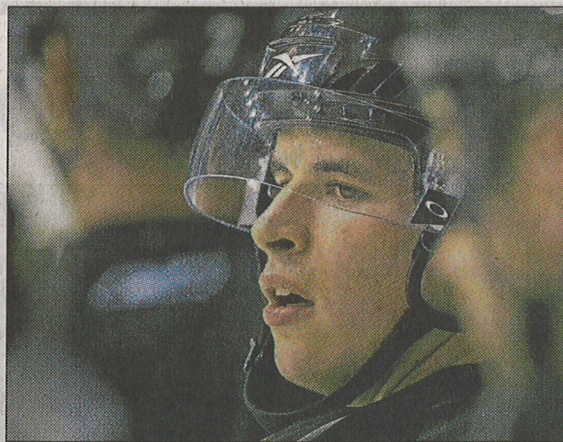




Sports

SECTION C

Friday, October 3, 2008



By Bob Strong, Reuters


Seeking title: Sidney Crosby leads the Penguins' Cup quest.


Facing off in Europe

The NHL season opens Saturday with the Penguins and Senators meeting in Sweden and the Rangers playing the Lightning in the Czech Republic, 10C

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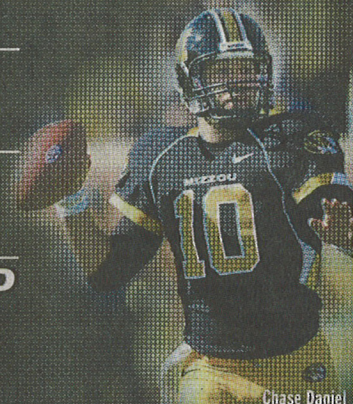
#13 AUBURN  #19 VANDERBILT
6 PM/ET

#4 MISSOURI  NEBRASKA
9 PM/ET

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USA TODAY · FRIDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2008 · 11C

Motor sports

Objective is to win, but Le Mans teams also shooting for efficiency

By Nate Ryan
USA TODAY

In motor racing, results generally are as black and white as the checkered flag. But the American Le Mans Series is spicing its standards for success with a gray area that's actually green.

Saturday's Petit Le Mans at Road Atlanta will be the debut of the Green Challenge, which measures performance, fuel economy and environmental impact in a formula using more than 30 categories. Trophies will be awarded to the most efficient teams and

manufacturers, though ALMS President Scott Atherton says the focus will remain on the winners of the 10-hour event.

"The race is still first and foremost," Atherton says. "The new technologies of the competition will enhance the race."

Using three alternative fuels (sulfur-free diesel, E10 gasoline and cellulosic ethanol), ALMS is the only series meeting "green racing" criteria set by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Agency.

Several bigwigs from both agencies, which developed the

challenge with the Society of Automotive Engineers, will attend Saturday, and several manufacturers, such as General Motors, Audi and Acura, want to capitalize on the attention by showcasing a commitment to environmentally friendly vehicles.

"I don't think people will be suddenly more interested in fuel economy rather than who crosses the finish line first," says Doug Fehan, program manager for Corvette Racing. "But doing this gives (ethanol) a stamp of approval and allays fears consumers might have about putting it in mom's

SUV or dad's pickup truck. We have to change the mind-set of people to embrace there's going to be different propulsion methods in cars."

Fehan believes Audi, which uses biodiesel and turbocharged engines, will be a top green contender, along with Porsche and Ferrari. Corvette Racing should be a player, having switched to cellulosic E85.

ALMS has tested its Green Challenge scoring monitors for a couple of races. Atherton says, "I've seen the results, and running diesel or cellulosic E85 is not

necessarily a foregone conclusion that you're a winner of the Green Challenge."

Corvette spent much of the last year improving mileage (getting an extra lap a tank at the 24 Hours of Le Mans) but won't sacrifice performance to win the challenge.

"We don't want to make this a fuel-economy run," Fehan says.

Victory, though, is important to GM, which has more than 3 million FlexFuel vehicles that run on gasoline and ethanol.

"We're leaders and want to maintain that role," Fehan says.

Weekend racing

Today: ARCA Re/Max Series, Talladega, Ala. (Speed, 5 p.m. ET)

Saturday: ALMS, Braselton, Ga. (Speed, 11 a.m. ET); NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series, Talladega, Ala. (Speed, 4 p.m.)

Sunday: MotoGP, Phillip Island, Australia (Speed, 6 p.m. ET, tape)

"It's important to the future of the company and the world."