



Formula BMW Americas appoints new management partner.

Munich, December 23, 2008. Beginning on January 1st, 2009, Rahal Letterman Racing will assume the management of Formula BMW Americas. The move means that a single team will both partner with BMW of North America in the American Le Mans Series – with its two BMW M3 racers – and oversee the Formula BMW series in America. Most of the management functions and key individuals in the 2008 organizational structure shall remain in place.

“We are pleased to have found in Rahal Letterman Racing a professional, well integrated partner with great experience in US motor sport,” commented BMW Motorsport Director Mario Theissen. “The Formula BMW races held in support of the ALMS will generate synergy effects in terms of PR, marketing and logistics. Lapwing Management already set the bar high last year as far as the organization of the series is concerned, and we thank them warmly for their work. The concept is also proving a success from a sporting perspective, as demonstrated not least by Alexander Rossi. The US driver recently backed up his Formula BMW Americas title triumph with victory in the Formula BMW World Final. We are hoping that the expansion of the race calendar into Mexico as part of the World Touring Car Championship event there will further increase interest from all the Americas in the line-up for 2009.”

Rahal Letterman Racing co-owner and US racing legend Bobby Rahal said: “Formula BMW has long produced one of the finest entry-level open-wheel racing series in the world, and Rahal Letterman Racing is proud and excited about forging this new partnership with the series. We saw first-hand when my son Graham competed in the series that Formula BMW offers the complete package for the young driver, providing an affordable series with a level playing field that still exposes the drivers and teams to high-profile events and challenging circuits. When you add those benefits to the proven stewardship and support of BMW Motorsport, Formula BMW is easily the best choice for the young drivers that aspire to the higher levels of the sport.”

The victory of Rossi in this year’s Formula BMW World Final in Mexico City represents the first time in the history of Formula BMW that a Formula BMW Americas champion has also won the annual showpiece of the Formula BMW season. Rossi’s success earned him a test in a BMW Sauber F1 Team car. A season review of the 2008 Formula BMW Americas championship is scheduled to be broadcast on Speed TV on Dec. 28th, 6:00 pm ET.

2009 Formula BMW Americas schedule:

TBA

20 th -22 nd March	Puebla (MX, WTCC)
15 th -17 th May	Miller Motorsports Park (US, ALMS)
17 th -18 th July	Lime Rock Park (US, ALMS)
14 th -16 th August	Road America (US, ALMS)
28 th -30 th August	Mosport International Raceway (CN, ALMS)
16 th -18 th October	Brazilian Grand Prix (BR, F1)



Background:

Formula BMW is the world's leading entry-level series in formula racing. In 2008 the three Formula BMW series – Formula BMW Europe, Formula BMW Pacific and Formula BMW Americas – were held in the key motor sport markets of Europe, pan-Asia and North and South America. The end of the year saw the Formula BMW World Final staged for the fourth time, this time at Mexico City's Autódromo Hermanos Rodríguez from 5th–7th December. The winner, Alexander Rossi, has been rewarded with a test for the BMW Sauber F1 Team. Formula BMW was held on the undercard of Formula One on 12 occasions in 2008. 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 230 km/h. 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 racing drivers, attendance at a Formula One test, fitness courses, tuition in driving technique and strategy, as well as seminars on sponsoring and sport management.

Four Formula BMW graduates – Nico Rosberg, Adrian Sutil, Sebastian Vettel and Timo Glock – were among the 20 drivers lining up in Formula One in 2008. Test and reserve drivers Christian Klien, Sébastien Buemi and Nicolas Hülkenberg added three more to the tally.

In the words of BMW Motorsport Director Mario Theissen: "With our worldwide Formula BMW concept, we offer drivers and teams a platform which, in this format, is unprecedented in a junior series and which allows them to benefit from our Formula One involvement. Through Formula BMW the drivers are equipped with the tools they need to assert themselves successfully in the world of professional motor racing."

Note to editors:

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