

# Cancer Survivor to Challenge Baja 500 with Lexus SUV

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## **New Off-Road Racing Team Relishes Test after Personal Ordeal**

PHOENIX, May 7, 2009 – Joe Bacal is no stranger to difficult challenges. He has successfully driven the notorious Rubicon Trail without incident, for one. Surviving Hodgkin's Lymphoma cancer was a much larger test. Now he is taking on the more interesting challenge of racing a Lexus LX 570 in the Tecate SCORE Baja 500 this June 5-7. He wants to win this one, too.

Backed by the company that helped him regain his health, the Cancer Treatment Centers of America (CTCA), Bacal's newly-formed JTGrey Racing team began preparing a new Lexus LX 570 for racing duty in February, with plans to contest several additional Best in the Desert series races in 2009 and 2010. The LX will compete in the Stock Full/4100 class and is expected to be the first Lexus SUV to be raced off road.

"It may seem unusual to race a large luxury SUV in the desert, but I've worked quite a bit with Lexus vehicles and frankly, I think I'll have an advantage," said Bacal, owner of JTGrey Racing. "Lexus SUVs are capable and extremely durable—both key factors in successful off-road racing."

Although the chance to compete in the Baja 500 in his own vehicle is the realization of a dream, Bacal has prepared well for the task ahead. In 2007 he raced a Toyota Tacoma in the Baja 1000 as part of the Long Beach Racers team. Though they were not able to make it to the finish in the grueling race, the experience was valuable and made him hungry for more.

An important part of Bacal's preparation has been his "day job," in which he provides pro driving services to clients around the country as owner of JTGrey Performance Driving, LLC. It's an outgrowth of years spent working as a test and development driver for carmakers such as GM, Nissan and Toyota, where he honed his driving and technical skills over a 17-year period. During this time, Bacal trained with renowned offroad racer Ivan Stewart. Taking inspiration from the legendary driver, Bacal plans to drive all of his races solo as well.

The concept for Bacal's business and the dream of racing really crystallized during his ordeal with cancer.

Confronted with his own mortality, he became focused on achieving important goals now rather than later, and with a new resolve.

The excellent treatment and positive support he received from the CTCA was an inspiration as well, and not long after starting JTGrey, Bacal took the idea of sponsoring the race team to them for mutual benefit.

With the new partnership established, Bacal assembled an experienced team of successful off-road racers to support his efforts for the season ahead. The team is currently working flat out to prepare the new Lexus for its first desert test later this month.

In addition to the Baja 500, the team plans a limited schedule for 2009 as shown below:

Vegas to Reno 1000: Best in the Desert series, August 19-23

Bilek Silver State: Best in the Desert series, September 25-27

Henderson Fabtech: Best in the Desert series, December 4-6

JTGrey Racing and the CTCA Lexus LX 570 will make their competition debut on June 6 in the Tecate SCORE Baja 500. The race begins in Ensenada at 6:00 a.m. PDT.

## **About JTGrey**

JTGrey Performance Driving, LLC was created in 2007 by Joe and Teresa Bacal to provide expert highperformance driving services (on and off-road) to the auto industry and related companies such as parts suppliers, print advertising and marketing agencies and the commercial and feature film industries, among others. The company is based in Phoenix, Arizona.

JTGrey Racing was created by Joe and Teresa Bacal in 2008 to support Joe Bacal's off-road racing efforts. It is also based in Phoenix.

## **Note to Editors**

In addition to the attached rendering, high-resolution images will be available directly after the Lexus' first test later this month. Please let us know if you would like to be informed when images become available.

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