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BACKGROUND

AUSTIN DRIVER HELPS PUT THE “CHALLENGE” IN FERRARI

CIRCUIT OF THE AMERICAS HOSTS EAGER 35-DRIVER FIELD

AUSTIN, Texas (November, 16, 2012) - Drivers competing in the Ferrari Challenge support race this weekend at the Circuit of The Americas track have one of their own to thank -or perhaps, blame - for making the race course so, well ... challenging.

Austin-based Ranger Construction, which two years ago won the bid to do extensive excavation and site work at COTA, is owned by Mark McKenzie. That might just give him an advantage in his “other” job -- driving the #27 Ferrari Challenge car for Ferrari of Houston.

Given McKenzie’s detailed first-hand knowledge of the course, it’s not surprising he did well in Friday’s practice session, finishing a respectable fifth, with a time of 2 minutes 18.31 seconds - just two seconds behind Alex Popow, who led the 35-car field in his #2 Ferrari of Ft. Lauderdale car with the top practice time of 2.16.36.

“From the very moment you get your tires out on the track, its just one amazing driving experience after another,” claims Popow. “It’s not only America’s newest track, overall it just may be America’s best track. It’s a little green right now, though, so the grip isn’t that great, but it’s still a wonderful experience.”

Understandably, McKenzie is also quite pleased with how the track turned out. “I’d have to say that Tilke, the German engineering firm that designed the track did a beautiful job of working with the existing topography, amplifying and exploiting it to the best advantage” McKenzie said.

“And in my opinion they did a masterful, beautiful job in terms of producing a highly challenging, world-class race track. It’s simply a masterpiece - between the topography, the blend of turns, and the way the turns work together.

“They were able to select classic turns of other tracks around the work, and blend them together, including turns from Silverstone, Hockenheim and the new track in Turkey. I may be a bit biased since I helped build it, but in my view it’s absolutely perfect.”

RACE

ANASSIS WINS SECOND FERRARI CHALLENGE RACE

CANADIAN HOLDS OF AUSTIN DRIVER MARK MCKENZIE, GOING 2 FOR 2

AUSTIN, Texas (November, 16, 2012) - Veteran Ferrari Challenge driver Emmanuel Anassis was up to the challenge Sunday, once again besting the 34-car field of Ferraris from start to finish.

The main difference between Saturday’s and Sunday’s race was the name of the driver camped out on the Canadian’s bumper. Challenging Anassis’ #777 Ferrari of Quebec car on Sunday was Austin driver Mark McKenzie in his #27 car, rather than Alex Popow in his #2 Ferrari.

McKenzie, who finished in fourth place Saturday, was delighted to move up to second, holding off Popow, who dropped back into third in this race. Cooper McNeil moved up one slot from Saturday, finishing fourth instead of fifth.

"Naturally, every win is special," Anassis said, "but it's doubly special to win back-to-back Ferrari Challenge races here at Austin's COTA track since it's a brand new venue. And I have to say, the competition was pretty fierce. We had several pro drivers in this series this weekend, which makes it fiercely competitive. And for me it's extra special, because I not only got the wins for myself, but for Canada as well. So hearing the Canadian national anthem in Austin, Texas was very special.

McKenzie gave it everything he had in an effort to become COTA's first hometown winner, but came up short by only a few tenths of a second.

"I was really pleased to finish second place today's race," McKenzie said. "The only way it could have gone any better would have been if I'd been able to pull out a win. I was able to overtake a couple of drivers, and ran most of the race in second. I had a little bit of pressure from Popow, but was able to respond and keep him from overtaking me. And before the race ended I was closing the gap on Anassis."

While none of the winners in the weekend's races will score any points toward this year's championship, Ferrari of North America president Marco Mattiacci said all the drivers were eager to come here and help christen the track on its opening weekend.

"Our drivers were very enthusiastic when I made the proposal that we come here to Texas to participate along with the first F1 race here," he said. "We think that without a doubt it will develop a reputation as being one of the best five tracks in the world. It's a spectacular track, and will result in some pretty spectacular racing. The people who designed and built this track did a terrific job. And at this time of year the weather is fantastic -- perfect for racing."

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