

The first event of the 2008 season will get underway on April 19th & 20th, at the Silverstone circuit in Great Britain. A traditional location for the FIA GT Championship, this will be its tenth visit to the popular track, and the fourth time that the winners of the event will be awarded the historic Royal Automobile Club Tourist Trophy. The Tourist Trophy, first awarded in 1905, was first presented to the winners of the 2005 FIA GT Championship, Peter Kox and Pedro Lamy, who won the race with their Aston Martin DBR9. Vitaphone Racing was victorious in both 2006 and 2007 with the Maserati MC 12 – the first time that the Maserati name has been inscribed on the Trophy. The impressive Trophy will be escorted to the circuit on Friday April 18th, with the now traditional London to Silverstone Supercar Tour. The event will be a real festival of GT racing, with the first rounds of the 2008 season of the FIA GT3 European Championship and two rounds of the GT4 European Cup. These SRO-promoted series will also be joined once again by the Ferrari Challenge Trofeo Pirelli and the Ferrari Challenge Trofeo Pirelli Coppa Shell. Members of the press wishing to attend the event are kindly reminded that they should apply for accreditation immediately. The forms can be downloaded from the FIA GT web site. Publications based in the UK should apply to Carol Watts at Silverstone, while all international publications, websites or TV stations should apply to Jacquie Groom via the forms provided. On to this week's news : This week saw a two-day test organised at the French circuit of Nogaro, which will host the eighth round of the FIA GT Championship as well as rounds of the FIA GT3 European Championship and the GT4 European Cup on the weekend of October 4th – 5th. The main aim of the test was to complete the performance balancing procedure started at Monza, for the GT2 and GT3 cars. Despite changeable weather, the performance balancing sessions for the FIA GT3 European Championship went well, with Official FIA Test Driver Christophe Bouchut driving all eleven models over the two-day test. Furthermore, the different models in the GT2 category of the FIA GT Championship were examined, with Jean-Marc Gounon driving the Ferrari 430 GT2, the Porsche 997 GT3 RSR and the Aston Martin Vantage GT2, seen in action in an official FIA GT session for the first time. A number of other teams took advantage of the official test sessions to run at Nogaro. The best overall time from the regular FIA GT1 competitors was set by the PK Carsport Saleen S7R, with a time of 1:25.418 in the final session on Tuesday, closely followed by the Gigawave Aston Martin DBR9 and the Larbre Competition Saleen S7R. The full results can be downloaded from the web site. Jetalliance announced this week that they had joined forces with the Austrian Olympic Committee, and will carry the logo on their Aston Martin DBR9 cars this season. "A collaboration that makes me very happy indeed", team owner Lukas Lichtner-Hoyer commented, "because it's a really conspicuous gesture. For the first time, sport is supporting sport. This goes to show that we're the most innovative. And the Olympic motto is pointing the way for us as well. Because Jetalliance, too, is persistently trying to improve to be able to offer our customers even better service." Scuderia Ecosse was testing on home ground, in Knockhill, and set the team's fastest-ever lap of the track while going through a Pirelli tyre test. Jamie Davies and Fabio Babini will be driving the car in this year's Championship; they already set the fastest GT2 time during the Monza test days. Scuderia Ecosse team principle Stewart Roden commented "It has been a fantastic day and we have been able to run various new compounds and constructions from the Pirelli development programme." The FIA has released the 2008 entry list for the FIA GT3 European Championship. All eleven models entered in this year's Championship were testing in Nogaro; the results will be examined by the GT Bureau in order to balance the performance of the various cars for the first two races in Silverstone. It is important to remember that the measures taken – which can include weight, restrictors and ride height, among others – are meant to balance the performance over the six circuits on the 2008 calendar and not at any one in particular. Alphabetically, the Ascari KZ1R, Aston Martin DBRS9, Corvette Z06, Dodge Viper Competition Coupe, Ferrari 430 GT2, Ford GT, Ford Mustang FR500, Lamborghini Gallardo, Jaguar XKR, Morgan Aero 8 and Porsche 997 Cup S all lined up for a photo shoot in front of the Nogaro control tower. Further to the tragic plane crash which killed Apex Motorsport Team Principal Richard Lloyd and driver David Leslie, when they were heading to Nogaro, Harry Handkammer of Apex Motorsport has stated that the Jaguar project

will continue : "Apex will be forging ahead with the Jaguar XKR GT3 programme and its entries in the 2008 FIA GT3 European Championship. We were racing before to win; now we will be racing with an added purpose – in memory of Richard, David and Chris," he explained. The GT4 European Cup also completed a successful two-day test at the Nogaro circuit in the south of France. Seven different models, from the GT4 and Sports Light classes, were present, to be tested by the official test driver, Kurt Mollekens, in order to complete the performance balancing for the 2008 season, which will start at Silverstone on April 18th. Among the cars present was the new Corvette, which was in Nogaro to be checked by the technical delegate, in order to start the homologation procedure in order to be accepted into GT4. Reigning Champion Eric De Doncker was not only present with his Motorsports 98 Mustang, with which he will defend his title in 2008, but was also driving the Matech Racing Mustang he will drive in the FIA GT3 European Championship. The television coverage for the FIA GT3 European Championship and the GT4 European Cup received a boost with the announcement that the highlights programmes for both series will be shown on pan-European channel Motors TV. The preview for the Silverstone round of the FIA GT Championship, the FIA GT3 European Championship and the GT4 European Cup, including provisional entry lists, will be sent out on Friday April 11th.