



GT NEWS

NEWSLETTER nr 19 - 21st DECEMBER 2007

A PERFECT FINISH TO THE SEASON !

In front of guests of honour Mr Max Mosley, President of the FIA, and Mr Marco Piccinini, Deputy President of the FIA, the SRO Motorsports Group held its 2007 prize-giving in Monaco on Saturday December 8th.

Pit-lane reporter Anne-Laure Bonnet presented the evening, awarding trophies to the winners from the GT4 European Cup, the FIA GT3 European Championship and the FIA GT Championship. Among the special prizes, GT3 Champion Henri Moser was presented with a cheque representing a prize-fund of 150,000 € from SRO and Cessna Citation, plus a year's worth of tyres from Michelin, to allow him to move up to the FIA GT Championship in 2008.

The FIA GT Driver Performance of the Year, voted for by journalists and SRO, was awarded to Jetalliance's Karl Wendlinger, for his three poles and three wins in the nr 33 Aston Martin DBR9. Stephane Ratel presented a special award to Gustave and Lucette Boyer, who have worked in the Technical department since the start of the BPR series. 2007 FIA GT1 Champion Thomas Biagi completed a marathon performance, including three award ceremonies and approximately 2000 kilometres within 24 hours, going from the FIA prize-giving Gala to the Bologna Motor Show and back to Monaco to receive his trophy from Mr Piccinini.



"A HUGE SUCCESSFUL FUTURE AHEAD"



Mr Max Mosley gave a short speech on the future of GT racing at this important time :

"I would like to say how impressed we are with the way the GT Championships, not just the FIA ones, but GT racing in general, have progressed. It is a fascinating category, and one which has been greatly underrepresented until quite recently. But these are the cars which the ordinary members of the public dream about, and the cars which fascinate everybody. It was necessary to somehow find the means to allow them to race each other, even though the potential performance of various categories and makes is quite different. I think we have succeeded in doing that. The fact that Stephane is able to put

on an evening like this, and to raise the level to the degree he has, indicates that there is great success coming in the future.

The World Championship is planned. We have succeeded, I think, with not too much controversy, in leveling the performances so that you do not have to spend a huge amount on the technology in these cars. And yet, the technology is interesting, because the GT category is probably the first place where we will see the new kinetic energy recovery systems, the hybrid systems, that we are bringing into F1. And yet the cost will be kept under control which is essential. So I would like to congratulate Stephane, and all of you, on the success of the category. I am absolutely confident that it has a huge future, and that GT racing will be back up in the next few years to the sort of level it was in the 1960's when it was completely the rival to F1 - and more important than F1 by the end of the 1960's. So you have a huge potential, it's just a question of running it properly. And I think in Stephane's hands, with just a little help from our technical people, there is a hugely successful future ahead.."



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



STEPHANE RATEL : “OUR DREAM IS A WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP“



The evening in Monaco started with Stephane Ratel giving a speech about the SRO Motorsports Group and the future of GT racing, before handing the microphone over to the president of the FIA, Mr Max Mosley.

“With the only exception of the British F3 International Series, and our partnership in the Le Mans Series, SRO is exclusively and passionately dedicated to GT Racing. GT Racing is not only a Championship, it is a full category with all its classes, both internationally and nationally. We believe strongly in the future of GT racing for many reasons.

If you look at the news-stands, at the cover of magazines, you will see mainly GT cars. If you look at the video games, you will see that GT is very strong. If you even look at music videos from all areas of the industry, you see so many GT cars. If you look at the number of GT cars that are being sold, brands like Aston Martin or Maserati, which were selling only a few hundred cars just ten years ago, are now selling in the thousands. Despite the paradox of more stringent and more generalised speed limits everywhere in Europe, the world of GT racing is growing and we hope we are contributing to this.

People want to buy these cars, and once they have had their driving license removed a couple of times, they start going to the circuit. The number of track days is absolutely exploding. Once they have done a couple of track days, they want to go to the clubs. The Porsche Clubs, Ferrari Clubs and all the others have gone from twenty or thirty members to having days with hundreds of cars. Our goal is, with the help of the FIA and the many ASNs, to structure GT racing from GT4, which is for very lightly modified cars, up to GT1. Our model is like the old structure of single-seater racing. Once upon a time everything was simple. In every country you had a Formula 3 Championship. Then there was a European Formula 2 Championship, and you had the World Formula One Championship.

I don't pretend we're going to get there, but the model is there. We want to develop GT3, both internationally and nationally, which is why we have opened offices in Germany, in Belgium, in Brazil. SRO now has five offices following nine different championships. This year alone we have launched six different series. The first is from our own past, the GT90 Revival Series, along with the all-new GT4, the ADAC GT Masters in Germany, GT3 Belcar in Belgium, the FFSA GT3 Championship in France and the Brazilian GT3 Championship. And this only looks like a beginning, as we have many requests from countries around the world, who all want to do GT racing.



So I want to thank everyone from being here, and a special mention to Martin Bartek, who, by himself, represents this phenomenon perfectly. He came to GT racing only a year ago, he was a car enthusiast, a Bugatti owner. He went to club meetings, then wanted to come to GT racing. He took over the Ford project, which faced some opposition from the Ford company. He took a plane to Detroit, and convinced Ford to help him. And now he is the official representative of Ford in Europe for the GT and Mustang programmes. This is the great opportunity of GT racing, all these enthusiasts. Now we want to go a step further in our dreams, and our dream is a World Championship.

You can tell that we are heading somewhere, whether you are in GT4, GT3, GT2 or GT1, whether you are here for your own pleasure and fun, or to run a successful business. I would like to thank everyone for their support and look forward to seeing everyone in Silverstone next year.”

FIA GT CHAMPIONSHIP “ONE OF THE MOST EXCITING SEASONS !”

Stephane Ratel : “You will agree that the FIA GT Championship this year has been one of the most enjoyable, one of the most exciting seasons we have seen in many years. We have had four different manufacturers winning a race, we had 5 different winning teams and 6 different cars. Every race was exciting because we never knew who was going to win. And I think that is what GT racing is all about, and it is all down to the success of the balance of performance. And I really want to thank Peter Wright and the Bureau, Gabriele Cadringer and Jacques Berger, who are the referees of GT racing. They have done a fantastic job, getting between seven and ten cars within the same second at every race, keeping costs under control and allowing the GT1 category, which some said was dead at the start of the year, to have a fantastic grid of between 16 and 18 cars. I also want to thank Hartmut Beyer who put together a fantastic event in Bucharest. This is what GT racing needs. We have the Royal Automobile Club Tourist Trophy, the Total 24 Hours of Spa, now we have the Bucharest Street Circuit Challenge. When the GT Championship has 10 events like these, then we will have one of the best series in the world.

My congratulations to AF Corse Motorola, congratulations to Vitaphone Racing Team, you have put together two amazing teams, you deserve your victory, and I have no doubts that you will be back to defend your title. The 2008 season is looking very strong. I am sure we will have more cars. Don't listen to any rumours. GT1 will be as strong, if not stronger, than this year, with certainly the return of a number of Saleens. GT2 should be a lot stronger, as I think Porsche are fed up of seeing Ferrari win two years in a row, so they are going to put a big effort and we will have a fantastic competition. Group 2 is looking better with probably some Moslers joining the Vertigo, so it is looking good.”

Dirk Müller : “I am very happy to be here with Toni and AF Corse Motorola, together with Ferrari and Michelin. Our second sister car was very competitive and came close to winning the Championship. I am very happy to be back in GT competition, and to have won the Championship in my first year.”

Toni Vilander : “It was a really exciting year, we were obviously aiming for the victory since the beginning. I didn't know Dirk before this year, but I knew the team from the end of 2006. Everything went really well, we won 6 races, we had some bad luck during the season, but in the end we did what we wanted to do. It was a great year and I think I will remember it for a long time.”

Thomas Biagi : “I have to say, all the other cars were with two drivers but I feel a bit alone because Michael Bartels is not up here with me. He told me that I was not to say anything, but this is what I think. He did 8 races with me, missing two races for some health problems, but he did more effort than before from the pit wall to help me to win this Championship. So I want to dedicate this win to him. I would like to try to win again with him next year. This was my third year with Vitaphone Racing, for me it was a dream to race beside him. He has taught me a lot as a driver and as a person. I would like to thank him, Vitaphone and Michelin.”



Bas Leinders and Marc van der Straeten, representing Renaud Kuppens, leading G2 drivers of 2007



The top three crews in GT2 : Müller/Vilander, Ortelli/Bruni and Malucelli/Collard (absent)



The GT2 Champions collect their prize



The top GT1 drivers : Biagi, Wendlinger/Sharp and Hezemans/Deletraz (absent)



GT1 Champion Thomas Biagi

FIA GT3 EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP “A REAL SUCCESS STORY !”



Winners of the GT3 Manufacturers Cups



The top three GT3 teams : Von Gartzten, representing Martini Callaway Racing, Loris Kessel for Kessel Racing and Oscar Berselli for BMS Scuderia Italia.



The top six in GT3 !



Henri Moser receives his award from Gerard Bombléd of Michelin



The GT4 presentation, with Olivier Gomez and Martin Bartek representing Eric de Doncker

The results of the 2007 FIA GT3 European Championship were made final on December 10th further to the post-race scrutineering of the Kessel Ferrari 430 GT3 and the Martini Callaway Racing Corvette Z06.

Stephane Ratel :

“As you all know, the FIA GT3 European Championship is **the** success story in GT racing, and the GT3 in general is moving everywhere, with 44 entries in the first year, 50 this year, and already 11 models represented. Some beginnings were not easy, we didn't see the Jaguar or the Mustang much, and the Morgan still has some work to do. But as for next year, the big news is that Porsche is producing a specially designed and built FIA GT3 car, and another very good announcement from Alpina is that they will come with a BMW Alpina 6 series. When everybody will be ready, we will have 12 different models, and I don't know where the grid is going to stop : 50, 60 – we will be at full capacity. GT3 is becoming the benchmark for national championships, and people such as Loris Kessel and Hans Reiter have more order than they can fill, with requests from Australia, South America, and we have people and promoters around the world who want to start GT3 Championships.”

Henri Moser :

“I was really not expecting to win this Championship at all. We went to Silverstone, not knowing at all where we would be. But we won the first two races, which was something really amazing. Winning this Championship is something really special, and I would like to thank Stephane Ratel for organising it, and for allowing me to go further in GT racing. I would also like to thank Loris Kessel and his team, as without his fantastic car it would have been impossible to win the Championship, and also Gilles Vannelet, who won the Championship with me, and I'd like to thank him particularly for the last race in Dubai.”

Gérard Bombléd of Michelin then presented Moser with his award as winner of the fund set up by SRO, Citation and Michelin. This rewards the faster of the GT3 Champions, and provides a fund of 150,000 euros and 40 sets of Michelin tyres to allow the driver to be promoted to the GT1 or GT2 category of the FIA GT Championship.

GT4 EUROPEAN CUP “ON THE WAY UP !”

The first season of the GT4 European Cup showed that the diverse grid, with up to seven different makes competing, could provide extremely close, action-packed racing. This entry-level category of GT racing is set to expand in 2008, with an additional class , GT Light, being added to cater for cars which have lower production numbers, such as the Ginetta G50, already seen in action this year.

Olivier Gomez collected his trophy for second-place in the 2007 season, while Martin Bartek, representing the Ford GT programme in Europe, collected the Cup winner's trophy on behalf of Eric de Doncker.

GT CHAMPIONS AT THE FIA PRIZE-GIVING GALA



The 2007 Champions in the FIA GT and FIA GT3 European Championships received their awards from the FIA on December 7th, in a glittering celebration of motorsport at the Sporting d'Été in Monaco. On arrival, the guests were greeted by the Vita-phone Maserati MC 12, which was on display just off the red carpet.

Thomas Biagi, Mr Matthias Quinger of Vitaphone and Mr Maurizio Leschiutta of Maserati collected the trophies for the GT1 Winning Driver, GT1 Winning Team and GT1 Manufacturers Cup respectively.

In GT2, Dirk Müller and Toni Vilander collected trophies for Winning Drivers, Mr Amato Ferrari collected the Teams trophy for AF Corse Motorola, and Mr Antonello Coletta received the GT2 Manufacturers Cup.

In GT3, Henri Moser and Gilles Vannelet were celebrated as the winning drivers.



WORLD MOTOR SPORT COUNCIL UPDATES

The World Motor Sport Council sat in Monaco on December 7th. Among other questions, two date changes were approved for the FIA GT and GT3 European Championships. The Bucharest round will now be held a week earlier, on August 24th 2008. The Nogaro round of both the GT and GT3 Championships will now be a week later, on October 5th.

Bullet points for the draft proposed Homologation and Technical guidelines for the 2010 FIA GT Regulations, drafted in collaboration with the ACO and to be applied in the FIA and ACO Championships and Series, were also approved. These specified the homologation guidelines, as well as the technical regulation guidelines for GT1 and GT2, as outlined in the previous SRO press release in October.

This document also outlined the timetable of the eligibility of the 2010 cars, which will be defined by the sporting regulations of each series. Nevertheless, the FIA and ACO agree on the need to run the new cars along the old ones to give manufacturers and tuners enough time to finalise the development and freeze the homologation forms.

In 2009, the 2010 cars would be eligible in GT1 and GT2 alongside the older cars frozen in their 2008 definition and whose performances will be balanced with those of the 2009 cars (ride height with the addition of skid blocks, weight ballast and possibly restrictors) 2010 cars will be accepted with a temporary homologation form. This form will be modified at the manufacturer's request to adjust the performance and solve the reliability issues it is likely to face in the first year.

In 2010, the 2010 GT1 cars will replace the older cars. 2010 GT2 cars will continue to run alongside older cars. By 2011, the 2010 GT cars will be the only ones eligible in both categories in the FIA and ACO Championships and Series.

FIA GT CALENDAR

1. 20th April Silverstone (GBR)
2. 18th May Monza (ITA)
3. 21st June Adria (ITA)
4. 6th July Oschersleben GER)
5. 3rd August Total 24 Hours of Spa (BEL)
6. 24th August Bucharest (ROM)
7. 14th Sept. Brno (CZE)
8. 5th October Nogaro (FRA)
9. 19th October Zolder (BEL)
10. 23rd Nov. San Luis (ARG) *

* subject to the homologation of the circuit

FIA GT3 CALENDAR

1. 19th/ 20th April Silverstone (GBR)
2. 17th/18th May Monza (ITA)
3. 5th / 6th July Oschersleben(GER)
4. 13th/14th Sept. Brno (CZE)
5. 4th/5th October Nogaro (FRA)
6. 14th/15th Nov Dubai (UAE)

KARL WENDLINGER CHOSEN AS WINNER OF 2007 'DRIVER PERFORMANCE OF THE YEAR'

Every year, SRO asks the journalists covering the FIA GT Championship to elect the winner of the 'driver performance of the year'. Past winners have included Andrea Bertolini, Pedro Lamy and Jarek Janis. The finalists in 2007 were Jean-Denis Deletraz, who had a great season in the Carsport Holland Corvette, Mike Hezemans, who celebrated his 11th pole and 100th race, GT2 newcomers Dirk Müller and Gianmaria Bruni, and Vitaphone rookie Christian Montanari.

However, the winner was Jetalliance driver Karl Wendlinger of Austria. The 1999 FIA GT Champion had an excellent season, claiming three pole positions with his Aston Martin DBR9, and converting them all to race wins with team-mate Ryan Sharp. Wendlinger, also elected Driver of the Year by the Austrian Motorsport Federation, and as leading FIA GT driver by British magazine Autosport, received a watch presented by SRO Chairman Stephane Ratel. "It's known that all good things come in threes", Wendlinger commented. "But seriously, I'm really very pleased about these awards. The perfect closure to a very nice and successful season."



BIAGI AND BERTOLINI THRILL THE CROWDS IN BOLOGNA



Maserati chose the Motorshow to celebrate its success in the FIA GT season. At the MC12 Show, the undoubted star was the Trident's GT model. On Friday, Andrea Bertolini wowed the spectators with a display in the racing version of the MC12. During the exhibition, four lucky fans enjoyed a ride in the passenger seat of the world's most exclusive supercar. This was followed up with a show on Saturday when the 2006 FIA GT title holder together with the newly-crowned 2007 champion, Thomas Biagi, put on a fantastic show at the wheel of the MC12 GT1 he used in the FIA GT. The two drivers carved out a series of 'donuts' and threw gadgets into the crowd. Bertolini and Biagi whipped the audience into a frenzy as they enjoyed a well-

deserved standing ovation. Thomas Biagi looked back on the event with enthusiasm: "We have raced on some of the best tracks in the world but the atmosphere at the Motor Show is always special. I am not just saying this as someone who is from Bologna as you can see it from the passion of the fans. We felt their joy and, even though we were not racing, it was a buzz. The Motor Show is unique!" Andrea Bertolini shared this opinion: "It was great! It has been an intense and satisfying year and could not have ended on a better note than at the Motor Show with its amazing crowds. The stands packed out as soon as we appeared in the MC12s."

WALTER LECHNER READY TO RACE AGAIN !

It has been announced that Walter Lecher Jr is soon to resume his racing career ! Walter, younger brother of Jetalliance driver Robert Lechner, was an extremely successful FIA GT driver, claiming six pole positions in a Saleen S7R in 2003 and 2004. However, just before the start of the 2005 season, when he was supposed to drive with his brother for Konrad Motorsport, he was diagnosed with leukemia.

Now fully recovered, Walter will soon be back behind the wheel. He will drive for his father's team during the 24 Hours of Dubai. "This is a dream come true," the 26-year-old said. "the thought of driving again gave me strength during the many difficult stages of my illness."

We hope to see Walter back in the FIA GT as soon as possible !



Walter with his brother Robert and father Walter

BMS SCUDERIA ITALIA TO ENTER TWO FERRARI 430 CARS IN GT2

BMS Scuderia Italia has announced that, in partnership with Pirelli, the team will take part in the GT2 category of the 2008 FIA GT Championship with two 2008 model Ferrari 430 GT2 cars.

The driver crews will be named in January, when the first car, with which the team will start its test programme, will be delivered.

BMS Scuderia Italia won the FIA GT Championship in both 2003 and 2004 with a Ferrari 550 Maranello. In recent years, it has entered two Aston Martin DBR9 cars, claiming numerous podiums. In 2007, the team also entered a Porsche 997 GT3 RSR in the GT2 category, claiming victory in the Total 24 Hours of Spa and finishing second in the Teams category overall.

In their press release, BMS thanked Porsche Motorsport AG for their profitable cooperation which allowed them to claim these important sporting results.



SRO VISITS ARGENTINA IN PREPARATION FOR 2008

SRO Event Manager Patricia Kiefer and SRO Chairman Stephane Ratel have just returned from an extremely successful trip to Argentina, where the circuit of Potrero de los Funes is preparing to welcome the FIA GT Championship in November 2008. Accompanied by Eduardo Ramirez and Diego Mesa, both representing the Automovil Club Argentino, the SRO representatives arrived at San Luis airport on Tuesday this week, where they were welcomed by Carlos Bassi, representing the Government of San Luis, in charge of the road programmes, and Alfredo Cortez, the construction engineer. They visited the PSL concrete factory, where the bridges for the track are being built, which will be used in certain sections of the track, especially those going up the mountain road and over the lake.



Work is progressing well on the circuit. The paddock area has already been cleared, while the surfacing and a third of the buildings (control tower including media centre, drivers briefing room, offices, race control and the medical centre) should be ready by March 1st, 2008. Thirty pit tents, each 7m by 18m, will be available for the FIA GT Championship cars. The pit lane will be 15m wide.

Other major works are being done in the section after the pit straight in order to enlarge the road, over the river.

A preliminary inspection by the FIA was held at the beginning of December, which was positive. Some slight changes have been done in order to find a couple of braking and overtaking points and improve safety in one section crossing the village. In order to allow access from San Luis, a security road will be built next to the track to take the teams, media, officials and VIPs to the paddock. The team members staying at the Hotel Potrero de los Funes will cross the lake to the paddock by boat.



On Thursday 20th December, a press conference was held at the Automovil Club Argentino in Buenos Aires with Stephane and Carlos Garcia Remohi, the President of the Sporting Commission of the ACA. Stephane said : "The track is beautiful, very challenging, which in terms of length and variety of levels, is similar to Spa. Like Spa, it could become a classic in the season ! The FIA GT Championship has been a pioneer in various countries, like China, the United Arab Emirates and Romania. After going to countries where the motorsport culture was to be created, we wanted to add to our calendar countries with a true motorsport culture, which is the case for Argentina".

In order to promote the event, the Automovil Club Argentino is working on the entry of an Argentinian team in the 2008 FIA GT Championship.

CR SCUDERIA TO LAUNCH AT AUTOSPORT SHOW

2008 will see a new team in the GT2 category of the FIA GT Championship :

CR Scuderia. It will enter two Ferrari 430 GT2 cars, as well as racing in the British GT Championship and the Formula Renault UK Championship.

The team is the brainchild of FIA GT regular Chris Niarchos, Chairman of the Cobra Group. As the Team Principal of CRS, Chris has built a strong team around him to take on the formidable challenge of entering three competitive championships. The Team Director at CRS is Andrew Kirkaldy, a former winner of the McLaren Autosport BRDC Young Driver of the Year Award, who has also run his own successful race team. Malcolm Swetnam is the CRS Team Manager and with 20 years of experience with manufacturers such as Ferrari, Ford, Honda and Seat.



In the FIA GT Championship, the first car will be driven by Andrew Kirkaldy - who claimed his 10th pole position in less than two seasons at Oschersleben this year - and the current Le Mans Series GT2 Champion, Rob Bell, creating what could turn out to be an unbeatable partnership. In the sister car Chris Niarchos and Tim Mullen will recreate the successful partnership that brought them many race wins and the title victory in the 2006 British GT Championship.

The team took delivery of the world's first 2008-specification GT2 Ferrari 430 this week, when they travelled to Fiorano in Italy for a private test with Andrew Kirkaldy on driving duty for the shakedown. "The car felt incredibly good," said Kirkaldy. "Considering the (freezing) conditions the pace was impressive and it ran faultlessly. The new car is a clear step up from this year so I'm excited about our prospects for 2008. Michelotto have pulled out all the stops to deliver the car to us before Christmas; this was important to us as it gives us that extra bit of time to prepare for our 2008 season, so thanks to Cristiano (Michelotto) and his team."

The first opportunity to see the new livery will be at the Autosport show, at the NEC in Birmingham, on January 10th at 12:30. ITV's Ted Kravitz will be chatting to Team Principal, Chris Niarchos, before introducing the team's FIA GT driver line-up. It will also be the first chance to see a 2008-spec GT2 Ferrari 430.

All visitors to Autosport International are welcome to attend. The event will be repeated on Saturday January 12th for the general public.