

Formula BMW Americas



Date February 10, 2009
Subject **Formula BMW Americas Holds First Official Test of 2009 Season**

The sixth season of open-wheel racing's most complete driver development series will kick off preparation for 2009 competition next week as the Formula BMW Americas Championship holds its first official test at Florida's Palm Beach International Raceway.

The growing roster of drivers from North, Central and South America that hope to compete in the 2009 Formula BMW Americas Championship will take to the 2.034-mile road course on February 16-17 in their identically-prepared Formula BMW FB02 race cars, hoping to follow in the footsteps of former Formula BMW Americas champion and World Final winner Alexander Rossi, as well as Formula 1 driver and Grand Prix Winner Sebastian Vettel and Indy Car race winner Graham Rahal.

Interest in the Formula BMW Americas Championship has continued to grow over the winter and a contingent of 15 drivers is expected to take part in the year's first test sessions. Last year's Formula BMW Americas Rookie champion Gianmarco Raimondo will return for a renewed assault on the title with Team Autotecnica, battling alongside established outfits such as Atlantic Racing Team, three-time team champion Eurointernational, Jensen Motorsport, and Team Apex, as well as new squads Andersen Racing, OS Racing and Robali Motorsports.

The 2009 season also begins a new partnership with Rahal Letterman Ventures, as the championship-winning race team assumes the stewardship of the Formula BMW Americas Championship. Headed by three-time Indy Car champion Bobby Rahal and late-night television icon David Letterman, the team will use its vast expertise to provide a quality racing experience for the drivers and teams of the Formula BMW Americas Championship.

"We are eagerly awaiting the opportunity to get out to the first test of the year and see the next generation of open-wheel drivers getting ready for the season," said Rahal. "This will be an exciting season for us at Rahal Letterman Ventures and we anticipate a great start with this opening round of testing."

Next week's test will be followed by the Introductory Test at Carolina Motorsports Park on March 2 and 3. An additional six official testing days are scheduled during the season. The 2009 Formula BMW Americas Championship will open with Rounds 1 and 2 at Puebla, Mexico on March 20 - 22.

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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 FBO2.

The FBO2 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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