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Michael Crawford Motorsports to field two cars

By Tim Harms - indycar.com

Michael Crawford has been a racing fan his entire 38 years, but as he puts it, "that doesn't mean anything." Instead Crawford cut his teeth in the automotive and racing industries for 16 years to the point where he's ready to form his own race team.

Michael Crawford Motorsports will field two cars in the Indy Pro Series™, the Indy Racing League's top development series, in 2006.

"I wouldn't say this is something I've always dreamed of," Crawford said, "but when you've had success once and then are given an opportunity to do it again, you have to take it."

Crawford has been the general manager of Sam Schmidt Motorsports since the end of the 2002 season, helping build a team which won the Pro Series championship in 2004 and fielded three cars that finished in the top six in points in 2005.

"In 2002, our goal was to become the 'Penskies' of the Pro Series," Crawford said. "I still think we have a way to go, but I also think we are thought of very highly."

"Michael developed the infrastructure for Sam Schmidt Motorsports," said Sam Schmidt. "He has a high level of integrity and knows how to take care of his people. His knowledge and experience will lead to success as a team owner."

Crawford is stepping out on his own after running 14 events under the Sam Schmidt Motorsports banner in 2005. He fielded the No. 11 car in eight races and also conducted six tests. He recently acquired a second car and has updated both of them for 2006.

"This effort in 2006 is a result of the contributions of many friends and supporters," Crawford said. "The team would not exist without the assistance of Sam Schmidt, Scott Mayer, Tim Whiting and each of the drivers who worked with us in 2005. Sam Schmidt has been an inspiration and mentor for four seasons. Scott Mayer gave me the confidence and commitment necessary to take this next step. Tim Whiting is the

key to the whole program. Tim will be our lead engineer, team manager and the key to our success on the track."

Crawford is working on identifying drivers and sponsors.

"Michael Crawford Motorsports is a perfect example of the Indy Pro Series as a platform for drivers, team owners, team members, sponsors and others to develop their skills and take them to the next level," said Roger Bailey, executive director of the Indy Pro Series. "Michael has been part of the Indy Pro Series from the early stages, playing an integral part in the success of Sam Schmidt Motorsports. He has a bulldog approach that will serve him well as he forms his own team to compete in 2006 and beyond."

Crawford's career in motorsports began in the early 1990s with The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company. Armed with an MBA from the University of Wisconsin, the Mequon, Wis., native started working in the company's market research department. Shortly thereafter, he transferred into the racing division where he was responsible for the Sports Car Club of America (SCCA) and International Motorsports Association (IMSA) programs. From 1995-1997, he worked on Goodyear's IndyCar Series program.

Crawford then spent two seasons at Kelley Racing and three seasons with PDM Racing.

"2000 was a magical year for me," Crawford said. "Sam Hornish Jr. and I drove all over together – northwest Ohio, northeast Indiana, looking for sponsors, knocking on doors. It was the Cinderella story."

Crawford hopes to bring that magic back in the future under his own team's banner.

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