

WELCOME RACING

PETER BROCK
does team introductions
for the American
Le Mans Series
2007 season

After several seasons of almost predictable outcomes in most of the ALMS's four classes, the 2007 racing season is suddenly less easy to divine. While Audi's past domination of the premier LMP1 class appears that it might continue almost unopposed, with its flawless works' team of revolutionary diesel-powered R10s, the supposedly slower, less dramatic LMP2 class, originally intended for privateer teams with prototypes up to 3 liters displacement, unexpectedly promises to be the proverbial wrench in Audi's carefully engineered plans to again dominate the series.

In a beautifully orchestrated but rather unspectacular American racing series modeled after the rules for the famed 24 of Le Mans, the eight year old American Le Mans Series has almost been devoid of "name" teams and drivers in any of its four classes. But that seems to be changing too.

At the tail end of the 2005 season, the combined entry of Porsche Motorsports and the famed Roger Penske organization, with a pair of yellow, DHL-sponsored, Porsche RS prototypes, was perhaps all the rudderless racing world needed to know about where the most interesting competition would occur in the near future. Penske's astute decision to join the ALMS focused the racing world's attention on the potential of the American series, and other prominent teams took notice. Most surprising about the whole endeavor was that Porsche would build cars for LMP2 instead of going for the overall win with a larger engined P1 racer. Then when the new RSs suddenly showed P1-speed potential in their first outing in the final race of the '05 season at Laguna Seca, it appeared that Porsche and Penske knew exactly what they were doing.

Racing by its very nature tends to be cyclical due to the fact that a series becomes "hot" whenever the factories decide to compete there. Their confidence in the viability of the marketing value of a series is everything. As long as they stay in the game and more than a single team has a chance of controlling the spotlight, the series becomes the focus of public attention. Penske's entry did that. It's where the major factories decide to place their emphasis that determines how long the cycle will last and ALMS is just now entering a very competitive cycle, with factory support in several classes.

It costs millions to develop and race a factory team, so the marketing strategy for any astute manufacturer is to select a series they can dominate, or at least race in competitively, to best recoup their promotional investment. If two or more teams feel they have a serious chance to win a class title, out-

side sponsors are more easily attracted to assist in the effort.

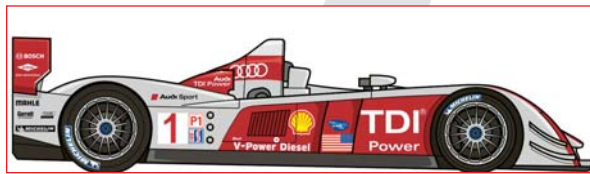
On the negative side, Audi's phenomenal success in the ALMS over the past seven years has been so overwhelming that factory opposition has been almost non-existent. Even GM's nicely organized three-year effort in '00-'02, with their IRL-based Northstar-engined Cadillac protos, would have been seriously competitive had the Audi R8s not been so dominant with its advantage of the direct-injected V-8s. The Auto Club de l'Ouest's efforts to reign in the Audi's speed at Le Mans, to make the Cadillacs competitive, didn't help against Audi's superior, direct-injected fuel mileage, and essentially put "paid" to the upstart Cadillac program even before it could get rolling. Since then no factory has been willing to challenge the mighty German team.

When Penske's DHL team arrived at Laguna Seca with the first RS, it appeared that Porsche's plan was to dominate P2 as Audi had P1, which would essentially scare off any potential privateer contenders. But then it became obvious that the new Porsches had the potential to run with the Audis. Conversations with the Porsche engineers cooled some of that enthusiasm when they explained that their cars could be equally fast by themselves on the track, but not to expect them to be able to pass the torque-superior Audis one on one. Still, Penske's two-car effort was one of the best things in years to elevate the series' potential. The second shoe dropped last season when Acura announced a long term plan to enter the ALMS with three P2 cars and eventual plans to run at Le Mans with a P1 racer! Then Mazda came in too, with the announcement that it was exchanging its rotary-engined car program in favor of an AER-developed piston-engined racer that would also run in P2 with drivers Jamie Bach, Ben Devlin and Rafael Mattos.

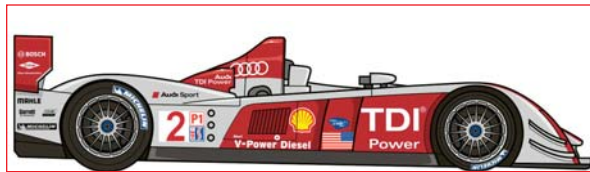
Making matters even more appealing in LMP2, Rob Dyson, long one of ALMS's major privateer teams, announced he was selling both of his Lola/AER-engined P1 cars in favor of two new '07 Porsche RSs! In a few short weeks the ALMS could boast not just the single Penske two-car team, with factory drivers Sascha Maassen, Ryan Briscoe, Timo Bernard, and Romain Dumas, but also that Dyson was coming in with its twin RS effort driven by veterans Andy Wallace, Butch Leitzinger, Guy Smith and Chris Dyson. Even better is the fact that two of Acura's open-wheel "name" teams, with considerable Honda experience, have elected to shift much of those team's energy to the ALMS' expanding cycle of public awareness. The Andretti-Green Acura team, with drivers Dario Franchitti, Bryan Herta, Danica Patrick and Tony Kanaan, all highly visible Indy racers, should add considerable luster to the ALMS' starting grid. Lowe's sponsorship for the all-Mexican Acura team of Adrian Fernandez, Luis Diaz and David Martinez portends a huge Latin following. Duncan Dayton's Highcroft Racing organization will run a Courage/Acura chassis driven by David Brabham and Stefan Johansson, with Dayton sitting in for longer events.

GT1 has been Corvette Racing's personal playground in the ALMS for some six years now. So the word that longtime nemesis Aston-Martin would not be contesting the ALMS'

**AUDI SPORT
NORTH AMERICA**
Auburn Hills, MI US
Audi R10 TDI (LMP1)
Car No. 1: Frank Biela,
Allan McNish
Car No 2: Emanuele Pirro,
Marco Werner



Additional team members:
Rinaldo Capello, Tom Kristensen,
JJ Lehto



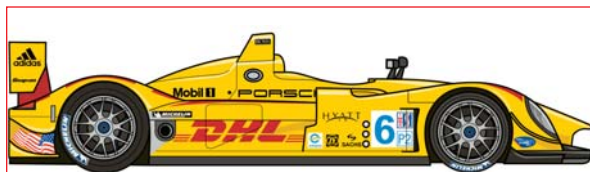
AUTOCON MOTORSPORTS
Escondido, CA US
Lola EX257-AER (LMP1)
Michael Lewis, Chris McMurry,
Bryan Willman



INTERSPORT RACING
Dublin, OH US
Creation CA06H-Judd (LMP1)
Richard Berry, Clint Field,
Jon Field, Liz Halliday



PENSKE RACING
 Mooresville, NC US
Porsche RS Spyder (LMP2)
Car No. 6: Sascha Maassen,
Ryan Briscoe
Car No. 7: Romain Dumas, Timo
Bernhard,



Additional team members:
Lucas Luhr,



B-K MOTORSPORTS
Saukville, WI US
Lola B07/40-Mazda (LMP2)
Jaime Bach, Ben Devlin,
Rafael Matos



ILLUSTRATIONS BY PAUL LAGUETTE



HIGHCROFT RACING
Danbury, CT US
Courage LC75-Acura (LMP2)
Duncan Dayton, David Brabham,
Stefan Johansson



**LOWE'S FERNANDEZ
RACING**
Indianapolis, IN US
Lola B05/40-Acura (LMP2)
Luis Diaz, Adrian Fernandez



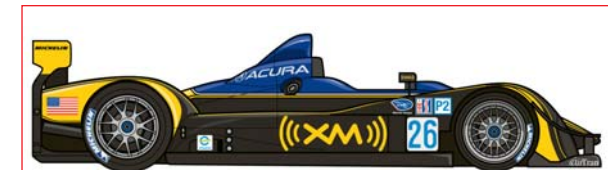
DYSON RACING
Poughkeepsie, NY US
Porsche RS Spyder (LMP2)
Car No. 16: Andy Wallace,
Butch Leitzinger
Car No. 20: Chris Dyson,
Guy Smith



VAN DER STEUR RACING
Havre de Grace, MD US
Radical SR9-AER (LMP2)
Gunnar van der Steur,
Adam Pecorari, Bill Binnie



ANDRETTI GREEN RACING
Indianapolis, IN US
Courage LC75-Acura (LMP2)
Marco Andretti, Bryan Herta,
plus others TBA



HORAG RACING
Sulgen, CH
Lola R05/40-Judd (LMP2)
Fredy Lienhard,
Didier Theys,
Eric van de Poele



CORVETTE RACING
New Hudson, MI US
Corvette C6.R (GT1)
Car No. 3: Johnny O'Connell,
Jan Magnussen, Ron Fellows
Car No. 4: Olivier Beretta,
Oliver Gavin, Max Papis



TEAM MODENA
Warwickshire, UK
Aston Martin DBR9 (GT1)
Antonio Garcia, Liz Halliday,
Darren Turner