

Formula BMW Americas



Subject Formula BMW Americas Prepared To Open 2009 Racing Season
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The preseason will find itself fading in the rear view mirror when the Formula BMW Americas Championship heads south of the border for the 2009 season opener this week, as the next generation of open-wheel drivers begin their quest for stardom.

The Formula BMW Americas Championship will contest the first two rounds of its 14-race series this weekend at the 2.09-mile (3.363km) Autodromo Miguel E. Abed in Puebla, Mexico, as drivers from eight different countries attack the challenging 16-turn road course.

With an expanded race field over 2008, the Formula BMW Americas Championship features four returning drivers from '08, with ten rookies joining the battle in replacing 2008 Formula BMW World Final winner Alexander Rossi as series champion.

"I'm really looking forward to Puebla," said 2008 Rookie Champion Gianmarco Raimondo. "The first race will be interesting because it will let the rookies know what the competition is like and how these cars are like to race. I've learned a little about each driver over testing and realized it's not going to be easy. I feel the team has developed the car well and we are looking confident heading into the season. I'm just hoping for a reliable car and to get the most out of the car every weekend. If we can accomplish that task, it should be a great season."

Raimondo and his paddockmates each completed four days of open testing leading into the season opener, with Autotecnica, Jensen Motorsport, Robali Motorsport, Eruo Junior Team and Team Apex looking for a way to unseat 2008 Team Champion EuroInternational. The defending team title winners have been strong in preseason testing and appear to show no signs of slowing to let anyone catch up.

"After the official testing at Palm Beach, and Carolina, I am expecting great results from myself as a driver and from the team," said EuroInternational's Gabby Chaves. "The team has been performing very strong lately and if we keep this up, I have no doubts we have a great chance at the championship. The series has put on a good schedule for teams and drivers, and I am very proud to be a part of the 2009 FBMW Americas championship!"

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The rookies are battling for their own championship-within-a-championship, with a chance to earn a Junior Scholarship for 2010 available for the top first-year driver. Ten drivers will hope to make that next step in 2009, including Team Apex driver James Kovacic, who joins many of his fellow rookies in looking to turn a strong karting record into a career in open-wheel racing.

"The opening races of the season in Puebla should be a good experience and a level playing field for most teams and drivers alike," Kovacic reported. "It will be very competitive, but I have faith that my team and I can put together a strong performance and be up the front of the field aiming for victories."

In addition, the series announced that it has rescheduled a proposed event to run in conjunction with the Formula 1 event in Brazil, moving that tentatively-scheduled event to Virginia International Raceway. The two-race event weekend will take place April 24-26 in conjunction with the Grand-AM Rolex Sports Car Series.

"While competing with Formula 1 has been one of our goals, the fact that F1 pulled both of its North American races off of the schedule made it a very costly venture for us to do during this season," Rahal explained. "Our teams have voiced concerns over the funding and time needed to transport their operations to Brazil and we needed to do what was best for the long-term health of our teams."

The official completion of the 2009 schedule presents the Formula BMW Americas Championship field with 14 races over six race weekends, featuring the opportunities to run at many of the top road-racing circuits in the United States, Mexico and Canada. The series gets underway next week in Puebla, Mexico March 21 and 22. Fans can follow all of the results via the series' official website www.formulabmwamericas.com.

2009 Formula BMW Americas Schedule

Date	Country	Circuit	Rounds
Mar. 21-22	Mexico	Autodromo Miguel E. Abed	1-2
Apr. 24-26	USA	Virginia Int'l Raceway	3-4
May 15-17	USA	Miller Motorsports Park	5-7
July 17-18	USA	Lime Rock Park	8-9
Aug. 14-16	USA	Road America	10-12
Aug. 28-30	Canada	Mosport Int'l Raceway	13-14

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Background:

Formula BMW is the world's leading entry-level series in formula racing. In 2009 the three Formula BMW series – Formula BMW Europe, Formula BMW Pacific and Formula BMW Americas – will be held in the key motor sport markets of Europe, pan-Asia and the Americas. Formula BMW will be regularly held on the undercard of Formula One. The series gives young racing talents the chance to enter professional motor sport in a safe racing car – the Formula BMW FB02.

The FB02 has been in use since the 2002 season. It is powered by a 140 hp BMW engine that takes it to a top speed of up to 140 mph. It ranks among the safest vehicles in its category and exceeds the FIA safety regulations that govern this class of car. Innovations such as the FORS (Formula Rescue Seat) were developed by BMW Motorsport specifically for Formula BMW. Following Formula One, Formula BMW was the first single-seater series outside the US in which the HANS system was made mandatory.

Formula BMW drivers have the opportunity to take part in an Education and Coaching Program that runs parallel with the racing season. The program includes driver coaching at the races by professional race drivers, attending a Formula One test, fitness courses, tuition in driving technique and strategy, as well as seminars on sponsoring and sport management.

Among the 20 drivers expected to compete this season in Formula One, there are now five Formula BMW graduates: Nico Rosberg, Adrian Sutil, Sebastian Vettel, Sebastián Buemi and Timo Glock.

Note to editors:

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