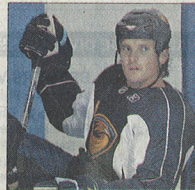


# Sports



## Defenseman sets his goals

Thrashers defenseman Hainsey looks to make an offensive impact. **D9**

► Schultz predicts no Vick, Favre sightings, **D3**



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# Fueled by innovation

**Going green:** ALMS racing spurs technology development that can benefit consumer cars.

By **RICK MINTER**  
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**Braselton** — NASCAR and the American Le Mans Series are similar in that they're both motorsports sanctioning bodies, but their philosophies are miles apart. As both battle a difficult economic environment, the decision about which circuit is on the right track ultimately will be made in the boardrooms of the auto manufacturers that support racing.

In NASCAR, the emphasis is on the star drivers, many of whom have become household names, such as Earnhardt, Gordon, Kenseth and Stewart.

They drive cars that are basically alike. The rules for NASCAR's Car of Tomorrow, the exclusive vehicle of the elite Sprint Cup Series, require that all cars, regardless of manufacturer, fit the same templates and run under the same rules. The main differences in Fords, Chevys, Dodges and Toyotas are in the decals that identify the brand and in the engines, which basically are built to a standard set of rules. Teams that innovate to increase speeds often find themselves in violation of the rules.

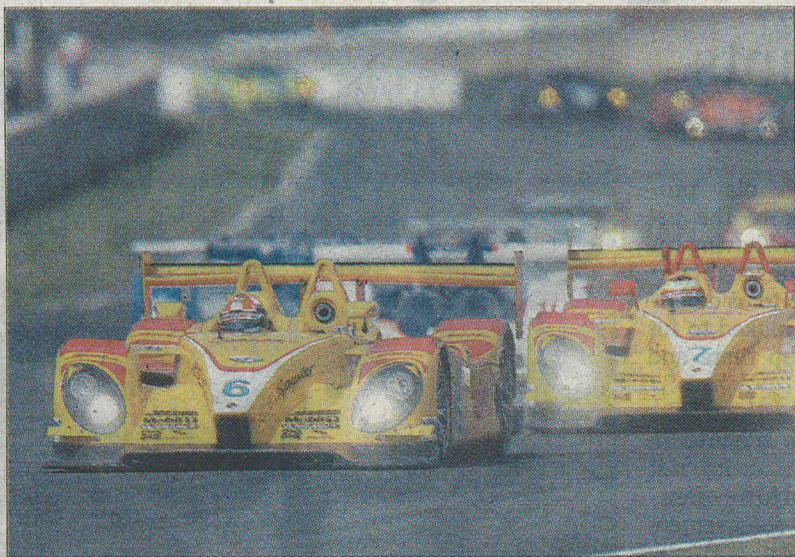
But in the American Le Mans Series, which races this weekend at Road Atlanta, the cars get top billing. And innovation is encouraged, especially when it comes to reducing the use of fossil fuels.

The Green Challenge, a race within the race, makes its debut in Saturday's Petit Le Mans.

"It looks like we were brilliant thinkers, but it just happens to be great coincidence," said Scott Atherton, president and CEO of the ALMS. "Now you can't pick up a newspaper or watch TV without seeing stories about urgent need for new automotive technology."

Atherton also says that in tough times for automakers, his series is a better venue than NASCAR or the Indy Racing League, which like NASCAR has rules that standardize technical aspects of the cars.

"The manufacturers are scruti-



POUYA DIANAT / 2007 photo

In the American Le Mans Series, it's not the drivers but the cars that are the stars, such as the No. 6 Porsche RS Spyder.

## PETIT LE MANS

- **When:** 11:15 a.m. Saturday
- **Where:** Road Atlanta, Braselton

nizing budgets and resources like never before," he said. "The auto industry on a global scale is going through a shakeout and paradigm shift of unprecedented proportions.

"When you have a racing program [like NASCAR] that has literally no connection whatsoever to your road car, it doesn't have any technology in it, does not have any physical appearances that look anything like the cars available in the showroom, it's very difficult to justify the hundreds of millions involved.

"Where the ALMS has set itself apart is that all the technology being developed in the series has a direct link back to the road car, back to the production line. And in the GT class, it's the actual car."

He said that's why 10 manufacturers already participate in the series with more set to join soon.

That ongoing search for speed and new technology is a large part of what led former IndyCar Series star Gil de Ferran to form his own Acura team this year.

"It's a part of the sport that I really enjoy," he said. "I like the technical challenge of motorsports. I've always been that way. Maybe that makes me a bit of a dinosaur, but it's the type of envi-

## Castroneves faces tax evasion charges

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Miami** — Helio Castroneves, the two-time Indianapolis 500 winner and TV "Dancing With the Stars" champion, was indicted Thursday on tax evasion and tax fraud charges, accused of using offshore accounts to hide millions of dollars in income from the Internal Revenue Service.

The 33-year-old native of Brazil is charged with conspiracy and six counts of tax evasion for allegedly failing to report to the IRS about \$5.5 million in income between 1999 and 2004.

ronment I grew up in.

"I get excited when we sit here with all the Acura engineers, discussing the next development, whether it's in the cars or in the engines."

He said it takes only one look at the exotic sports cars such as his Acura prototype to appreciate the work that goes into one.

"The proof of that is you look at the cars and they're cool as can be," he said. "They're interesting cars, have interesting features and are changing all the time. "You've got to keep on top of it. I enjoy that."