

"Fresh From Florida" Racing Team To Compete In 2007 Grand-Am Koni Challenge Series, Brinson Announces

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[摘要] 12-14-2006. TALLAHASSEE - Florida Agriculture Commissioner Charles H. Brinson today announced that the "Fresh from Florida" program will sponsor a racing team and car during the 2007 Grand-Am Koni Challenge Series. The "Fresh from Florida" car will compete in 12 events, seven of which will be nationally televised on the Speed Channel.
[关键词] Fresh from Florida, Motorsports, Road Racing

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The "Fresh from Florida" car was unveiled today during the Performance Racing Industry show, the world's largest racing trade show featuring the latest in motorsports technology from 1,400 companies. The event, held in the 1 million square-foot Exhibit Hall at the Orlando Convention Center, draws thousands of racing enthusiasts and industry representatives.

"Motorsports is extremely popular in North America, and Grand Am racing is among the fastest growing segments of this sport," Brinson said. "Our sponsorship will help promote the 'Fresh from Florida' brand to sports enthusiasts around the world. In addition, the 'Fresh from Florida' car and driver will make at least six promotional appearances at grower products and their importance for a healthy lifestyle." The "Fresh from Florida" car, a BMW M3, will be handled by the Orlando-based Automatic Racing team, which joined the KONI Challenge Series in 2002 and had eight top-10 finishes in 2006. Jap Thomson is team owner and driver.

"Automatic Racing is very pleased to have 'Fresh from Florida' on our team," Thomson said. "Being based in Orlando, our partnership with 'Fresh from Florida' was very appropriate. Also, the series' first two races this year are right here in Florida, in Daytona and Homestead. We're looking forward to eating lots of fresh Florida fruits and vegetables."

The Grand American Road Racing Association, located in Daytona Beach, was established in 1999 and is world's fastest-growing motorsports organization. The Grand-Am Koni Challenge Racing Series, in which the "Fresh from Florida" car will race in 2007, is one of the fastest growing of all motorsports, posting huge gains in race attendance, television ratings and household viewers.

The "Fresh from Florida" car will be driven by Automatic Racing's Tom Long and David Russell. Long, 26, began his sports car career in 2001 and joined Automatic Racing this year. He earned two Pro Mazda Cup Championships (North American and Atlantic) in 2005. The 2006 season marked Long's debut in the Grand Am Cup earning two top-10 finishes in seven starts. Russell, 41, started racing in 1984. His first professional race was the 12 Hours of Sebring in 1989. In 2005, Russell earned a best finish of fourth at Daytona. In 2006 he earned five top-10 finishes in eight Grand Sport starts with a high finish of third. Russell works at the BMW Performance Center in Spartanburg, S.C., and instructs at the Skip Barber Racing School. He joined Automatic Racing in 2002.

In addition to competing in 12 Grand-Am Koni Challenge Series events, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services will also sponsor the Rolex 24 Hours of Daytona Race on January 27-28, 2007, and American Le Mans Series 12 Hours of Sebring on March 14-17, 2007.

"We're always utilizing new and innovative ways to increase the number of 'Fresh from Florida' consumer impressions," Brinson said. "Logo exposure helps shoppers recognize our agricultural products in retail stores, and that helps increase sales for our state's farmers." The racing sponsorship was funded by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services as part of the Florida Agricultural Promotional Campaign, an identification and promotional program designed to increase sales by helping consumers easily identify Florida-grown agricultural products at retail stores. The "Fresh from Florida" campaign also helps increase public awareness of the importance of Florida's agriculture industry, which has an estimated overall economic impact of more than \$87 billion annually. For more information about the "Fresh from Florida" program, visit www.FreshFromFlorida.com.

