



ALTERNATIVE ENERGY MOTORSPORT

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Frentzen gets going with a hybrid racing car in the “Green Hell”

The Nürburgring, famously called the “Green Hell” by Scottish driver Jackie Stewart, once again provides the setting for a spectacular premiere: The one-time Formula 1 driver Heinz-Harald Frentzen will take off for a 24-hour race from May 22-25 in a hybrid racecar he designed himself. The three-time Grand Prix champ has set himself an ambitious and courageous goal. Based on technology that will be introduced in Formula 1 racing in 2009, the private Hybrid-Racing team has chosen to have its baptism of fire on the longest and most difficult race at one of the finest and most challenging racetracks in the world.

The base vehicle for the conversion was the super sports car Gumpert Apollo, which even in its street version offers much of what a successful racecar has to have. Instead of the standard series-equipped motor, a 3.3 liter V8 Twin Turbocharged engine is the driving force behind the racer.

To reclaim energy that is otherwise lost each time the brakes are applied, an additional electric motor was installed, delivering up to 100 kW. Together, the two power sources allow the spectacular HHF HYBRID CONCEPT CAR to achieve up to 360 horsepower for racing around the Nordschleife and Grand Prix course. The street version offers 20 hp more than the hybrid racer, and is also relieved of the burden of having to propel the additional weight of the electric motor and batteries.

“Motorsports cannot ignore the necessity of economizing energy. Moreover, I see the opportunity to make our sport a trailblazer in technological innovation once again, which will in turn make cars considerably more energy efficient off the racetrack,” explains Heinz-Harald Frentzen when asked about the reasons for his involvement in hybrid racing. Based in Mönchengladbach, Germany, Frentzen is not just a trophy driver in the project. More precisely, he is the driving force behind it, and is even responsible for financing the hefty costs. “The organizer of the 24 hour race, the ADAC Nordrhein Auto Club, has been open to alternative propulsion concepts for years,” says Frentzen when asked why he was racing at the Nürburgring.

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Frentzen and his team are aware of the handicaps they are up against

by financing a “green” racing project. The lack of a supply of tried and tested components mean the team was always very short for time. For this reason, a planned test race on the Nordschleife fell through and was replaced by private test runs. Nevertheless, the technician responsible for this project, Norbert Kreyer, is in good spirits: “We’re very much aware of the difficulties. Needless to say, we’re not among the favorites in terms of winning here. As a private team, we just don’t have the financial and technical resources available to major carmakers. But with this innovative concept, we hope to be able to show what’s possible with hybrid technology even today.” Frentzen’s partner behind the wheel will be the FIA GT Champion of 2007 in the GT2 category, Dirk Müller from Monaco. Müller, who drives a Ferrari 430 GT and is leading in points in the American Le Mans Series GT2 category, has recently garnered wins in St. Petersburg and Long Beach and is well known on the Nordschleife. As a BMW official driver, he was part of the winning team of the 24-hour race on the Nürburgring along with Hans-Joachim Stuck, Pedro Lamy and Jörg Müller. One or two additional solid drivers, ideally with experience on the grueling Nordschleife, will team up with Frentzen/Müller to complete the Hybrid-Racing team.

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