

boston bimmer

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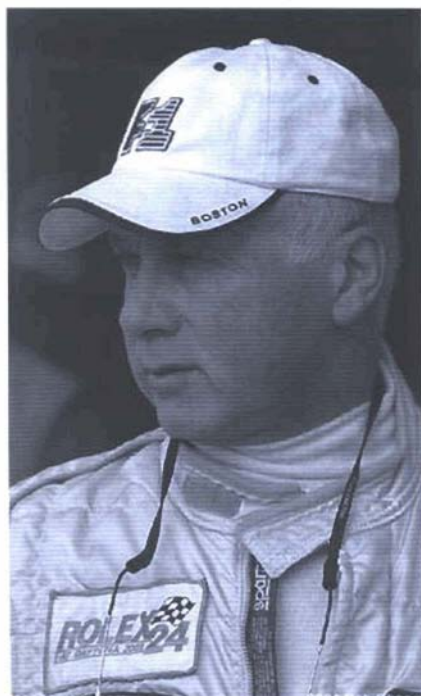




Story and photographs
by Jeffrey Loucks

FROM THE BOARDROOM TO THE RACETRACK

Left to right: Kelly Collins, Tom Milner, and RJ Valentine.



Passion, teamwork, commitment, discipline—Boston businessman, BMW enthusiast, and acclaimed race-car driver Richard “RJ” Valentine uses to describe the keys to success—whether on the racetrack or in the boardroom. During his remarkable business career, he has done everything from nurturing start-ups to overseeing multi-million-dollar enterprises by providing strategic vision, marketing innovation, operational expertise, and financial acumen that have enabled these businesses to thrive and grow.

As a race car driver, he has been a major player on the competitive racing scene for over thirty years, and continues to be a force on the track. This year, he drove in his 19th consecutive Rolex 24 at Daytona, a significant achievement given the grueling nature of this 24-hour endurance race. And, he finished third last year in the GT class of the Grand American Rolex Sports

Car Series, driving a Porsche 911 GT3 Cup car.

“I believe there are remarkable parallels for success in both the racing and corporate worlds,” Valentine states. “To achieve something special in both areas you need the support of a great team, the drive and desire to make the most out of every opportunity and the vision, passion, and drive to see it through to the finish.”

ENTREPRENEURIAL ENGINE

Valentine has achieved similar levels of success in business as he has on the race track. The MBA Group, which he founded in 1969 and is headquartered in Braintree, has owned and operated businesses in such diverse industries as automotive aftermarket, insurance, high technology, real estate, financial services, oil and gas, and corporate investigative services.

Valentine and The MBA Group were



quick to recognize the potential of the quick-lube concept and built the New England Jiffy Lube franchise into a 30-store, \$25 million business before selling to Pennzoil. At the time of the s&, Valentine's stores were averaging five to six times the national average in terms of sales and car counts.

Since 2000, RJ has overseen the creation and explosive growth of F1 Boston, a world-class conference and entertainment center built around two indoor European-style kart racetracks. F1 Boston's unique, total participatory approach utilizes the parallel tenets of both racing and business—leadership, teamwork, sharing of a common goal, communications, attention to detail, competition, and focus—all critical to the success of any race or business team. It provides a wide array of race-themed programming for events including: off-site meetings, dinners, sales/staff meetings, trade shows, incentive events, social events, rewards programs, summer outings, team building, recruiting, holiday events.

At the F1 Boston facility, Valentine hosts Corporate Fight Night—a highly anticipated annual event that features Jr. Olympic-sanctioned boxing matches as well as a casino reception, live auction and raffle. Each year, hundreds of leaders in the Boston business community gather at this black-tie gala to raise money for local charities. In just six years, it has become a hot-ticket event and has raised funds for area charitable organizations.

F1 Boston was quickly followed by the launch of F1 Outdoors in East Bridgewater, which offers competitive kart racing on a 1.5-mile track and will soon include a clubhouse and dining room with

all the amenities associated with a country club. F1 Outdoors was recently honored by a prominent trade publication as the "Gold Standard" in its industry.

His most recent venture is the creation of F1 Air, a private aircraft management and charter firm with offices in Braintree and New Jersey. F1 Air, with a senior management team that has a combined total of more than 100 years in the aircraft industry, is committed to raising the bar in private jet aircraft management.

IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

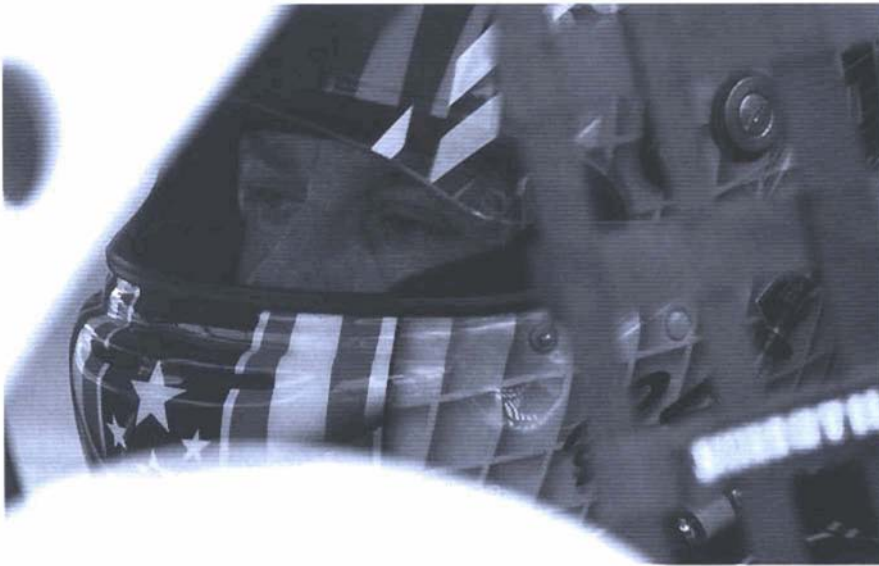
Valentine, a member of BMW CCA Boston Chapter for almost ten years and owner of several BMWs, has raced all manners of sports cars against some of the stiffest competition. He's gone toe-to-toe with racers including Scott Pruett and Paul Gentilozzi in the famous SCCA Trans-Am Series, driving 750-horsepower beasts like Chevy Camaros. This year, though, he secured one of the most coveted drives in sports car racing.

Based on his successes in the Grand Am Rolex Series, RJ was selected to drive for PTG Motorsport, BMW's American research and development team, with former GM factory Corvette driver Kelly Collins. Thus far on the 2005 schedule, PTG has come on strong, recently sweeping the podium at Laguna Seca. Collins set the GT-class pole in the race, and he and Valentine went on to finish 2nd, cementing BMW's first 1-2-3 finish in nearly eight years. Valentine is having the time of his life in the M3, and finds that it suits his time-tested driving style.

"When the opportunity presented itself to drive with PTG this season—I just

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jumped at it. The combination of the M3, which has proved itself to be one of the most competitive and well-engineered cars in recent history, with the PTG American factory team, is formidable," he states. "It's an honor to be selected by Tom Milner (Owner of PTG) to run in his cars, and I couldn't be happier. I've driven everything under the sun, and in my opinion, the M3 is one of the best balanced, most responsive cars on the track—and it's especially well-suited to mad course racing."

Valentine races in the Rolex Series, which in 2005 has condensed to two classes—& exotic tube-frame Daytona Prototype class, and the production based GT class. On any given weekend, Valentine's M3 is racing against the world's finest—Porsche 911s, Ferrari 360s, Corvettes, Maserati Coupes, Mazda RX8s and Pontiac GTOs—and more often than not, beats them on the track. Why? Valentine says it all comes down to balance.

"The main strength of the PTG M3 is balance. Unlike a Porsche 911, with the engine hanging over the rear axle like a pendulum, the M3 has a front-mounted motor with extremely responsive steering. When most of our competitors are struggling with excessive understeer or oversteer, PTG is ahead of the game and working out how to maximize the performance of the tires."

The PTG M3 uses a 3.4L, normally aspirated motor, which provides an estimated 440bhp. Fully loaded with fuel, the car approaches 2,600 lbs., and with a motor that produces 300 ft-lbs of torque, Valentine and Collins are never wanting for more acceleration. The cars that comprise the GT

class of the Rolex Series are all regulated similarly so no single car has an unfair advantage over the rest of the field. Therefore, finding a team that can maximize the positive characteristics of the race car while minimizing drawback, is critical.

Valentine explains, "PTG is absolutely the class of the field in the Rolex Series. Tom Milner has an incredible ability to run a race team, something that takes a lot of organizational skill as well as technical know-how. Any problems are quickly identified and solved, which makes my job as a driver much easier—I get to concentrate on being the best driver I can, and I have all the tools at my disposal to do that properly. Driving with PTG's stable of World Class drivers and being around Tom is more fun than I've ever had."

In addition to his responsibilities as a driver on the team, Valentine has evolved the relationship with PTG to even greater heights. His aircraft firm, F1 Air, sponsors two of the PTG BMW team's cars. "Motorsport presents tremendous sponsorship opportunities for corporations; so it's a win-win to have F1 Air as an integral part of the PTG team. F1 Air's services fit well with the marketing, promotional business and operational needs of the team and its' partners," he points out. "Racing and corporate marketing are intimately connected. It provides all the elements of a profitable business investment—it's an advertising, branding and sales method, a motivator, reward and relationship marketing tool wrapped into one. It's highly visible and leading edge—we're thrilled with the relationship."

Suffice to say, Valentine is living the

dream. "It's a dream come true to be driving such a fantastic car, on a world-class team with some of the world's top professional racers. I'm having a blast, and holding the flag high for the BMW marquee."

MENTORING THE NEXT GENERATION

RJ's passion for the sport doesn't end on the track. His dedication to the sport is exemplified by his commitment to helping introduce the thrill and excitement of racing to the next generation of drivers. Though 80 percent of F1 Boston's business caters to corporate clients, Valentine has established a junior kart racing program—the F1 Junior Racing Academy—offering kids ages 7 to 17 the opportunity to learn how to drive and compete. "Over 1,500 boys and girls have enrolled in the program. From racing school, to leagues to summer camps, we're not only educating kids on how to drive and race, but also helping to instill confidence and sportsmanship, build coordination and discipline and teach driver safety and control," he states.

Taking it to the next level, Valentine hosts the East Coast Run Off competition for the Red Bull's Driver Search program at F1 Outdoors. The program is designed to find, test, and support budding young American racing talent (ages 13-17) and build the American presence at the pinnacle of motor racing; the Formula 1 World Championship. The Red Bull Driver Search mission is to discover and support promising young racers—the real "diamonds in the rough," helping them embark on a career in racing. Each year since 2002, this grassroots program has provided thousands of young go-kart racers with the opportunity to take racing to the next level and beyond—with the winners landing scholarships to race in Europe; groomed to break into Formula 1 and compete for the World Championship,

"This July 100 young drivers tested their mettle at F1 Outdoors, competing to reach their dreams of becoming a Formula 1 race car driver," Valentine stated. "We're proud that Red Bull recognizes the quality of our facilities and has selected F1 Outdoors as the ideal venue for its annual East Coast Run Off."

"Racing has been an indelible part of my life, both personally and professionally. To me, it's both a responsibility and a pleasure to help share the experience with as many kids as possible." ✕