

Acura makes history in 2007 with three cars in American Le Mans Series

Acura has made a historic decision in 2007.

That decision reflects Acura's position as a leader in automotive performance and technology.

The popular marque is going racing. And in a big way too.

Acura has entered the highly-competitive world of endurance sports car racing this year with its inaugural factory-backed effort in the American Le Mans Series.

Acura is partnered with three outstanding racing operations with experience in many facets of American motorsports. Three separate Acura-powered prototype sports cars will represent the auto manufacturer during the 12-race 2007 American Le Mans Series campaign.

"As Acura marks its 20-year anniversary, I can't think of a better racing series to showcase our technology and performance than the American Le Mans Series," said John Mendel, Executive Vice President of Auto Operations, American Honda Motor Co.

Honda Performance Development, Inc. (HPD), Honda's wholly-owned racing subsidiary, spearheads the Acura operation with a 3.4-liter, normally-aspirated V-8 engine that is being designed and developed at HPD's headquarters in Santa Clarita, CA.

The new Acura effort also marks the first time HPD has taken on multiple concurrent motorsports programs, with operations in both the American Le Mans Series and IndyCar Series.

Andretti Green Racing, Lowe's Fernandez Racing and Highcroft Racing Ltd., introduce Acura's entry into top-level sports car racing this season, pitting their Acura-powered LMP2 prototypes against full factory-supported efforts from Audi, Porsche and Mazda, and a variety of independent teams.

Andretti Green Racing and Highcroft Racing each field Acura ARX-01A machines while Fernandez enters an Acura-powered Lola B05/40 that will debut on March 17 in the famed 55th annual 12 Hours of Sebring. All three teams will compete on Michelin competition tires.

XM Satellite Radio is the primary sponsor of the Andretti Green Racing Acura ARX-01A, with veteran drivers Bryan Herta, Tony Kanaan and Dario and Marino Franchitti leading the team's first sports-car effort. Lowe's will be primary sponsor for the Acura Lola run by the Fernandez organization with Mexican stars Adrian

Fernandez and Luis Diaz at the controls. Former sports car champions David Brabham and Stefan Johansson will pilot the Highcroft entry, along with team owner Duncan Dayton.

“We’re thrilled to have teams the caliber of Highcroft, Fernandez and Andretti Green join us for our entry into American Le Mans Series competition,” said Robert Clarke, president of HPD. “Both the Andretti Green and Fernandez teams have been integral parts of our open-wheel racing effort, so it is entirely appropriate that we expand our relationships with them in our newest racing program.

“While new to our ‘family,’ Duncan Dayton’s Highcroft organization is impressive and perfectly fits our needs,” Clarke added. “A team that is young and with limited experience, but with aspirations of being a formidable team capable of competing against the best, Highcroft has expectations and goals that are in complete alignment with those of HPD.

“Acura faces a huge challenge with its entry into American Le Mans Series racing and we do not underestimate that challenge.”

Andretti Green Racing is the winningest team in the IndyCar Series with 24 race wins (all with Honda power), two drivers’ championships (2004 with Tony Kanaan and 2005 with Dan Wheldon) and one Indy 500 win (2005 with Wheldon).

Fernandez Racing won three IndyCar races with Honda power in 2004, with Fernandez driving to the Winner’s Circle in all three cases. Fernandez also won a Champ Car race with a Honda-powered car in Toronto in 1996.

Acura has previously competed in a professional road racing series—with the International Motor Sports Association (IMSA)—in the 1990s, providing sponsorship and limited support for Comptech Racing in the Camel Lights class. Comptech and lead driver Parker Johnstone won consecutive class championships in 1991-93 in an Acura-powered Spice chassis. Johnstone recorded 22 race wins in 38 starts, including a victory at the prestigious 12 Hours of Sebring in 1993. Acura also has supported the title-winning efforts of Peter Cunningham and RealTime Racing in SCCA World Challenge/Speed TV competition.