

Michelin provides the 4-inch wide tyre for Nissan Delta Wing race car

ATLANTA (Rubber Country): For Michelin, designing a tyre for a car that did not exist was a huge challenge and what ultimately emerged was the 4 inch tyre that Ben Bowlby's designs and extensive simulations.

The new Nissan Delta Wing, will debut at Lemans and make its race start at the Road Atlanta for Petit Le Mans.

The Delta Wing team needed four-inch wide front tires at the same time that Audi, Toyota and others were racing 14- inch wide fronts and looking for more. There were still a number of major hurdles, not the least of which was securing an engine partner. For several months, each bi-weekly Michelin motorsports internal call opened with the global team asking Michelin's North American based project team leader, Silvia Mammone, a simple question: "Does the DeltaWing have an engine yet?"

An answer arrived in outstanding fashion when Nissan stepped aboard with its 1.6-liter turbocharged, directinjection engine, and a commitment to take the lead role in the project.

"There is no question that the Michelin announcement gave the program new credibility," said Darren Cox, general manager of Nissan Europe, who became his company's internal champion.

"Michelin is a very technical company and for them to take this on, meant they thought it had a good chance of success. We looked at it and thought the fit with the environment and efficiency was a perfect fit for Nissan."

The car is not without its detractors. Some deride its design, others claimed the car would never be built, would never turn, or would never achieve the performance envisioned. So far, they have been proven wrong.

At Le Mans, the organizers set a target lap time for the DeltaWing of 3 minutes 45 seconds on the 8.5-mile circuit, with a straightaway target speed of 300 kph (186 mph).

The car easily bettered both targets with a lap at 3:42.6 and 309.5kph (192 mph). Here at Petit Le Mans there are no artificial targets and the team is expected to compete with the top P2 class contenders.