

AIM Stays on Target in Testing at Homestead

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Toronto (March 3, 2008) – AIM Autosport was back in action this week as the Rolex Sports Car Series gathered for two days of testing at Homestead Miami Speedway. The test marked the first opportunity for the Toronto-based team to put lessons learned at the Rolex 24 At Daytona to good use. The 2008 Rolex Sports Car Series season created a wide range of variables for AIM, as not only has the Series has moved to Pirelli as the specification tire provider, but the team also made the commitment as an early adopter to the upgraded Riley XX bodywork as well as moving to Ford power provided by Roush Yates.

Brian Frisselle and Mark Wilkins buckled in to share the driving duties over the two days in South Florida with the Gold Car's Ford-Riley XX combination, which led the season-opening event on several occasions at the hands of all four AIM Autosport drivers. AIM opened the test by focusing on the aerodynamic side of the program, with some fixed speed testing to generate vital aerodynamic data as the team continues to adapt to the implications of the new Riley XX bodywork.

“With the testing rules the way that they are for cars that have already been deployed into competition, this was the only chance we had to do this kind of testing,” said Ian Willis. “It was a little challenging to be out there running at a steady speed, but we had Andrew (Bordin) up top spotting for us to give us some clear laps, and were able to knock all those tests off first thing in the morning without any trouble.”

After generating the aero data, the team began to tackle a test program that focused on mechanical grip on the 2.3-mile oval-based road course.

“Homestead has that long backstretch and oval section with a pretty tight infield road course, so there was a lot that we picked up at Daytona that was useful here at Homestead,” said Wilkins. “So we put that to use on our first set up and unloaded with a quick car, but then we started down the wrong path a little bit. Fortunately we got the chance to step back and were able to sort out why we weren't improving like we should have been. Once we started back in the right direction, we shot back to the top of the charts even though we weren't really going for a time.”

The Homestead track, which has gone through three different layouts in its relatively short history, with the latest iteration featuring a heavily banked oval, rewards tire conservation over the course of a fuel run on the combination asphalt/concrete surfaces.

“We did several longer runs just to get a good read on how the tires were lasting through a stint,” said Frisselle. “We'd lose about one second a lap which is about the same as what happened at Daytona, but obviously with this being so much shorter of a lap, that drop-off was more significant here. So that was a big focus for us to do the best job we could with that because those are the conditions we'll be dealing with when we come back to race here.”

“The guys did a great job because we basically never stopped making changes during the test, and they were really efficient and worked their butts off so we got the maximum track time possible,”

said Willis. “A race like the 24 is a huge test for a team, because everyone is under such pressure to perform when you run out front like we did, but the kind of chemistry that comes out of those experiences pays off all season. This team is really gelled together, and everyone knows what their roles are and what they need to focus on so we get things done rather quickly.”

With so many new factors to tackle, the sophomore effort is benefiting from a lot of other consistency—from the war wagon to the cockpit, the team has a lot of familiar faces in place as Frisselle and Wilkins will share the Gold Car all season long.

“Mark and Brian did a great job for us as well. We all know that they just want to go out there and race, and not be sitting here on the pit wall talking about how the car is reacting. But these guys are pros and they know that those conversations are really important to what kind of car they have when it’s time to go racing. Their feedback was good and they just did the same thing lap after lap, which is key because without that consistency the data is useless. We’ve got some good homework to do now before coming back at the end of March, but we were really pleased with how much we got out of this test.”

AIM scored a top-ten finish in the 2007 Homestead event, and will look to go even better in a second visit to the oval-based road course on March 27-29.

Established in 1995, AIM Autosport has a mandate to identify, train and manage emerging motorsport talent. AIM has provided many young drivers with a solid foundation on which to build a career in professional racing. The success of the AIM driver development programs has been achieved through the dedication of our employees and the ongoing support of our commercial and technical partners. Away from the track, AIM Autosport serves the needs of the racing community with a purpose-built preparation shop situated in the Toronto suburb of Woodbridge, Ontario.

Additional information available:
www.aimautosport.com