

Press Release

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Volvo Motorsport - 16 consecutive racing seasons and technical innovation

From estate models with catalytic converters to diesel, gas, E85 and DRIVE

May 2 is the premiere of this year's STCC - the Swedish Touring Car Championship. Volvo and Polestar will be on the grid with a two-car team with Robert Dahlgren and Tommy Rustad fighting for the title, each driving an enhanced version of the Volvo C30 DRIVE powered by E85.

There was the same excitement in the air in 1994, although at a different place and with a different car. That was the year Volvo officially started racing in the British Touring Car Championship. On the grid was a relatively unknown young driver called Rickard Rydell dressed in a Volvo racing suit.

Estate car and catalytic converters in racing? But of course!

Volvo brought two extremes along to the BTCC in its maiden season. Volvo ran an estate model and equipped the race car with catalytic converters, a move that was unknown in racing at that time.

It was not long before Rydell was a winner and a national celebrity in England and Sweden, and catalytic converters were soon made mandatory in touring car racing regulations.

Volvo went on to win the BTCC in 1998 and had debuted in the STCC two years earlier. Volvo was on the grid from the very first STCC race with driver Jan Flash Nilsson behind the wheel.

A diesel car with a bit too much power

In parallel with its STCC project, Volvo started several single-make classes such as the S40 and S60 Challenge to promote the development of young drivers.

In 2002 Volvo decided to test its D5 diesel engine in racing and built a car that could race in the S60 Challenge. That car became a 500 Nm monster that Jens Edman was given the job of taming.

"I had to race outside of points so as not to interfere with the drivers who were battling for the title. I drove mostly using third and fourth gears and Volvo's motorsport people told me over and over to hold back. We only did one season and that was just as well. You can't really mix petrol and diesel in the same class, it's too unfair. But what a car and what torque," Edman recalls.

Gas or bio-ethanol?

In 2005 the company's technical enthusiasm really started to itch. Volvo's motorsport organisation had previously managed to combine green technology with motorsport. And now the company had both gas-powered and E85-powered cars on sale. The temptation was too great. Volvo decided to evaluate both fuels in parallel.

Volvo could bring bio-ethanol E85 from the street to the track completely on its own, but for gas Volvo needed a partner to actually supply the race cars with compressed gas on the track.

Alexander Murdzevski Schedvin, then motorsport manager at Volvo Cars Sweden, was assigned the task of allocating a gas partner together with Christian Dahl at Polestar. Very soon the duo approached Eon.

"We presented our concept which was based on converting our current FIA Super 2000 engines so we could start racing with gas in 2007. The 2006 season would be used to conduct an open technical study within the STCC framework to evaluate, compile regulations and open up the possibility for other teams to switch too. When the gas alternative failed to be adopted we simply made the exact same journey with E85," explains Alexander Murdzevski Schedvin.

Green victory straight off the blocks and C30 DRIVe takes over

That journey paid off. In 2007 Volvo was on the grid with E85 in their S60 race cars and became the first manufacturer to switch to alternative fuels in an FIA Super 2000 championship. Even better, E85 was now approved by the STCC and was made available to all teams. Robert Dahlgren won the premiere race and the second one, and the season was crowned with double victory together with teammate Alexander Storckenfeldt.

With momentum at a high level, Volvo developed a completely new racing car for 2008, one that was based on the forthcoming Volvo C30 DRIVe. This model has an optimised aerodynamic package that results in lower drag and therefore lower fuel consumption on the street. On the track, these same aerodynamic features provide better stability and higher top speed. Green street technology would form the basis for a winning car on the track.

After a tough start Volvo's green C30 race car delivered five pole positions and victories in the last two races of the season. Best of all, it did so within 11 months of starting from a blank piece of paper.

16th season the toughest, more technically packed than ever

On May 2, Volvo will enter its 16th consecutive touring car racing season with quick drivers and cars packed with more green technology than ever. The aim is to win both the drivers' and the manufacturers' championships. The competition could not be tougher, with cars like BMW, Alfa Romeo and two gas-powered VWs with turbo engines competing thanks to special dispensation.

"These first fifteen years have passed quickly since we have always been developing new and stimulating ideas. Yet, from a technical perspective, it feels as if we are just getting started. This season will be tough and very exciting. It is especially fun to see that the gas idea finally made it to the track, although that was only thanks to some serious short cuts through the regulations. What a wonderful example of recycling. Let's race," says a determined Derek Crabb, Director of Motorsport at the Volvo Car Corporation.

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