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12/30/2009
St. Catharines teen Ellis wins racing scholarship

Congratulations to Alex Ellis of St. Catharines who's won a fully funded drive in the 2010 Jim Russell Championship Series plus coaching and testing opportunities. Almost 40 drivers from 10 countries participated in a four-day shootout at Infineon Raceway in Sonoma, Calif., just before Christmas. Only six made it to the final day of the Russell worldwide driver search program that was launched this year to find the best young talent from the worlds of karting and "junior" formula car racing. Speed, precision and car control were evaluated, as well as media awareness, racecraft and fitness.

Ex-F1 and double Le Mans 24 Hour race winner Allan McNish and his fellow panel members chose the 18-year-old Ellis because he was considered the best "all-rounder."

A St. Catharines high school student, Ellis finished fifth in the 2006 Sunoco Ron Fellows Karting Championship, 15th in the 2007 BTK/Arrows Karts (Rotax Junior), second in the 2008 Ontario F1200 Championship as Rookie of the Year (five wins, 11 podiums, 15 races), and sixth in the 2009 Formula BMW Americas series (one pole, three podiums, two fastest laps).

"Winning this means absolutely everything to me," said Ellis, "having dedicated my life, mine and my family's money, into succeeding in motorsport so you can understand that I'm absolutely elated. It's more than a dream coming true, it's a massive turning point in my life."

"For someone with such limited karting and race-car experience at a high level, he really impressed me," said McNish. "He bounced back from any problems and issues very quickly and, importantly, strongly. He has a positive personality. He suffered badly with the weather conditions but nevertheless performed outstandingly."

The 16-race 2010 Jim Russell Championship Series gets under way in April. The 2010 Jim Russell champion will win a fully-funded drive in the 2011 FIA Formula 2 Championship.

Ellis raced last year with Team Autotecnica, which has its shop in the Keele-Highway 7 area not far from where Pinecrest Speedway used to be. When BMW pulled the plug on the BMW-Americas series, it left teams like Autotecnica a bit out in the cold.

However, the Toronto team has partnered with Italy's RC Motorsport and plans to participate in the 2010 Formula BMW Europe championship.

Autotecnica has been in business since 2004 and alumni include Esteban Gutierrez, Robert Wickens, Gianmarco Raimondo, Richard Philippe and, of course, Ellis.

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Ellis was very impressive this season in Formula BMW competition, he made some huge gains in 2009 and I'm looking forward to watching his progress again in 2010. The Jim Russell Championship should be a very competitive series in 2010 with the FIA Formula 2 fully-funded ride on the line.

Posted by: [Ryan](#) | 12/30/2009 at 06:32 PM

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