



GT NEWS

NEWSLETTER NR 1

JAN 27th 2006

MIL MILHAS BRASIL TO BECOME ROUND OF THE 2007 FIA GT CHAMPIONSHIP

During a press conference held at the circuit of Interlagos, attended by Paolo Scaglione, president of the Brazilian Motorsport Federation and Ciro José, director of TV Globo, Antonio Hermann, organiser of the Mil Milhas Brasil, and Stephane Ratel, promoter of the FIA GT Championship, announced that they have signed an agreement to integrate the race into the 2007 FIA GT Championship.

Having established one of the strongest grids in Europe, and brought together some of the most legendary brands in motorsport, such as Aston Martin, Corvette, Ferrari, Maserati and Lamborghini, the next objective of the FIA GT Championship is to concentrate on building up the calendar, integrating major events. Since 2001, the Proximus 24 Hours of Spa has been rebuilt as the world's leading GT endurance race, attracting 124,500 spectators last year. The extremely successful revival of the RAC Tourist Trophy at Silverstone added another jewel to the calendar, with the second running to take place on May 7th this year.

The next step will be to add the Mil Milhas Brasil. This prestigious event, which faded away for a number of years, will see a major revival, starting from this year, thanks to the enthusiasm and investment of Antonio Hermann and Ricardo Pereira. It is now set to become once again a major event, and from 2007 onwards, will be the opening round of the FIA GT Championship, although at a later date than in 2006.

Adding the motorsport nation of Brazil and the legendary track of Interlagos is another step forward in the ambitions of the FIA GT Championship. Along with the well-established race in China, and those in the Middle East, it is one step further towards building a truly global Championship. Having a second longer race in the FIA GT calendar anchors the true endurance nature of the series.

"The sight of the six cars from the FIA GT Championship competing in Interlagos this weekend will give the Brazilian public an idea of the sheer sound and spectacle offered by a full grid of 20 GT1 cars," said Stephane Ratel during the press conference held to announce this event. "We are confident that the crowds in Sao Paulo will really enjoy the glamour, the diversity and the extremely close racing offered by the FIA GT Championship. We also hope that this flagship event will help the development of GT racing in Brazil."

"It is with great joy that we can announce that the Mil Milhas, one of the most charming races in the world, will become part of an important competition like the FIA GT Championship," added organiser Antonio Hermann.

The agreement concerning the Mil Milhas is completed with a deal with major Brazilian TV company Globo, for coverage of the 2006 season of the FIA GT Championship, both on its cable network and in the Sunday morning sports show on the terrestrial channel. The double objective of this contract is to increase promotion of the Mil Milhas through better knowledge of the Championship, and also to help secure the presence of Brazilian drivers in the FIA GT.



"It is with great joy that we can announce that the Mil Milhas, one of the most charming races in the world, will become part of an important competition like the FIA GT Championship" **Antonio Hermann, Organiser of the Mil Milhas Brasil**



For more information on the teams, drivers and everything about the FIA GT Championship, please visit : www.fiagt.com

CIRTEK VICTORIOUS IN MIL MILHAS BRASIL

Cirtek Motorsport, who finished the 2005 season in fine form with victory in Bahrain for the Russian Age Racing Aston Martin, started 2006 with an excellent win in the Mil Milhas Brasil, on the 50th anniversary of the first running of the event.

The car was driven by team regular, triple FIA GT Champion Christophe Bouchut, with three Brazilian stars : double Indy 500 winner Helio Castroneves, F1 star Nelson Piquet and his son Nelson Piquet Jr - the 2004 British F3 Champion and GP2 star. Over 374 laps of the challenging but incredibly popular Interlagos circuit in Sao Paulo, Brazil, the Cirtek Aston Martin raced for 10 hours and 36 minutes, apparently a record time for the race. This is the second time a British car has won, further to the McLaren F1 GTR's victory in 1997, and Bouchut is the tenth non-Brazilian to win.

Cirtek's win came despite problems earlier in the week, when the team's equipment did not arrive. "We had to beg and borrow tools to take out the old engine, but when the new one hadn't arrived, we had to put it back in," said team manager Rob Schirle. "On Wednesday we didn't even have a spanner. The Cirtek consignment was three sets of tyres, and a few boxes with some spares in them, and nothing else." The equipment arrived in time for the race, and the team set about preparations immediately, preparing for what was to be a faultless event. "This is probably the best line-up I will ever have in terms of history and ability," said Schirle. "I had a double Indy winner, a three time Formula One champion and a double FIA GT champion and Le Mans winner, and they were a pleasure to work with. They didn't get on my back when the equipment wasn't there – they all knew the situation. Come the race, everything went smoothly. The fact that we won the last big race of 2005 and the first race of 2006 bodes well for the rest of the season, and we will be building on it this year."

"It's really great," Bouchut said afterwards. "It's my first time, it's a major endurance race here in Brazil, with a serious history behind it : this is the fiftieth anniversary of the first race. We had an impressive line-up, the car worked very well, the team did an excellent job It's quite impressive considering we missed the first day of testing altogether, and we couldn't do a good time in qualifying. Despite everything, by the start of the race, I came in for my first pit stop in the lead, which wasn't bad at all. We were quite confident, but nevertheless, for a ten hour race, your car has to be incredibly reliable, and the Aston, despite everything, is still a relatively young car. My co-drivers were also relatively inexperienced in the car, so there were a number of factors counting against us. We really put in a faultless performance, all of us : the drivers, the mechanics, everyone. I will have some fantastic memories of this race. It's really nice to come back to Europe having won something like this !"

The ZF01 prototype led for the early stages of the race, but was soon overtaken by the Aston Martin and the GLPK Corvette, the two FIA GT regulars putting on a fine performance for the Brazilian public as they battled for supremacy over the compact, hilly circuit. Unfortunately, the Corvette slipped back down the rankings further to a throttle cable problem. Second place was taken by the Capuava Mercedes DTM car, driven by Tony Kanaan, Raul Boesel, Giuliano Losacco and four-times 2005 FIA GT winner Pedro Lamy. The Konrad Saleen of race organiser Antonio Hermann, Didier Theys and Jean-Marc Gounon was third, ahead of the leading GT2 cars, the Scuderia Playteam Ferrari and the Baluarte Racing Team Porsche. The second Konrad Saleen finished sixth overall, having lost fifteen laps in the pits due to a broken upright. The GPC Ferrari 575 M Maranello shared by the Marques family - Tarso, Tiago and father Pedro - along with FIA GT regular Philipp Peter - was tenth, three seconds off ninth place, despite a 40-lap stop to repair damage after a puncture. The team's second car retired early on, after an engine overheating problem.

The circuit, atmosphere and race appeared extremely popular with the FIA GT regulars; it should make a fine addition to the 2007 calendar !

MIL MILHAS BRASIL 50 YEARS RACE RESULT- GTP1



1. GTP1 N. Piquet - NA Piquet - C. Bouchut - H. Castroneves - Cirtek Aston Martin DBR9
2. GTP1. T. Kanaan - P. Lamy - R. Bousel - G. Lossaco - Capuava Mercedes DTM
3. GTP1 A. Hermann - D. Theys - JM Gounon - Konrad Saleen S7-R
4. GT2 G Giannoccaro - Guidi - Vilander Scuderia Playteam Ferrari Modena
5. GT2 Orsi - Maluhy - Mauricio - Baluarte Racing Team Porsche GT3
6. R. Lechner - T. Weickart - F. Konrad - Konrad Saleen S7-R
7. P. Gomes - M Hezemans - Alencar Jr - C. Lunardi - GLPK Corvette
8. T Marques - Th Marques - P Marques - P Peter - GPC Ferrari 575 M Maranello

QUALIFYING

1. 21 Bonifacio - Giuffone - Meira ZF01
2. Gomes - Hezemans - Alencar - Lunardi - GLPK Corvette C5-R
3. Kanaan - Lamy - Boesel - Lossaco - Capuava Mercedes
4. Peter - Marques - Marques - Marques - GPC Ferrari 575
5. Piquet - Piquet - Castroneves - Bouchut - Cirtek Aston Martin
6. Hermann - Theys - Gounon - Konrad Saleen S7-R

WHAT THEY SAID ...

Nelson Piquet, nr 1 Cirtek Aston Martin (Piquet, Piquet, Bouchut, Castroneves) : "It was a good opportunity to do a race together with my son, and it's really good to win as well. It's the first time we've raced together. I tried to run consistently in the car, as I have not driven competitively for a number of years. It was a very important race for us, and I hope that next year it will be for the Championship !"



Antonio Hermann, nr 5 Konrad Saleen (Hermann, Theys, Gounon) : "I enjoyed the race very much. But I think the best thing for me is that Nelson and Helio were on the top step of the podium - much better than me ! This is the first time ever that I've lost a race and been happy about it ! But I still have a good prize. The race was very good, with no accidents, no problems, we broke all the records for time and distance. Everybody is happy. But this is just a little taste of what we will have next year !"



Robert Lechner, nr 4 Konrad Saleen (Lechner, Konrad, Weickhart) : "To be honest, we can be happy we made it to the finish - as anyone who has followed our last season in the FIA GT would know. Those races lasted three hours, and we didn't survive most of them. So this time we raced for over ten hours. I feel very happy for the team, that both cars made it to the finish, and one car on the podium, which was very nice. I would have loved to be on the podium with those guys out there, but unfortunately we are not.



We'll have to come back next year and try harder ! The broken suspension cost us around 15 laps, and if we add those on, we would have been fourth, which I think is the maximum we could have achieved by ourselves. We all tried our best. I struggled a bit in the wet, as the lights didn't work so we had to change the front, and the windscreen wipers and the radio didn't work. But we made it to the finish, and I was glad to drive with Tom and Franz. It's very good for the team."

Franz Konrad, nr 4 Konrad Saleen (Lechner, Konrad, Weickhart) : "I said at home, we will change the colours back to my own team colours, and the cars will run and finish. And that's what happened. We had a small problem on the nr 4 car, a mechanical failure, when the wheel hub broke. It took 15 laps to change the whole upright. It was me in the car at the time, and I was lucky not to damage the car. I was going up to the hill, fifth gear flat, and before the 50 m braking point, the car turned to the left, towards the wall. It was very bad. We had good people, good drivers, everybody did a great job. Tom did a good job, for his first time in a Saleen, so I hope we'll get him back in the car again. This is a new start for Konrad!"



Batti Pregliasco, team manager GPC : "It was perfect, the drivers were fantastic, but we had a flat tyre quite early on. It was too difficult to rejoin the real race. We got into the top ten, and we lost ninth place by just three seconds ! It was impossible to go faster than this. Tarso Marques did a wonderful job in the night, Philipp Peter was brilliant in the difficult conditions in the night and wet. Tiago Marques was a real surprise - he's a young guy, with just three years of racing experience, but very fast. It's amusing to see the whole family racing together, it's something I like a lot. There was a really good atmosphere in the team and in Brazil in general. It's very important to be there in the end. If you're going to have a problem, sometimes it's better for it to happen early on, so you can fight back, rather than later in the race, as happened to the Corvette here... The car has very good potential here, we were almost always the fastest on the track. The conditions were difficult, very hot and humid. The nr 10 had a high engine temperature. We preferred to stop rather than risking the car in just the second hour. "



NEW AUSTRIAN TEAM FOR FIA GT

Austrian drivers Karl Wendlinger and Philipp Peter will be driving an Aston Martin DBR9 for new Austrian team Racealliance in 2006. Team ownership is being shared between brothers Richard and Heinrich Karner, who are also Austria's Aston Martin importers, and Lukas Lichtner-Hoyer on behalf of his company JetAlliance, one of Europe's largest on-demand flight services providers. Karner said: "We are very pleased to be able to launch this Austrian team - and with Karl and Philipp we will have two of Austria's finest racing drivers competing in the 2006 championship." The team will be managed by Andreas Hainke, a former Zakspeed team manager, who will take charge of the Austrian team with immediate effect. Karl and Philipp have excellent FIA GT experience. Karl won the 1999 Championship with Olivier Beretta in the Chrysler Viper Team Oreca, and has also won races with JMB in 2004 and 2005, remaining in contention for the 2005 title until the very end. Philipp, having competed in the very first FIA GT race in 1997, has been a regular since 2001. As well as three N-GT wins, he gave the Ferrari 575 M Maranello its first-ever win in Estoril 2003, and claimed two poles in 2005, for JMB Racing.

Philipp Peter, competing for GPC in the Mil Milhas Brazil, talked of this new team : "I am very pleased that Karl and I will finally be driving together, and that we will be driving in the FIA GT Championship, which for me, is one of the best series to be in at the moment. The Aston Martin looks to be one of the most competitive cars, Dunlop is trying to push hard to get up where Michelin and Pirelli are, so it is very good to know you have a tyre manufacturer which is willing to do some testing. On the other hand I am sorry to leave Pirelli, with whom I have been working since 2000 in the Supercup, then in N-GT. But life goes on, and sometimes you have to take new directions. This is an all-Austrian package, with the importer, sponsors, drivers, based in Vienna. I am really looking forward to it. We will do some testing in March, which is also when the official launch will take place. The people involved, the Karner brothers and Lichtner-Hoyer are really professional, and they are people who like to be successful in their life and in business. Racing for them is a passion but a business too, so I am confident they will put all their manpower together. We will surely have everything we need to be competitive. "

FULL SEASON AND PORSCHE BACKING FOR EBIMOTORS



Italian team Ebimotors, which finished third in the 2005 FIA GT2 Teams Classification this year, with four podiums, has announced that, like GruppeM, they will benefit from support from the Porsche factory in 2006. The team, owned by Enrico Borghi, stated in a press release that their aim will be the 2006 FIA GT2 title, with their Porsche 996 GT3 RSR and drivers Emanuele Busnelli and Luigi Moccia. "This comes as excellent news and confirms Porsche's commitment, taken as part of a gentleman's agreement with Ferrari, not to concentrate all their support behind a single team as has been done for the past few years, bringing much more open competition to the GT2 category," Stephane Ratel commented.



SALEEN FOR ORECA



Oreca, triple FIA GT Champions between 1997 and 1999, have announced their return to GT racing in 2006. The French team has signed an agreement with American manufacturer Saleen to set up an endurance programme and a client competition service in Europe.

Although their main aim is to run two cars in the next 24 Hours of Le Mans, the team has also announced that they will do some rounds of the LMS and FIA GT. It will also be good news for the teams running Saleens in the FIA GT, which will now be able to take advantage of the European base.

"It was time to establish a base in Europe, in order to better serve our clients," Steve Saleen, president of Saleen Autosport commented.

Balfe Motorsport has already announced that they will be competing in the 2006 season with a Saleen S7-R. The car first competed in the FIA GT in 2003, winning its first race in 2004 for Vitaphone. The American-built car has also an impressive record of nine pole positions, from Lechner, Gounon and Bartels.

FIA GT3 EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP - TEAM UPDATE

There has been an exceptional level of interest in the inaugural season of the FIA GT3 European Championship, which will get underway at Silverstone on May 7th, in the context of the RAC Tourist Trophy meeting. The following teams are among those which have confirmed their intention to enter the series in 2006. All entries are subject to FIA confirmation, after the closing date on February 28th 2006.



LARBRE COMPETITION

LARBRE COMPETITION TO ENTER THREE PORSCHE IN FIA GT3

Leading French team Larbre Competition, FIA GT Champions between 2000 and 2003, has announced that it will be entering a team of Porsche cars in the 2006 FIA GT3 European Championship. Team principal Jack Leconte said : “*LARBRE Competition, a participant in all aspects of Grand Touring competition for fifteen years, prides itself in always taking part in the premieres of world Endurance racing. The FIA GT3 category, established by SRO, is the most innovative idea in recent years, and which will put this type of racing back within the grasp of all those who love it. LARBRE Competition has therefore decided to support this project from the start, and will enter three Porsche cars, representing the leading brand in Endurance racing.*”



TECH 9 MOTORSPORT PLAN PORSCHE CAMPAIGN IN FIA GT3

British team Tech 9, the reigning British GT3 Champions, plans to enter a team of Porsche 997 GT3 cars in the inaugural season of the FIA GT3 European Championship. “*We have been looking to step up internationally for some time,*” Team principal Phil Hindley commented. “*The FIA GT3 series will allow us to experience high-profile race meetings with the latest Porsche car, which will not be as expensive to maintain as a GT3 RSR. I like the format of two one-hour races; our BGT races share the same format so our experience should stand us in good stead. As a Porsche specialist company, we can market our business on the back of a successful Porsche campaign, and the concept of racing against a number of different marques - and other Porsche teams, is an appealing prospect.*”

MACH ONE RACING TO ENTER FERRARI F430 CHALLENGE IN FIA GT3

French team Mach One Racing has announced that they will be competing in the 2006 FIA GT3 European Championship, with three Ferrari F430 Challenge GT3 cars.



“*The Team had been looking for a new challenge for 2006 since the announcement of the end of the Touring Car era in France,*” said Serge Masson. “*Since the first newsletter about the FIA GT3 Championship, we have been seduced by this new project initiated by Stephane Ratel. Our partners are really interested by the European market, and have decided to support us and enter three Ferrari F 430 Challenge cars. The F430, after a technical comparison, looks to be one of the best in the field. Moreover, besides the entry of two cars with experienced Gentleman drivers, we are working hard to build a strong driver line-up for the leading car able to compete for the FIA GT3 European Driver Championship Title.*”

DAMAX TO MOVE UP TO FIA GT3 WITH ASCARI



GT racing team Damax are planning to compete in the 2006 FIA GT3 Championship with Ascari GT3 cars. The project has the support of manufacturer Ascari and Gigawave, designers and manufacturers of a wide range of RF equipment for television broadcasts and other applications.

Team boss Robin Ward commented : “*We have been looking for a way into the FIA GT Championship for some time now, and this association with Ascari gives us the perfect opportunity.*” The Damax line-up will be led by Nick Adams and Aaron Scott, with the rest of drivers due to be confirmed later.

Damax were delighted with the initial tests of the new Ascari KZ1 GT3 car after its recent shakedown at Silverstone. The car was driven by team drivers Nick Adams and Aaron Scott, who completed a number of laps in the car, as well as giving rides to journalists and VIP guests. Both drivers were delighted with the car as it set a blistering pace in cold conditions.

Aaron Scott said, “*The car is very good out of the box. I am sure that, with the expertise of the engineers at Damax, we can make it even better. I am very much looking forward to the testing programme ahead, and of course the racing season which starts in May at Silverstone.*”

The team will move to Snetterton next week for 2 days of intensive testing and development

JMB RACING TO TAKE PART IN 2006 FIA GT3 EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP

Having raced in the FIA GT Championship since 2000, Monaco-based team JMB Racing is pleased to announce that it will also enter the new FIA GT3 European Championship in 2006, on two different fronts.

The team will enter three Venturi Heritage GT3 cars.

"JMB Racing is proud to be part of Venturi's return to motorsport competition, with great ambitions. The long-term relationship we have had with Gildo Pallanca-Pastor, who is now in charge of Venturi, the proximity of our headquarters and our similar sporting ambitions have allowed us to enter into this partnership," explained Jean-Michel Bouresche.

The team will also enter three Ferrari F430 GT3 cars. *"We have claimed a grand total of ten titles with Ferrari since 1998, with the Ferrari 333SP, the Ferrari 360 Modena and the Ferrari 575 GTC. It is therefore quite natural for JMB Racing to respond to the request of our gentlemen drivers and give the much-anticipated F430 its debut in this promising new FIA GT3 Championship,"*

Bouresche concluded.

JMB Racing's programme in the GT1 and GT2 categories will be announced shortly.



AF CORSE TO COMPETE WITH MASERATI LIGHT



Italian team AF Corse has announced its intentions to run the Maserati Light in the inaugural

season of the Championship.

Amato Ferrari explained : *"AF Corse races with a Maserati Light in the GT3 class and won the Italian GT Championship, so when we heard about the FIA GT3 European Championship we thought it was an excellent opportunity to race in the same class with a Maserati on prestigious circuits all around Europe alongside the FIA GT Championship. AF Corse is very excited about this coming season ."*

RACING BOX PLANS TO ENTER DODGE IN FIA GT3

Racing Box, a regular in the FIA GT Championship in previous years, is planning to enter the new Dodge car in the inaugural season of the FIA GT3 European Championship. *"We are very interested in this new championship and we are pleased to be present from the first year with three cars as we are sure it will grow in the future,"* team owner Mauro Felisatti explained.

"GT1 is a very expensive category and we think a lower cost series will be really appreciated by many drivers and teams. The contest remains a very professional one and we surely expect it to be a high level series."



TEAM RIVERSIDE AND CORVETTE FOR 2006 FIA GT3

French team Riverside intends to compete in the new FIA GT3 Championship with the exciting new Corvette Z06 GT3.

Team owner Philippe Dagostino commented : *"As a long time friend of Stéphane Ratel I have been part of his racing programmes from the very beginning. We started with the Venturi Trophy back in 1992 and then continued in the Lamborghini SuperTrophy, followed by the French GT Championship, where we have entered Lamborghinis since 1998. It is a great opportunity for Team Riverside to step up to a FIA European Championship."*



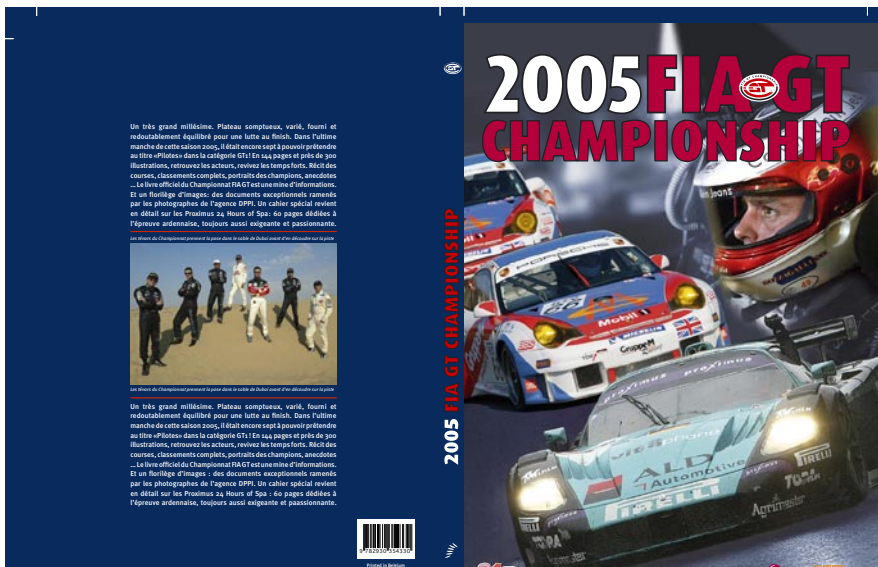
AUTOSPORT PROMOTION TO RACE PORSCHE IN FIA GT3

A regular competitor in the Porsche Carrera Cup, Autosport Promotion plans to enter the new FIA GT3 European Championship with Porsche 997 Cup cars.

Team owner Jérôme Policand explained : *"As a team owner, the new FIA GT3 Championship is a very important step. Since 1999, the year we set up the team (Auto Sport Promotion) our drivers have mainly been gentlemen drivers.*

For them, there is now a possibility to win races overall. It's the first championship for such drivers.

After three seasons in French Carrera Cup, it's also a possibility for us to take part in both championships with the same cars and same drivers."



GT ANNUAL 2005

The eagerly-awaited 2005 yearbook of the FIA GT Championship will be rolling off the presses shortly.

The book is 144 pages long, with over 300 photos. It is bilingual, in French and English.

There are six pages for each race, as well as 60 pages on the Proximus 24 Hours of Spa. Full classifications are included.

The book costs 42 € in bookshops. Special conditions are available for teams, drivers and sponsors.

For more information, contact the editor on apach@apach.be. Get your copy soon !

NEW YEAR, NEW ADDRESSES, NEW COLLEAGUES

2006 has seen a number of changes for the SRO Motorsports Group. SRO Paris has moved to new premises, while Benjamin Franassovici has moved back to the London office, where he will also take charge of the overall sporting coordination of the Avon Tyres British GT Championship and the British F3 International Series.

We are also delighted to welcome Anne Bernard back to the company. She will take care of the Promotion of the FIA GT and FIA GT3 Championships - a job she already did in 2004, while working for SRW Events. Anne, along with Event Manager Patricia Kiefer, is based in the Paris office.

CONTACT INFORMATION

SRO LONDON

110 Old Brompton Road
London SW7 3RA
United Kingdom

Phone : +44 207 259 2598
Fax : +44 207 370 4950

Team Relations Manager :
Benjamin Franassovici
benjamin@sro.co.uk

FIA GT3 Teams Relations
Sandrine Jarneit
sandrine@sro.co.uk

Hospitality Coordinator:
Fiona Pawley
fiona@sro.co.uk

Logistics Manager :
Jürgen Barth
Jurgen@sro.co.uk

SRO PARIS

3 rue Foucault
75016 Paris
France

Fax : +33 1 56 64 04 50

Event Manager :
Patricia Kiefer
Tel : +33 1 56 64 04 41
patricia@sro.fr

Promotion Manager
Anne Bernard
Tel : +33 1 56 64 04 42
anne@sro.fr

Media Assistant
Frederic Espinos
Tel : +33 1 56 64 04 43
frederic@sro.fr

SRO MARKETING SERVICES

110 Old Brompton Road
London SW7 3RA
United Kingdom
Phone : +44 207 259 2598
Fax : +44 207 370 4950

Managing Director : Ian Forbes
ianf@sro.co.uk

Executive Assistant : Mike Grime
mike@sro.co.uk

SRO LAUSANNE

Av. Gratta Paille 2
PO Box 476
1000 Lausanne 30, Switzerland
Phone : +41 21 641 1672
Fax : +41 21 641 1671

Media Delegate : Jacquie Groom
jacquie@sro.co.uk