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MARCH 15, 2012

## ON TRACK: PRO DRIVER COMPARES THE 458 ITALIA TO ITS RACING SIBLINGS

by Ferrari in Cars (<http://www.enevsferrari.com/category/blog/cars/>)

The Ferrari 458 Italia, the world's most acclaimed sports car, upholds Ferrari's tradition of blurring the lines between road car and racecar. It also has become the most prolific Prancing Horse racecar, with variants for the Ferrari Challenge and international GT racing.

The most recent to join that group, the 458 Italia Grand Am, made a strong showing at the 2012 Rolex 24 at Daytona, with two cars placing in the GT top 10. One of four drivers to pilot the AIM Autosport Team FXDD entry, Jeff Segal is also an instructor for the Ferrari Driving Experience at Circuit Mont-Tremblant in Canada and a private driving coach. He raced a Ferrari 360 Challenge 10 years ago.

*Ferrari News* spoke with Segal about driving the various 458 road and race models.

**Ferrari News:** Let's start with your impressions of the 458 Italia ([http://www.ferrari.com/English/GT\\_Sport%20Cars/CurrentRange/458-Italia/Pages/458-Italia.aspx](http://www.ferrari.com/English/GT_Sport%20Cars/CurrentRange/458-Italia/Pages/458-Italia.aspx)) road car on the track.

**Segal:** The 458 Italia performs in a manner that eclipses most (GT type) racecars. We use them in the Ferrari Driving Experience on the racetrack, as delivered to customers — the same tires, brakes and fluids. There's phenomenal power and fantastic braking. Most impressive is the traction control system — it's racing-derived, but ultimately, better than most racing traction systems.

*Ferrari News:* How does the 458 Challenge feel to drive in comparison?

**Segal:** Changes to the 458 Challenge (<http://www2.ferrarichallenge.com/>) car are mainly for lighter weight and to make it more appropriate in a racetrack environment. The engine is the same, and the transmission is basically the same, but with different ratios for racing. The suspension is tuned to take advantage of the stickier Pirelli racing slicks, and the car feels a bit more raw and responsive on a track.

*Ferrari News:* You drove the 458 Italia Grand Am ([http://www.ferrari.com/English/GT\\_Sport%20Cars/Sport-Prototypes/Pages/technical\\_sheet\\_458\\_grand\\_am.aspx](http://www.ferrari.com/English/GT_Sport%20Cars/Sport-Prototypes/Pages/technical_sheet_458_grand_am.aspx)) in the Rolex 24 at Daytona. How much of a leap is it from a Challenge car?

**Segal:** You can feel the DNA shared between the cars. Surprisingly, the biggest difference is that the Grand Am car makes less power than the 458 Italia and Challenge — it's just under 500 hp. That's to comply with the Grand Am rules that help to keep the racing even among brands.

The transmission, specified by the series' rules, is a six speed sequential, not a dual-clutch as in the 458 Italia and Challenge. It's easier to service and change gear ratios in a pit stop environment. It has a clutch pedal, but you use it only when taking off from a stop from the pit box and when coming to a stop. The rest of the time, you use paddles. The shifting is slower than in the 458 Italia and Challenge. It's noticeable.

*Ferrari News:* How about handling?

**Segal:** The Grand Am car is a bit more complex to drive than the Challenge car, because there's no ABS or traction control. But the way the car applies power to the road, the way it

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brakes and handles, are all very familiar when you drive the other 458s.

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([http://www.ferrari.com/English/GT\\_Sport%20Cars/Sport-Prototypes/Pages/Technical\\_Sheet\\_458\\_GT2.aspx](http://www.ferrari.com/English/GT_Sport%20Cars/Sport-Prototypes/Pages/Technical_Sheet_458_GT2.aspx)) at Sebring for Extreme Speed Motorsports. How does that car differ from the Grand Am racer?

**Segal:** The 458 GT2 car is a more evolved racecar. The core elements are based on the 458, but with more specialized components. The rules allow a lot more in terms of aerodynamics and suspension. But the power is even lower than in the 458 Italia Grand Am. Consider the different rev limits: The 458 Italia road car and Challenge rev to 9,300 rpm. The Grand Am car is limited to 8,000 rpm, and the GT2 is limited to 7,000 rpm.

**Ferrari News:** What's the takeaway for the owner of a 458 Italia or Spider?

**Segal:** The 458 Italia and Challenge have evolved to point where they're faster than the pro series racecars. I highly recommend taking the Ferrari Driving Experience (<http://www.experienceferrari.com/>) for that reason. In the racetrack environment, you can safely learn about your car's capability with proper instruction. It's for clients to enjoy, but educational.

**Ferrari News:** Not a bad job to have, driving those road and race Ferraris?

**Segal:** I have to pinch myself some days. I really enjoy it.

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