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Motorsport Circuit

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Overtime

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to keep the race fans coming back

Armchair racers

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to interact with the on-track action

Marshal plan

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systems with finish-line cameras

Interviewed

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CASE STUDIES Atlanta Motorsports Park; Guadix; Inje Autopia; Silverstone 2010; Surfers Paradise; Yvelines

THE INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF MOTORSPORT CIRCUIT DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

The ambitious plans for Atlanta Motorsports Park seek to break the mold of motorsport country clubs

WORDS BY SCOTT TRANCHEMONTAGNE

Country living

➔ Atlanta Motorsports Park founder and CEO Jeremy Porter has always been a competitive high-achiever. In his twenties, Porter bought into a failing exotic car customization company and turned it around in nine months. His next endeavor, leasing large jet aircraft at World Wide Charters, resulted in him almost outselling the CEO in his first 30 days. And before he was 30, Porter became a partner at Wyndham Mills International, a business consulting firm recognized by *Inc.* magazine as one of the fastest growing companies in the USA. So it's no surprise that Porter's vision for Atlanta Motorsports Park (AMP) is to "raise the bar" over all others – and create the best, most unique motorsport country club in the world.

Porter, now 37, knew early on that his vision for Atlanta Motorsports Park was good, he just needed the right time and a perfect location to launch it. The dream began nine years ago when he was asked to develop

a business plan to launch a karting/car motorsport park at Road Atlanta. The plan showed promise, but it wasn't the right time, and ultimately, Road Atlanta wasn't the right place. So Porter parked his idea in the paddock.

Over the next several years, as other member-based motorsport parks were springing up around the world, Porter couldn't stop thinking that his idea – and most importantly – his approach was better. As a business strategist and organizational guru, Porter knew he had to take his original plan, turn it on its head, and start testing its assumptions. He began studying every motorsport club he could find. He interviewed CEOs at 25 road courses around the world to find out what worked – and what didn't. He analyzed their price points and revenue streams, relative to their locations, so he could create a formula for success in Atlanta. Ultimately, he came up with 15

separate revenue streams for AMP. Most other tracks have just a few.

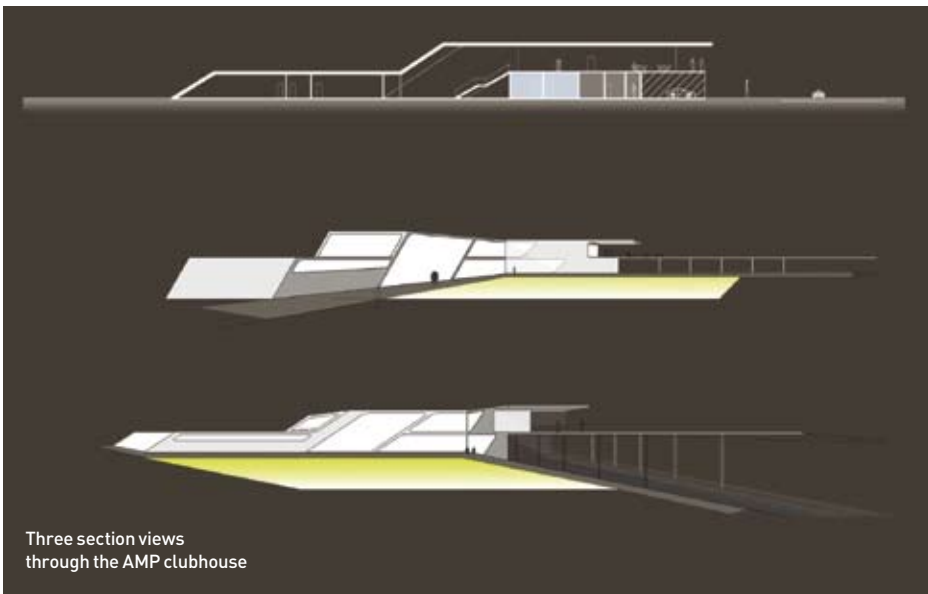
Then Porter started asking questions that seemed more like contradictory riddles. Such as, can a racetrack be environmentally friendly and sustainable? Can a motorsport park be a place that brings families together, rather than a private getaway for Dad's hobby? Can we build a road course that is very fast and exciting, but also very safe for a wide range of drivers? And, can a facility that hosts loud, fast cars be a good neighbor and asset to the community? Porter felt that if he could find a way to answer 'yes' to these questions, he would have a very special project.

"I was determined to make Atlanta Motorsports Park a cut above the other clubs I studied," says Porter. "I took the best ideas from successful tracks around the world, combined them with my vision for a facility that would appeal to our Greater Atlanta market, and developed a unique model."

All-star cast

In addition to Tilke Engineers and Inis Motorsport, many other highly respected motorsport professionals and organizations have partnered with Atlanta Motorsports Park. Skip Barber Racing School will offer members and guests top-level driving, racing, and corporate events programs. Kart specialist TS Racing is also on board with AMP. Racing legends such as Doc Bundy and Jack Baldwin have appeared at AMP events, and Speed Channel announcer Bob Varsha is AMP's official event emcee.

Atlanta Motorsports Park intends to be the world's first truly 'green' racetrack



Three section views through the AMP clubhouse

Porter knew that North Georgia, specifically Dawsonville, was an ideal location. Never mind that Dawsonville is home to Bill and Ernie Elliot, members of one of the most successful, respected families in US racing. Or that Dawsonville, with its colorful history of 'moonshine' trade during Prohibition, is considered to be one of the birthplaces of stock car racing. And City Hall shares a building with the Georgia Racing Hall of Fame! What really impressed Porter was the enormous wealth around Atlanta, and the high density of exotic-car owners.

"We are half the distance to our target members than most parks, and we have no other competitive clubs in the southeastern USA," explains Porter. "We are a quick drive to some of the wealthiest communities in America and, unlike motorsports clubs up north, we can operate 365 days a year. Our location is motorsports park nirvana." Indeed, AMP's slogan is, 'Home of the 100mph Power Lunch'.

Once Porter settled on an almost 500-acre tract of land in rural Dawsonville, he began the task of personally selling his project to community and county leaders, and some skeptical neighbors. Some of the public hearings were lengthy and spirited, but at the end of the process, all sides made some compromises and rezoning was approved to allow the project to move forward.

Porter says the process reaffirmed his commitment to ensure that Atlanta Motorsports Park became a community asset.

"We worked collaboratively with the town and county to come up with a plan that worked for everyone. This meant increasing our buffers, reducing our hours of operation, and changing our track configuration to be the best neighbor we can be."

Contingent upon permit approval, construction is due to begin in December 2009. Atlanta Motorsports Park will feature a one-of-a-kind, world-class road course designed by Tilke, the world-renowned expert that has designed nearly every Formula 1 track built over the last decade, including circuits at Bahrain, Sepang, and Malaysia.

Approximately two miles in length, with a breathtaking 141ft of change in elevation, the course will include two of the most famous turns in motorsport: the Nürburgring's Karussell and Spa's Eau Rouge. It will support six different configurations, and have the ability to run multiple events simultaneously.

Reaction to Tilke's involvement has been swift and impressive within the motorsport community. In late July, nearly 450 people, triple the crowd that was expected, descended on Hennessy Porsche in North Atlanta to witness the track's unveiling. AMP



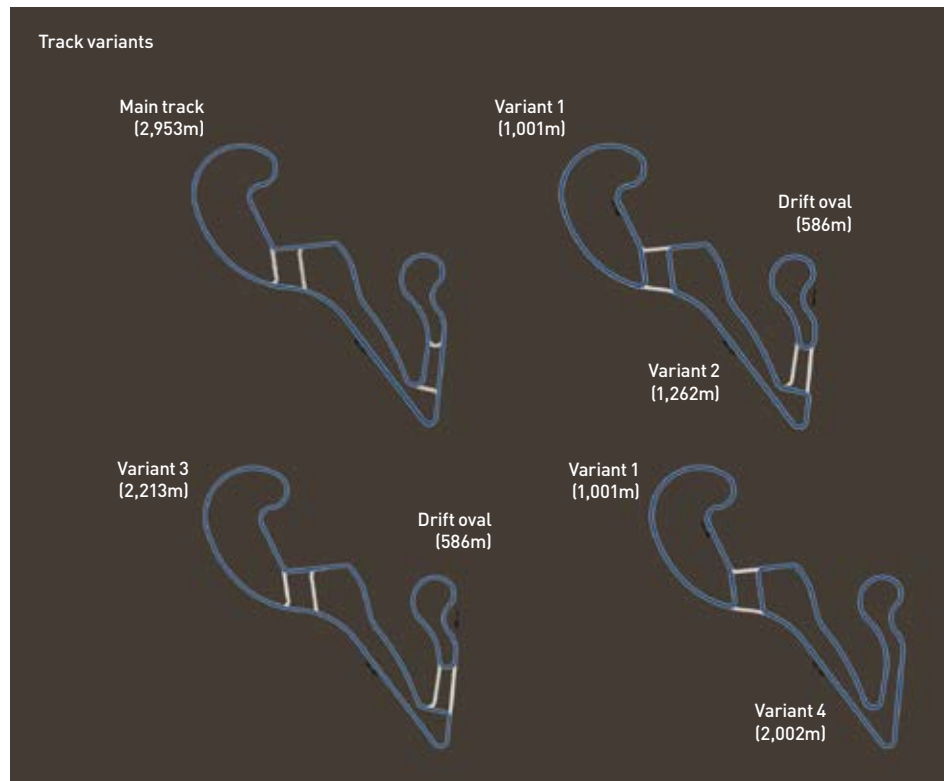
Aerial impression of the proposed circuit, with clubhouse (inset)

rewarded three new members that evening with a private helicopter airlift to see the Dawsonville site from above.

Porter says his goal with Tilke was to create an incredibly exciting design that would allow faster top speeds than any other southeast club course, but would also be safe for drivers of all skill levels. So while top speeds on the nearly one-mile straight will be up to 8mph faster than other courses, AMP's track will be also 10-12m wide, with extensive runoff areas to mitigate impact zones and safety barriers.

As for being eco-friendly, Porter says Atlanta Motorsports Park will be the first true 'green' track in the world. "Most normal tracks have a very high carbon footprint of +12. We will be +2, maybe even totally neutral if all our plans come together."

AMP will use sustainable building design (LEED certified), waterless urinals, tankless water heaters, reclaimed water for the irrigation system, recycling programs for garbage and oil, the maximum efficiency HVAC available today, thermal-resistant windows, supplementary insulation, and high-efficiency lighting and fluorescent bulbs. But the most visibly impressive green feature just might be the Formula 1-rated, wireless





Detail view of the undulating, 0.79-mile kart track at AMP

track lighting system from Inis Motorsport, which will be completely solar-powered. In addition, recycled materials will be used to build the track and guardrails.

"I strongly believe we need to do more than just talk about 'going green'. We need to step up and do it, through our actions. Atlanta Motorsports Park will lead by example on being sustainable."

The motorsport country club has even applied for grant money to build what would be the largest solar park in Georgia. If the funding comes through, the solar park could provide enough power to run AMP and nearly 1,500 homes.

Porter understood early on that AMP needed to position itself as exclusive yet accessible to motorsport enthusiasts, rather than to hardcore, competitive racers. Research confirmed that 85% of the park's membership would be serious motorsport enthusiasts looking for executive level, country club amenities. So in addition to a world-class driving course, Atlanta Motorsports Park will offer members a 10,000ft² clubhouse with private lockers and shower facilities, wide-screen high-definition televisions, a members-only lounge with leather furnishings and biometric fingerprint access, and a patio that overlooks the road course.

When not driving or enjoying the clubhouse, members can relax in the pool, venture out on a hiking trail, or serve up a



"I strongly believe that we need to do more than just talk about 'going green'. We need to step up and do it, through our actions" *Jeremy Porter, AMP*

tennis match. To pamper the cars as well as the drivers, private high-tech garages and storage areas for driving trailers will be available for sale and lease. A 0.79-mile CIK Kart track with more than 30ft of rise and fall will also be offered, with a complete rental program that will enable drivers to advance to faster karts based on demonstrated driving skill and experience. The complex will also feature shops offering high-performance driving gear, an on-site fueling station, a convenience store, and an Adirondack-style trackside lodge.

"Atlanta Motorsports Park's emphasis on being 'green' is a big benefit, as is its proximity to Atlanta," says Bryan Moss, former president of Gulfstream Aerospace in Savannah, Georgia, who serves on the AMP Advisory Board. "There are many



Plan of the dramatic clubhouse at ground level, with pit garages to the right and race control central, in blue

performance car enthusiasts in this area who want to have a place like AMP to exercise their vehicles. Like me, they like to drive fast, but do not consider themselves 'racers'. AMP is a cleverly designed track that will be challenging and fun, but will also keep safety in mind."

Skip Barber Racing School president and CEO George Ayres says he's been very impressed with Atlanta Motorsports Park's progress: "The track layout is very innovative, with multiple configurations for multiple events. This will enable the driving school to operate simultaneously with other road course uses. Our mission is to help members drive better, faster, and safer with their high-performance cars, and offer some great corporate event opportunities. Skip Barber Racing is excited to be part of Atlanta Motorsports Park and we view this as a complementary service to our established racing school programs at Road Atlanta."

Porter believes it is important to surround AMP with the best and brightest in motorsport. "We want this project to be running exceptionally well right out of the gate, not to learn from our members, but to serve them well at all levels from the very beginning." ●