

Mintz Levin Patent Litigator Revs Up for Racecars

By Nell Gluckman

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Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris, Glovsky and Popeo partner John Bauer does not often tell people about the hobby he's deeply passionate about, but when he does, his eyes widen and his hands start moving with excitement.

The New York-based patent litigator is an avid racecar driver who spends about 15 days a year zipping around a racetrack in a 2005 Porsche 996 GT3 Cup racecar at 150 miles per hour.

Bauer got into racecar driving in the early 1990s because he liked Porsches. He bought a 1987 Porsche Carrera—a streetcar as opposed to a track-only racecar—in 1992 and drove it from his home in Washington, D.C., out to a track in West Virginia called Summit Point. Bauer borrowed a fire extinguisher in case of an accident and drove the racecar around the track with an instructor.

"From that point on, I was hooked," Bauer said. "That's common. People go to the track, and they just become obsessed with it, and that was me."

Bauer is now on his third Porsche, and he participates in races where there is no instructor necessary. He described reaching maximum speed as an obsession. Minute adjustments to the car, as well as the exact second a driver begins braking, can make huge differences to a race.

When he was first getting into it, Bauer spent about 20 to 25 days a year racing. Now the Mintz Levin litigator goes on trips to racetracks up and down the East Coast three or four times each year.

Bauer, who joined Mintz Levin in 2011 from Norton Rose Fulbright legacy firm Fulbright & Jaworski, said that there are similarities between patent litigation and racecar driving.

Litigators "are listening for cues as far as what the judge is thinking about and deciding how to react. It's no different from being in the middle of a corner surrounded by four cars," Bauer said. "It's a very instantaneous, reactive situation."



John Karam

Mintz Levin partner John Bauer in his Porsche 996 Cup racecar.

An interest in digging into technical details has drawn Bauer to both patent litigation and racecar driving. He reads books on suspension and internal combustion engines, does some of the repairs on his own car and compares data about his own races—such as how fast he accelerated on a straight—with the performance of professional drivers.

Getting up to speed on those details provides plenty of fodder for conversation with other drivers during his three-day trips to various racetracks. Bauer said that day jobs and home lives are almost never discussed.

"People are talking about cars: why their tires can't stick, do I need to loosen a sway bar, whether the guy blocked me," Bauer said. He knows of a few other lawyers that share his hobby, but admitted there aren't many, and those amateurs with the most expensive cars usually work at hedge funds.

Bauer has brought clients along for rides, but finds that it's hard for people to relate to his passion, so he rarely brings it up. He did add, with a laugh, that he's waiting for Mintz Levin to sponsor him.

Contact Nell Gluckman at ngluckman@alm.com or on Twitter: @NellGluckman