

# ALMS Aston for full ALMS

Pickett's team commits to British leviathan for US campaign

An Aston Martin Racing LMP1 car will race full time in the American Le Mans Series for the first time this season.

Greg Pickett's team, which won two ALMS races with a Porsche RS Spyder as CytoSport in 2010, will field one of the Lola-based Aston Martin Racing coupes that have competed at the Le Mans 24 Hours for the past two seasons. The factory-assisted car will run under Muscle Milk AMR banner in the nine-round series.

The California-based squad, which is being branded an official partner team by AMR, opted to run an Aston after Porsche decided not to extend the competitive life of the RS Spyder. Pickett said that running the Aston was "the best of all the possibilities" available to the team.

Klaus Graf, who will race the car with Pickett, said: "We were spoilt a bit with the RS Spyder, but in terms of performance and reliability, the

Aston was the best choice for the future. We felt the deal with AMR had all the right ingredients."

Graf said that remaining in the Porsche camp and stepping down to the GT Endurance class to run a 911 GT3-RSR was among the

possibilities for 2011. He said that the team had decided to remain in the premier category because Pickett "loves the challenge of prototypes" and because it "offers the chance to continue to fight for overall victories".

Old-style prototypes such as the AMR coupe are allowed to race on under Le Mans rules, despite the introduction of new rules for 2011. Their performance will be restricted down to the level of the new generation of prototypes.

The Muscle Milk team is due to take delivery of the car next week and run it for the first time at the official ALMS test at Sebring in early February. The deal with AMR could include the loan of a factory driver for the long-distance races.



Aston leads CytoSport's old Porsche at Sebring

DAN R. BOYD

# WTCC Door open to all \$2000s in WTCC



'Oldies' can race on through 2011

**THE WORLD** Touring Car Championship has confirmed that all Super 2000 cars will be eligible for 2011, meaning that the older-spec 2.0-litre cars will be permitted to race alongside the newer 1.6-litre turbos.

Minimum weights have also been set. The weights for the newer cars have been fixed at 1150kg for front-wheel drive and 1170kg for rear-wheel drive, while limits for older-spec

cars have been set at 1150kg for normally-aspirated FWD, 1155kg for normally-aspirated RWD and 1170kg for FWD turbos.

The WTCC will be joined this year by a new endurance series that will run on the support bill at six European rounds. Titled the European Production Series, it will be open to SEAT Leon Supercopa cars and various specifications of touring cars and one-makes.

# LE MANS SERIES Strakka targets LMP1 return

**THE BRITISH** Strakka Racing prototype team has revealed aspirations to return to the LMP1 class after re-signing Jonny Kane on a three-year deal.

The deal means that last year's LMP2 class-winning team at the Le Mans 24 Hours now has Kane and Danny Watts under contract until the end of 2013 and '12 respectively. Strakka team manager and technical director Piers Phillips said that he hoped the team would be back in LMP1 before their contracts expire.

"It is not usual for a team like us to have guys on such long contracts, but Strakka is a long-term project," said Phillips. "Ultimately we want to go back to P1, hopefully in 2012, and we want continuity for when we do that."

Phillips explained that Strakka, which ran an LMP1 Zytek in 2009, hoped to continue its relationship with Honda Performance Development for its projected move from LMP2 to P1. It will continue to use its chassis and engines in LMP2 in the coming season.



Kane, Strakka in for the long haul

Kane was described by Phillips as the "unsung hero" of Strakka's 2010 LMP2 campaign, which included an overall Le Mans Series victory at the Hungaroring.

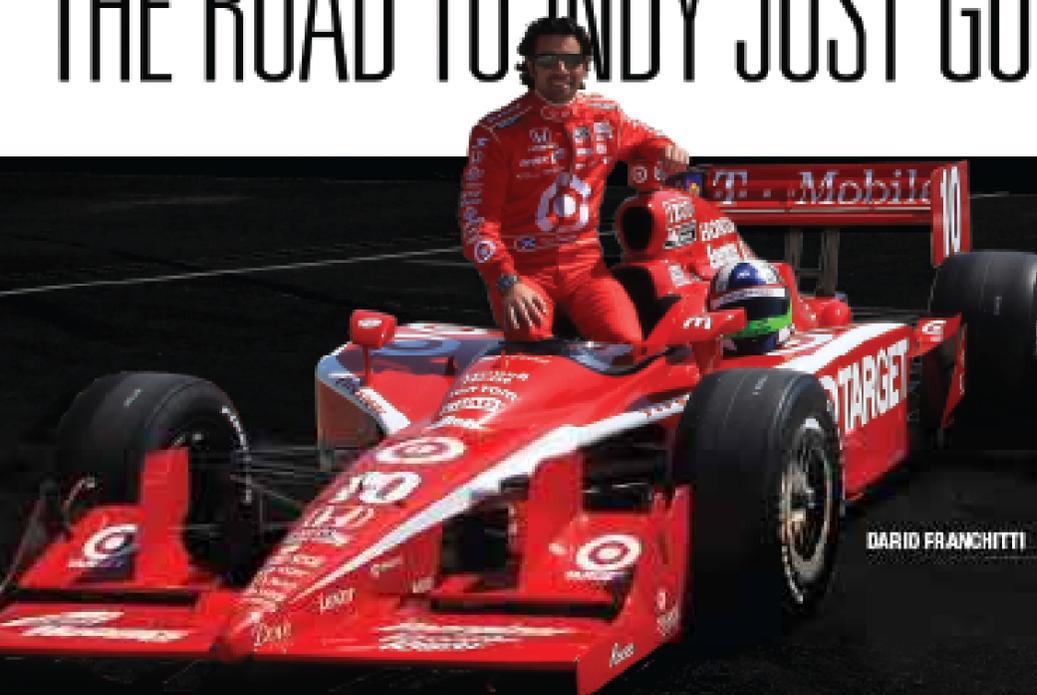
"Danny got a lot of the plaudits, but Jonny did an excellent job," said Phillips. "He brings a lot of stability and balance to the team."

Kane, 37, said he was "thrilled

that Strakka has the faith and confidence to sign me up for the next three years".

Strakka will attempt to win the 2011 LMP2 LMS title with the unchanged line-up of Watts, Kane and team owner Nick Leventis. They will drive the same HPD chassis as in 2010, now powered by the new twin-turbo V6 powerplant.

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