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## **Austin Driver helps put the “Challenge” in Ferrari**

*Circuit of The Americas hosts eager 35-driver field*

**AUSTIN, Texas (Nov., 16, 2012)** – Drivers competing in the Ferrari Challenge support race this weekend at the Circuit of The Americas track have one of their own to thank –or perhaps, blame – for making the race course so, well ... *challenging*.

Austin-based Ranger Construction, which two years ago won the bid to do extensive excavation and site work at COTA, is owned by Mark McKenzie. That might just give him an advantage in his “other” job -- driving the #27 Ferrari Challenge car for Ferrari of Houston.

Given McKenzie’s detailed first-hand knowledge of the course, it’s not surprising he did well in Friday’s practice session, finishing a respectable fifth, with a time of 2 minutes 18.31 seconds – just two seconds behind Alex Popow, who led the 35-car field in his #2 Ferrari of Ft. Lauderdale car with the top practice time of 2.16.36.

“From the very moment you get your tires out on the track, its just one amazing driving experience after another,” claims Popow. “It’s not only America’s newest track, overall it just may be America’s best track. It’s a little green right now, though, so the grip isn’t that great, but it’s still a wonderful experience.”

Understandably, McKenzie is also quite pleased with how the track turned out. “I’d have to say that Tilke, the German engineering firm that designed the track, did a beautiful job of working with the existing topography, amplifying and exploiting it to the best advantage,” McKenzie said.

“And in my opinion they did a masterful, beautiful job in terms of producing a highly challenging, world-class race track. It’s simply a masterpiece – between the topography, the blend of turns, and the way the turns work together.

“They were able to select classic turns of other tracks around the work, and blend them together, including turns from Silverstone, Hockenheim and the new track in Turkey. I may be a bit biased since I helped build it, but in my view it’s absolutely perfect.”