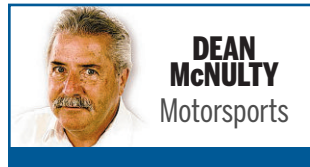


First step for 'vette



**DEAN
McNULTY**
Motorsports

After dominating the GT1 class in American LeMans Series (ALMS) for most of the past decade, Chevrolet's Corvette Racing decided to expand its horizon into the GT2 class where it will take on such sports car powerhouses as Ferrari, Porsche and BMW.

The newest C6.R is based on the recently introduced Corvette ZR1. That makes this generation of ALMS Corvettes more closely aligned to what you see in the showroom than any previous model. This is due to ALMS GT2 rules requiring the use of many production-based components, expanding the opportunities for the two-way transfer of technology between the race

track and the showroom.

Mark Kent, GM Racing manager, said it made sense to move the Corvette to GT2, where it will face more competition.

"The global movement toward a single GT class will allow us to compete head-to-head with more marketplace competitors while increasing both the production content of the Corvette C6.R and the relevance of racing to our customers," Kent said. "This is a step that positions Corvette for the future of production-based sports car racing worldwide, and a move that is perfectly aligned with GM's marketing and business objectives in racing."

The Corvette has been pretty much king of the road in sports car racing in the GTS and GT1 classes, winning 77 races and eight consecutive ALMS championships in the past decade.

"In our decade in GT1, our primary focus has been on



RICHARD PRINCE/GM RACING

racing victories and the validation of the Corvette as a world-class sports car," said Tadge Juechter, Corvette chief engineer. "As an authentic way to communicate to knowledgeable customers, nothing beats racing. As a cost-effective means to improve vehicle performance, nothing beats racing. These are the reasons racing is in Corvette's DNA.

"Behind the scenes, the race team and the production car

team have grown closer together, finding numerous ways to support each other and make both cars better," Juechter said. "Most automotive companies give lip service to claims like 'racing improves the breed' or 'race on Sunday, sell on Monday'. For team Corvette, it is a daily reality. It is now impossible to imagine one team without the other.

Getting the car right was a challenge, according to

Corvette Racing engineering director Doug Louth.

"Integrating a steel safety cage that meets GM Racing's stringent standards, as well as the strength and durability targets required in racing, is a challenge with an aluminum frame," Louth said. "Working in conjunction with the structure and chassis engineers in the Corvette production group, we designed, built and tested numerous examples before we finalized the configuration. We went through a similar process with the production Corvette group on the body design and aero components. It was truly a collaborative effort between the production engineers and the race team."

When the new C6.Rs get to Canada, race fans will see they are powered by 6.0-litre GM small-block V8s based on the 7.0-litre LS7-Rs that powered the GT1 versions.

GM says a 5.5-litre, production-based, GM small-block

V8 is currently under development and will be introduced at the start of the 2010 season. On a team that was pioneered and sent to victory lane by Toronto's Ron Fellows, the GT2 driving squad will include Johnny O'Connell and Jan Magnussen, who will share the No. 3 Compuware Corvette C6.R, and Oliver Gavin and Olivier Beretta, who will drive the No. 4 car. They will be joined by Antonio Garcia and Marcel Fässler at Petit Le Mans.

Team manager Gary Pratt looks forward to a full season in 2010 in the ALMS.

"We're not running for a championship this year, so we're looking at the upcoming races as preparation for 2010," Pratt said. "Our only testing from this point will be at the races, and we'll be doing it in the public eye. Everyone at Corvette Racing is looking forward to the challenge."

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A celebration of all things Mazda

Mazda drivers, racing fans and automobile enthusiasts of all kinds will want to set their GPS devices to Scarborough on Sunday, Aug. 23, as Scarboro Mazda hosts a celebration of motorsports for a fantastic cause.

The Mazda Performance Celebration at Scarboro Mazda will showcase drivers, cars and racing teams, all to benefit the Toronto Hospital for Sick Children. Among the drivers on hand will be Toronto's own David Ostella. A rising open-wheel racing star, Ostella is with the Woodbridge-based AIM Autosport

team and will be signing autographs, meeting fans and answering questions.

Dyson Racing Team will also be at the Mazda Performance Celebration, and will be showing off their ALMS (American Le Mans Series) Mazda MZR-R B09/86 Lola LMP2 Coupe. A premier sports car team in North America, Dyson has won 17 championships, 62 races and has captured 56 poles.

Also on hand will be rare cars, representatives from two of the top motorsport magazines, Canada's Inside Track and Grassroots Mo-



torsports from the U.S., local race teams Alan Balinsky Racing Team, Mazmark Auto, Can-Saf Auto Racing,

Mazdee's Performance, MOSI Race Dynamics, Union Autoclub and Nummelin Motorsports, and all

the local Mazda clubs.

All Mazda street, high-performance and race vehicles are also welcome to attend this celebration of motorsport. Admission is \$5, with all proceeds benefiting the Toronto Hospital for Sick Children.

"We've had pre-race events like this in the past and hundreds of Mazda and motorsports enthusiasts have showed up to be part of the excitement," says Scarboro Mazda general manager Alan Balinsky, himself a driver who races a second-generation Mazda RX-7. "With the

Star Mazda Championship and ALMS teams displaying their drivers, cars and transporters this year, we're expecting this to be a genuine 'event' for anyone who likes cars, and to raise money for a really great cause."

Festivities at the Mazda Performance Celebration will also include a free barbecue, prizes and the Mazdaspeed and Mazda Genuine Accessory "Sale to end all Sales." The event will run from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., rain or shine, at Scarboro Mazda, 2124 Lawrence Avenue East in Scarborough.

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