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Jun24

[Michelle](#)

[SAE Formula team takes first checkered flag at U.S. track – zooooom!](#)

Sometimes winning a sporting event in your own backyard is the most difficult, but when you do, how sweet it can be—just ask the 2009 RIT SAE Formula team. The team has won events in the past, and made a great showing overseas, but a win at a U. S. racetrack has proved elusive—until now.

Their very first win in a major competition in the U.S. came this past weekend in California where the racing team swept individual events and captured, finally, the coveted overall crown.

In a brief chat with faculty advisor, Alan Nye, and Formula team project manager, Anthony Salvo, the behind the scenes development, the competition travel and the camaraderie are as exciting as the actual races—well maybe...unless you're in the driver's seat!



“This is our 17th year doing this; we’ve gone to multiple events most years, and have won the events in Australia and England, but until this year had not won in the United States. We’ve placed second five times in the US. This event was very close; until the very end, it was reasonably possible that we would come in second again. I know many of the SAE people and they said if we came in second they were going to retire the number two and just give it to us!” Nye said in a phone interview.

The team is large and generally divided into groups to work on key areas like the brake system, engine and drive train. Each group has a leader who keeps track of the project being worked on as well as those who work on the projects. Team leaders decide who participates at main events like those in Michigan or California. They are spots well earned. For California this June, 25 students went, paying their own way.

The average budget for the Formula Car development and travel to at least three competitions is 140K, said Nye. Support is garnered from sponsors such as Toyota, Atlas Tool & Die and Siemens Corporation, just to name a few. RIT administrative help is added in, along with donations from some of the most enthusiastic of fans—the members of the **Checkered Flag Club**—that group of dedicated families and alumni who keep close tabs on the team, know of the effort needed to field a competitive car and know the costs to travel to events around the world.

Then there are ‘angels,’ the behind-the-scenes people like an anonymous donor (and family member of a teammate) who works for a shipping company and donated the cost to send the #17 Formula car to California.

“We build a crate big enough for the car and an unbelievable amount of spare parts and tools. This year, we had two crates, with parts and more tools,” Nye said. The crate is shipped taking a week to 10-days to arrive at the U.S. race site. For international travel, the team allows for 5-6 weeks for sea travel, and for the first time this August, will try air travel. The cost to ship the Formula car to Germany for the upcoming international event will be about \$11,000.

Nye helps with the scheduling of events as well as fundraising efforts. He takes a back seat however when the design and building takes place, leaving that to the students. “Design, analysis, construction, testing—I let them do it all-and they must be doing something right!” he says. Zoom...zoom!

Here’s a little more on the team:

This is a link to the SAE web site that is an article about the California competition.

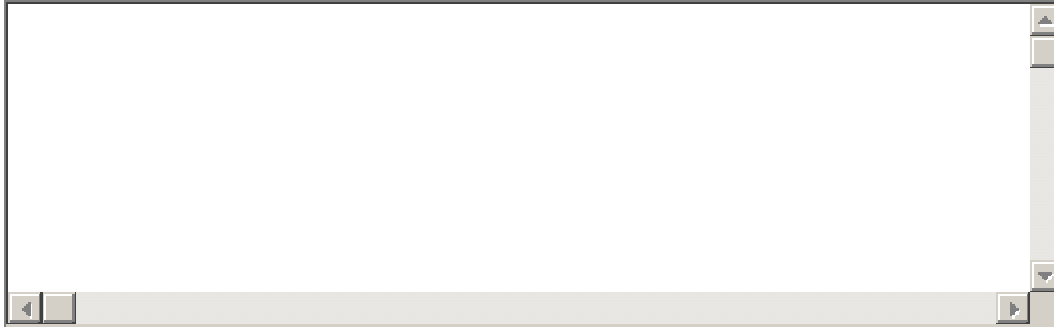
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