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For Immediate Release:
February 16, 2006

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The Rolex 24 through the eyes of a Formula Car Driver

Prospect Hill, NC- The Velocity Motorsports team has been preparing its Star-Mazda race cars for the first race of the season in Sebring, Florida. After a successful first full season in the pro series, the team with driver John Pew captured the Master Series Championship. In the off season, the team and drivers have attended several winter test sessions but none in full race trim.

After the New Year drivers, John Pew and Mark Patterson along with their driver coach Oswaldo Negri, Jr., would travel to the Daytona International Speedway for testing for the Rolex 24 at Daytona. This would not be their first visit to the high bank road track since all three drivers have previous Rolex 24 experience. Later the three experienced drivers would return for the race weekend in late January. Pew would race for the Synergy racing team in a Porsche GT3 Cup car and the duo of Patterson and Negri, Jr. would race in the Michael Shank Racing prepared Lexus Riley Daytona Prototype. Patterson and Negri will campaign the entire 2006-07 Rolex Sports Car Series with the Michael Shank Racing Team. Due to Patterson's Rolex Series schedule, he will compete in half of the Star-Mazda Championship races with Velocity Motorsports. Pew will compete for the entire season defending his championship with the Velocity Motorsports Team. The trio worked together last season at Velocity Motorsports with Pew and Patterson racing and Negri, Jr. as their driver coach. Their bond grew stronger as the season progressed. Patterson and Negri, Jr. even competed in several Rolex Series races, taking pole position in their first race and finishing on the podium at Watkins Glen. "I am really looking forward to the 2006 season in the Daytona Prototypes and with Velocity Motorsports as we look to win another championship", said Negri, Jr.

What made you decide to race in the Rolex 24 this year?

John Pew – "I had done it two years ago and had always wanted to do it again. I had a call from a friend that had an extra seat available about six weeks before the race and I accepted. I also wanted to learn more about driving another type of car like the Porsche GT3 Cup car."

How would you compare a Star Mazda race to a stint in the Porsche GT3 Cup?

John Pew- "A 45 minute Formula Mazda race takes more out of me than 1 ½ hours in the Porsche in the 24 hour race. It gives me the real sense of appreciation for Formula car drivers that race for two hours, like F1 or Champ Car."

How does the Porsche compare to the Star Mazda?

John Pew- "To me the Formula Mazda is a much more physical car to drive. The G-Forces are much higher because of the grip of the car and the feedback and traction sensing is more direct. Everything happens much quicker in the Mazda. The Porsche has its own challenges and the setup window is very narrow. Our setup was off in the Porsche during the race which made it even more difficult to drive fast. However, physically it was not tiring."

For the Rolex 24 you and Oz were partnered with Champ Car stars, A.J. Allmendinger and Justin Wilson. How did the drivers work together?

Mark Patterson- "Fluid, flawless and informal. Zero politics, zero room for who is better than who, all entirely friendly, constructive and brutally focused on winning the race as a team. Each brought their own version of what was needed to succeed, their technical knowledge, their race technique and their comic relief at just the right time."

How would you compare a Star-Mazda race with the Rolex Sports Car Series?

Mark Patterson- "I love the bee-buzzing chaos of 35-45 Mazdas driven at speed by drivers not old enough to vote. In contrast, I love the thunderous chaos and confusing mixture of 40-70 Daytona Prototypes and GT. Bottom line, both are extremely exciting series, one for up and comers and one for those who want to run with the giants of sports car racing."

What is your goal for the 2006 Rolex Sport Car Series?

Oz Negri- "My goal is to win. If it is possible or not, we will see. I feel we have the car. The team is doing a great job, and Lexus is giving us the horses. So it is up to Mark and me."

How would you compare the Star Mazda to the Daytona Prototype?

Oz Negri- "Very hard to compare, actually there is no comparison. They are two different cars and I love to drive both of them. The Formula Mazda reminds me of my time in British F-3."

The three drivers and their teams would see the checkered flag for the Rolex 24. Many top drivers and teams do not make it to the end of this grueling event. John Pew was a standout in his team as they captured a 17th place class finish. Pew will resume testing with the Velocity Motorsports at the Carolina Motorsports Park and Road Atlanta prior to the season opener. For more information on John Pew, visit www.johnpewracing.com. The duo of Patterson and Negri and their teammates finished an outstanding second place overall in their Daytona Prototype. "I am really thrilled. Now we just need to go win one of these things", stated Patterson. They will race in Mexico City with the Rolex Sports Car Series two weeks prior to the first Star-Mazda race. For more information on driver Oz Negri, visit www.negrijr.com or on the team, visit their website at www.michaelshankracing.com. Velocity Motorsports team information can be found on their new website, www.velocitymotorsports.com. For information on the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear, visit www.starmazda.com.

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