



The Lexus Formula

Enthusiasts who just can't wait to settle their driving shoes into the 2008 Lexus IS F, the V8-powered sports sedan designed to reset class standards for performance, handling, comfort and quality, most likely are thinking more about the car's ability to incinerate their favorite roads than they are about the etymology of its name.

But there's a story behind that name, a story that includes the V10-powered LF-A supercar concept shown at the Detroit Auto Show in January.

The story explains where the name came from, and it outlines the beginnings of the Lexus performance and quality heritage. It goes like this:

In the beginning, there was Toyota, a company that of course represents its own remarkable success story. A critical element of that success involves building reliable, efficient vehicles for every segment of the marketplace – it involves being a full-line company, with a vehicle for every buyer.

So far, so good; but in the early 1980s, Toyota Chairman Eiji Toyoda recognized that the company was not represented in a segment he was certain would be critical to the company's continued success and growth. He called together his most trusted corporate officers and advisors and told them that the company needed to create a luxury automobile that would equal, and then exceed, the world's best.

Mr. Toyoda challenged them all to create a vehicle that would serve as a flagship. Because of the size of the American market, the car would be designed with American tastes in mind.

So that's what they set out to do. They took the challenge so seriously, and so literally, in fact, that thinking in English, the language of the car's intended market, they assigned the code name "F," with a circle around it, to the project – with the "F" standing, of course, for "flagship."

The first vehicle to be completed was known as the "F1", or "Flagship One." This of course was the LS 400, which was developed by Chief Engineer Ichiro Suzuki and a group of 60 designers, 24 engineering teams, 1,400 engineers and 2,300 technicians.

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The LS stands of course for Luxury Sedan, and 400 means that the car was powered by a 4.0L V8 engine.

The first LS, and the Lexus models that followed, were developed using procedures even more complex and demanding than those in place for regular Toyota vehicles.

So it is that in addition to standing for “flagship,” the “F” came to symbolize a vehicle that conceived, designed and developed using Lexus’ special “flare.”

And now, it’s come to symbolize even more than that. It’s come to symbolize a separate brand designation within Lexus. In a move that was telegraphed by the appearance of the LF-A concept car, the first production vehicle to wear the “F” as a formal part of its identification is the IS-F, a carefully planned and engineered vehicle that was developed by after-hours enthusiasts, and was not part of Lexus’ usual deliberate development program.

To be certain performance targets were met on the IS F, it was tested at racetracks that count, at tracks that have challenge and heritage. Those test tracks include the legendary Nurburgring Nordschleife, in Germany’s Eiffel Mountains; Circuit Paul Ricard, in the South of France; Circuit Zolder, in Belgium; Laguna Seca Raceway; and at Fuji Speedway, in Japan.

In fact, the “F” logo design comes directly from the shape of Turn One at Fuji Speedway, the home circuit of IS F.

The “F” might also mean “fast,” or “fun,” “fascinating,” or “formula,” suggesting a precise recipe for excellence. But as much as anything else, it’s also a symbol of our “focus” on satisfying every element of the market.

Most importantly, it could also mean “finally.” If it means that, it’s only because it signifies our relief that there’s now a serious, fire-breathing enthusiast’s car that embodies all of the Lexus flagship DNA.

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