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# The Concours Club Of Miami Sets New Standards For Private Automotive Country Clubs



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Cars & Bikes

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The Concours Club is a state of the art road racing course built between runways of Miami-Opa Locka... [\[+\]](#) CONCOU CLUB

“When we decided to build The Concours Club, we brought our real estate developer’s skillset and our racing mindset,” says Neil Gehani, Chairman of Trilogy Real Estate Group and the force behind The Concours Club, a new state-of-the-art automotive

country club built between runways of Miami-Opa Locka Airport in the heart of urban Miami.



Planview of The Concours Club facility, a two-mile course with multiple configurations, separate... [+] CONOURS CLUB

“A number of people have tried to crack the code in Miami,” says Gehani, who is currently leading the points for the Ferrari Challenge race series and preparing for the Finali Mondiali this month at the Mugello circuit in Tuscany. “I was told it cannot be done—there’s no land, zoning is difficult.”

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Gehani with Hélio Castroneves, who is a founding member who in fact paid his own fees, unlike many... [+] CONCOURS CLUB

“We are seven miles north of Miami International, 15 minutes south of Ft. Lauderdale, 14 miles from Miami Beach,” says Gehani. “Miami-Opa Locka has three FBOs [fixed base operators]. Atlantic just bought a Orion Jet Center built for \$98 million. Fontainebleau Aviation is there,” says Gehani. “We got it zoned for a high-end auto country club with a 60-year lease.”

“Miami has often been where the biggest ambitions come to die,” Gehani says. “We do not want to be another of those deals that was advertised and never happened. We did not market until we were almost 70 percent done with first-phase construction [of the track].” In that first round, 40 founding memberships sold out, raising \$14 million.



Digital rendering of the clubhouse, which will be completed before year's end. The track has been... [+] CONOURS CL

Among those founding members is 3-time Indy 500 winner and longtime Miami resident H elio Castroneves. "When Neil came to me with the idea of a race track in between Miami and Ft. Lauderdale, I thought 'This is going to be a great opportunity,'" says Castroneves. "I'm not ready to stop racing. I don't have a workshop or someplace to go when I finally hang up my racing shoes. I can drive here," says Castroneves with a laugh. When asked how he felt about serving as the digital measuring stick for lap time and method through every single corner, Castroneves chuckles again and says, "Well, you have friends who talk trash and I can say 'Well, all right. Let's prove it.'" Castroneves also provided input on track configuration.



Digital rendering of the guardhouse, which will be completed before year's end. CONCOURS CLUB

With the 2-mile track completed and the clubhouse and related command-control buildings in final stages, a second round of marketing will offer 100 “Elite” memberships by year’s end.



The Concours Club does not use tire barriers because they have been known to cause injury to drivers... [+] CONCO  
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“Everyone else looked at the outskirts,” says Gehani, who turned that thought process inside-out. “We can rely on local hotels, local food and beverage suppliers, professional and service industry that live minutes away from the project. If you’re 90 miles away from a city, you just can’t find people who have those skillsets.” To understand the advantages, imagine Thermal Club located next to Burbank or Van Nuys Airport in Greater Los Angeles rather than more than two or three hours drive from Santa Monica;



The Concours Club is in the middle of Miami-Opa Locka private airport, minutes away from... [+] CONCOURS CLUB

Gehani, whose first sports car was a Porsche 911 purchased in his late twenties with profits from a real estate project, is lifting a page from Porsche's own real estate development playbook: don't force people to travel to a remote racetrack built in a cow pasture or bean field; instead, bring a racetrack to a densely populated area. Porsche's two North American Experience Centers are in densely populated urban areas built on reclaimed post-industrial land, near major international airports and have significant highway traffic flow just minutes away.



Advanced Material Services from Auburn, Alabama, custom-designed the asphalt mix. They are literally... [+] concours club

The Concours Club incorporates “the sum of all wisdom for a road course,” says Aaron Weiss, President of The Concours Club. Weiss is one of Gehani’s most important hires. His CV includes stints as President and COO of Moroso Motorsports Park in Florida, and also Executive V.P. of New York’s premiere private racing club, Monticello Motor Club. When the economy turned ugly in 2009, Weiss founded Sim-Sport.Net and in partnership with Speedsource manufactured high-end realistic simulator controls.





Digital rendering of the buildings that will be completed before year's end. Developer Neil Gehani... [+] CONOURS CLU

“We looked at all the current equipment through the lens of a private club with student looking to improve their skills,” says Weiss, who engaged the finest suppliers in North America and Europe to design and build not only the physical track itself, but just as importantly the electronics and command-control systems that are integral to contemporary racing.



Because The Concours Club is on the grounds of an airport, there can be no standing water, which... [+] CONOURS CLUB

“I’ve been on a quest to eliminate right-seat coaching. It’s a risk to the guy in the right seat, and a 175-pound instructor makes a huge difference in the car’s handling,” says Weiss. He hired GPX Lab, the simulator company of long-time racer Jeff Segal, to adapt their GPX Stream software system, which has been used in Ferrari Challenge for the past two seasons. GPX Stream takes real-time data from a car and delivers it instantaneously to a trackside coach.



Track surface has no “cold seams” between sections of track. Because the track will not be hosting... [+] CONOURS CLUB

“There’s a camera in the car, and equipment that integrates data coming from the CAN bus [the car’s electronic systems]. You can see in one quick image steering input, brake pedal pressure, throttle position. GPX Stream feeds that to any screen in our network. All of our fleet cars will be outfitted, and members’ cars if they want it. Your coach is on pitwall, in one of our buildings, almost anywhere in the world, and they can communicate in your ear just like in normal driver-to-pit communications,” says Weiss. In other words, a talented coach is analyzing your method and feeding input to your earpiece, rather than shouting and gesticulating from the passenger seat. “Now the

historical data we have been analyzing for years and using in simulators becomes real-time. The instructor can say ‘You turned in late for this corner last lap so get down to the marks...try earlier, try later.’”



Gehani is currently points leader in the North American Ferrari Challenge. The Finali Mondiali takes... [+] CONCOURS CLUB

Gehani brought Castroneves in as a founding member, not only for cachet and marketing power in Miami and the greater racing community, but also to feed the data base, to serve as one hell of a measuring stick and learning tool. “If you’ve driven a fleet car and want to compare with Hélio, your lap data can be overlaid,” says Weiss. “If you want to see what Hélio does in any corner or complex on the circuit, I can send that stream right to any iPad, laptop, or screen in the facility.” Coaches can superimpose video of a member’s path through a corner over that of Hélio, showing the differences in approach, arc, exit. “I can show you where you turned in, where Hélio turned in. Analysis is fairly exact.”



The Concours Club can run two one-mile versions, or a 1.3-mile for members and a 0.7 for guests... [+] CONCOURS CL

And then there is control of flow on the course. “I have a control room. We can capture data, move data around, and control the entire race course,” says Weiss. “We are working with Racetrack Engineering, which runs the cameras and replays for Indianapolis, and also the Formula One U.S. Grand Prix at COTA [Circuit of the Americas in Austin, Texas]. The track is saturated with PTZ cameras [Pan-Tilt-Zoom] and electronic flag panels. Peppered around the track are individual server stations called Trackside Racks, or TSRs. We also have the track covered with ‘MyLaps’ timing groups. We have used these to create multiple shorter segments.” All this technology allows The Concours Club to run the course without the burden of corner workers. Beyond payroll savings, that means it is very easy to set up the track for a member on-demand, when they want it, with no need to assemble a supporting cast of characters.



The course is 46 feet wide: 40 feet of track surface with three feet of verge on each side. Built to ... [+] CONCOURS CLI

The technology also makes the track safer and easier to manage. “Tracks have segment one, two, three,” says Weiss, referring to the three timed segments often shown in television coverage of Formula One races. “But what if you had a 2-mile track like ours with 20 segments? Now, each segment is a corner, or a complex of corners. If a car spins or wobbles, if it does not complete a segment in the expected amount of time, trackside lighting goes yellow. The software system will aim a camera at the zone and notify an operator to look closely for an anomaly. If the driver simply went wide and is still going we turn the yellow off. If there is an off or an incident, yellows go up.”



Gehani, who started developing commercial real estate shortly after law school, is a dedicated... [+] CONCOURS CLUB

And then there's ease of use. "Paddocks accommodate members arriving at any time, without crossing the track. We have two paddocks and pitlanes. One for members, the other for events staged by manufacturers," says Weiss. "The track runs in three 4-hour shifts. We can always ensure that members have daily access even if non-member even are scheduled for one or two of our slots." In other words, that Lamborghini, Porsche or Ferrari event for journalists or potential owners will not interfere with playtime for members.

"We are not a strategic branded facility," says Gehani. "We want to be Switzerland." Several premiere brands have asked to stage events at The Concours Club, "but we have politely declined for now," says Gehani. Clearly, Gehani knows the track will prove irresistible to performance car manufacturers wanting to reach the wealthy of South Florida.

The Concours Club is first and foremost a private club and learning tool for gentlemen racers. "We have a large irrigated concrete skidpad with a pitch to a center drain," says Weiss. "The irrigation system is comparable to those used in all the BMW Performance

Centers.” Gehani and Weiss looked at a kickplate, like those at the Porsche Experience Centers, but in truth these systems demonstrate stability control systems. As is so often the case, the old ways are often the best, and a wet skidpad is the best place to learn the fundamentals of car control, sliding across a safely controlled environment.

Gehani has financed the project almost entirely on his own, retaining clear majority ownership and thus control and direction. “We are investing the capital required to build the garages and plan on offering the option of renting rather than requiring members to buy real estate. The Concours Club is well capitalized and focused on delivering what we think our clients will prefer. Clients will have options to rent or buy but we don’t have to pre-sell anything to build.”

This approach adds flexibility. A member with children and grandchildren who love racing might use the club for decades, or lose interest in five years. Renting means the member leaving the club is not left with an expensive “Garage-Majal” townhouse in a remote location, with nothing but farms or desert nearby. In such a dense urban area, reselling garage space should not prove difficult.

“In 2015 I was visiting Miami to avoid a ‘polar vortex’ in the upper Midwest,” says Gehani, who will soon leave his home in Chicago to permanently relocate to Miami. “I saw every sort of Ferrari, Lamborghini, Porsche...all these sports cars. I was wondering ‘Why is there nothing comparable to the Autobahn country club in Joliet where I first started racing? Look at Miami’s car culture, the international culture, Formula One is coming. They have Indy car races. And at that moment I told myself ‘I’m going to build one of these clubs.’ Who ever thought we could pull this off at a private airport? But we did.”



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