PARTICIPANTS GET CHARGED UP FOR THE SOLAR GAMES

Intersolar and Energy Storage North America (IESNA)—the premier solar, energy storage, and EV infrastructure event—showcases top technologies, services, and organizations making a positive impact on climate change and support the energy transition.

A highlight of the show is the **SOLAR GAMES**, a thrilling three-day tournament that brings together some of the most skilled installation teams from across the U.S. for head-to-head competition. Introduced in 2020, the Solar Games generates excitement year after year as 4-person teams compete for a share of the \$16,000 prize money and title of Solar Games Champion.

The timed competition features multiple rounds during which teams are tasked with installing solar modules, racking, inverters, and battery storage to build on- and off-grid residential solar and storage systems, with all materials generously donated by sponsors. The custom-built arena consists of two roofs, placed side by side; the back edge of the asphalt-shingled roofs is 48 inches off the ground, built at a 12.6-degree pitch. There is a designated ladder entry point, which is the only place where equipment and installers are allowed to access the roof. In an effort to simulate a real-life installation, organizers include various obstacles in progressively difficult rounds that challenge even the most experienced installers.

“The Solar Games celebrate the talent and camaraderie among solar + storage installation professionals,” said Wes Doane, Vice President, Intersolar and Energy Storage North America. “The competition is a highly anticipated and well-attended part of our annual conference and expo, attracting some of the industry’s most talented and committed installer teams—cheered on by enthusiastic crowds.”

“There’s no other event in the industry like the Solar Games! It’s a challenging and rewarding experience that gives installers the chance to test their skills against other companies across the US.”

— Gabe von Wellsheim, Owner, Aloha Solar Power
2023 & 2024 Solar Games Champions



**MAKING A
POSITIVE
IMPACT
ON CLIMATE
CHANGE**



TURNING UP THE HEAT

Companies apply to compete and nominate their best installers to participate at the event. Following an open application period, submissions are further vetted by IESNA; all four team members must be OSHA 10-certified and one must be NABCEP-certified or a licensed electrician. Out of all the applicants in 2024, show organizers narrowed the field to eight teams for a chance at the championship title.

2024 teams included:

- All Energy Solar** SAINT PAUL, MN
- Aloha Solar Power** ENCINITAS, CA
- Castaways Energy, LLC** ORLANDO, FL
- GRID Alternatives** OAKLAND, CA
- Huston Solar** LAFAYETTE, IN
- Michigan Solar Solutions** COMMERCE, MI
- Northwest Electric and Solar** KENMORE, WA
- Sun Valley Solar Solutions** CHANDLER, AZ

ATTRACTING SOME OF THE INDUSTRY'S MOST TALENTED AND COMMITTED INSTALLER TEAMS

The teams face a daunting task: install a complete on-grid or off-grid solar + storage system from the ground up using products and materials they may never have used before while watched by hundreds of spectators and an eagle-eyed panel of judges (each an industry veteran). **All in less than 90 minutes.**

While it is timed, speed is not the most important criterion. During each round, the judges watch carefully to tally what's working well and spot any errors, awarding or deducting points for quality of craftsmanship, safety, and more. Competition is very tight; judges use a comprehensive scoresheet and no detail is too small. Points are allotted for everything from employing the correct safety precautions, to using the designated entry and exit point, properly tightened bolts and mid-clamps, appropriately-sized cantilevers, and more. Judges also evaluate the overall aesthetics of the final install.

The atmosphere is exciting, made more so by the cheering fans in the bleachers around the arena, and rivals that of a hometown sporting event. Rock music plays, t-shirts are thrown into the stands, and the emcee pumps up the crowd.

"It's an intense experience: hundreds of people watching you from all angles with the clock running and \$10K on the line; working with equipment we've never seen before, and judges watching your every move and taking notes as you work," said David Getschel, Director of Electrical Operations at **All Energy Solar**, whose team took third place in 2023 in their first time participating.



GENERATING BUZZ THROUGH SPONSORSHIPS

There's little doubt the Solar Games could not succeed without dedicated sponsors who supply all equipment, components, and tools for the competition. Many of these sponsors return annually after seeing measurable results from their support. "We know that we get great exposure at the event," said Jeff Myles, Marketing Manager at **Rolls Battery Engineering**, a regular Solar Games sponsor. "It generates a lot of buzz. Everyone really likes the competition and it's a great way to get people talking about our product."

Each year, sponsors target the best booth positions near the arena. As the audience sees different products and materials in use, curiosity is piqued and conversations begin. "We definitely engaged with people who were intrigued by the use of our products in the competition," said Jeff Lowman, National Account Manager, Renewable Energy and EV Infrastructure at **Milwaukee Tool**, a two-time sponsor. "It was great to talk to new people and really gave us a chance to expand our potential customer base."

Solar Games sponsors value the opportunity to place their products directly into the hands of experienced installers who effectively demonstrate for an aggregate audience of hundreds how easy they are to use. Watching the actual end-user work with your product gives internal salespeople, partners, and potential customers a deeper understanding of, and connection to, the brand. As a relatively new entrant into the renewable energy space, Milwaukee Tool was eager to see how its tools are used in the field and confirm that its products are a great fit for the job. "Seeing first-hand how our customers use our products makes us better at what we do," said Lowman, "We've definitely generated results from our first show. The network effect of installers sharing their experience with our product – we saw that advantage right away."

For Jeff Myles, too, seeing is believing: watching the teams use the company's batteries during competition "... opened my eyes to certain tools and critical needs within the residential, rooftop solar installation world, and allowed me to see the value that we can continue to bring to this customer base."

Brand awareness is a key benefit of sponsorship and Solar Games organizers make sure sponsors have multiple opportunities to showcase their products. During the competitions, sponsors often introduce their company and explain how their product(s) will be used in the competition. "This enables me to connect our product with what's actually happening on the ground," said Myles of Rolls Battery Engineering. "It puts the pieces of the puzzle together – people start learning about a product they may not otherwise have been looking at. We definitely see value in that."

Generous exhibitors donated the following important for the Solar Games: APSystems provided PV module rapid shutdown devices, while GME Supply donated safety gear, and HellermannTyton supplied small components. The equipment sponsors for the 2024 competition included: **Electriq Power, K2 Systems, LONGi Solar Technology, Milwaukee Tool, Rolls Battery Engineering, Roof Tech, SolaDeck, and Victron Energy.**

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– Jeff Myles, Rolls Battery Engineering



**BRAND
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IS A KEY
BENEFIT OF
SPONSORSHIP**



The networking possibilities inherent in any trade show are enhanced when your brand is prominently featured for the duration of the event. Large sponsor banners hang above the arena, providing instant brand recognition and a talking point for old and new relationships alike. "This was a great opportunity to strengthen some of our existing relationships," said Johan Alfsen, Director of Training for **K2 Systems**, a long-time sponsor. "And it did create some sales opportunities. We were able to re-engage with a past customer who has indicated a renewed interest in using our product for future projects."

Alfsen is also one of the organizers behind the Games and encourages others to get involved. "It's like being a part of a family and growing and making something more fun for the industry. And it's definitely good for the company to get some exposure, especially if your products are not mainstream; they'll get much more acknowledgment."

POWERING GLOBAL GOOD

Solar Games sponsors may also generously donate equipment, tools, components, and accessories required for two complete installs of connected and off-grid systems, plus storage. Once used, however, these materials cannot be re-used for commercial purposes. With this in mind, organizers recognized a wonderful opportunity to repurpose the donations. **Twende Solar**, a non-profit organization that strives to empower under-resourced communities around the world with renewable energy systems, has partnered with the Solar Games from the start. It has turned into a win-win: sponsors see that their donations are making a difference beyond the event and Twende Solar is able to build additional projects.

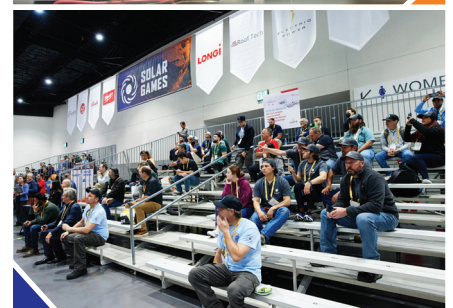
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Since 2010, Twende Solar has worked with a variety of nonprofits to design and install systems in some of the most remote parts of the world, including Mexico, Nicaragua, and Tanzania. Additionally, they have dedicated time, expertise, and materials to medical clinics in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; solar water purification system designs in Haiti; and the development of a solar system on the Quinault Indian Nation reservation. Collectively these projects and donations of resources and expertise have improved thousands of lives in developing nations.

"It's great to know that our tools are being used to continue to build for the better good. At the end of the day, it's about us as a society making sure that we're doing the right thing for people across the world," said Lowman of Milwaukee Tool. "That the tools we are donating are able to help other people have a better life makes our donation that much more meaningful."

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— Johan Alfsen, Director of Training for K2 Systems



CREATING COMMUNITY

The Solar Games is a true community effort involving not just the teams, but also sponsors and judges. While the competition is serious, support among teams is fostered once a round is complete. "The solar industry is a unique and tight-knit community. Competitors know each other from traveling to the same conferences and tradeshow and there's a genuine sense of camaraderie," says Johan Alfsen of K2 Systems. "It's kind of one big family in the sense that we're all fighting for the same cause: spreading the use of solar energy."

Each round of competition is a learning experience for competitors and spectators alike and many teams felt inspired watching some of the best installers in the country ply their craft. "It definitely makes us want to do our best," said Getschel of All Energy Solar.

Back in 2023, the All Energy Solar team had two extra special voices in the stands: one of the team members' grandparents traveled from Wisconsin to Long Beach to witness their grandson compete. No doubt their support helped propel the group to its third-place finish.

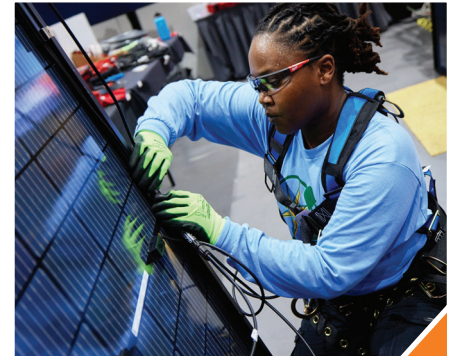
The event location proved a boon to the team from **GRID Alternatives**, who were cheered on by a large contingent from their Southern California office. The company used the event to showcase its commitment to equity and diversity. "While staff demographics in and of themselves do not drive our equity work, they are one way to understand and quantify our efforts to raise visibility in the industry," said Anna Bautista, Vice President of Construction at GRID Alternatives. "That's why we were so proud to enter as the competition's first and only all-women/non-binary team this year. Even though we didn't make it to the final round, we heard from so many people at the show about how inspired they were by our team."

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Participants and audience members felt the camaraderie that developed among and between teams. "You saw these teams come together and truly collaborate to troubleshoot and problem solve. Groups are competing against each other, but at the end of the day, it's definitely a very tight community of people who are there to root for each other," said Jeff Lowman of Milwaukee Tool.

He adds: "It was a great experience to be part of a growing event that really benefits people. But the best thing was that, even though there was only one team that could win the grand prize, I felt like everybody had a great experience. It really was a community event that celebrated the residential solar space."



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EXPERIENCE THE SOLAR GAMES IN PERSON

Whether you're interested in competing or sponsoring the Solar Games, the best way to understand the magic is to experience it for yourself. Potential participants are encouraged to contact our team or visit intersolar.us/solar-games to learn more about the 2025 event.

SAVE THE DATE

FEBRUARY 25-27, 2025

San Diego Convention Center
San Diego, California



TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW TO COMPETE AS AN INSTALLER TEAM OR SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR 2025, PLEASE CONTACT OUR TEAM. 



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