

MARK BOGHE / MICHAEL DE MAEGT

THE INTERVIEW



Q The outlook for the automotive and racing industries is pessimistic. What is Bekaert's response to this grim projection, and how and when does the company envisage a recovery?

Mark Boghe: Despite the current economic crisis, it is essential for the industry and market leaders to start contemplating the recovery. They need to determine how their company and products will be profiled during the recovery to make sure they are back on track when business picks up again. DLC coatings have brought valuable, cost-efficient benefits to engines in the racing and automotive markets and, as such, we anticipate we will see DLC coatings used more in both of these industries.

Q What cost-saving measures are currently being taken in the racing industry?

Mark Boghe: Unfortunately, budgets are being cut so teams are trying to adapt their spending accordingly. This often involves cutting back on personnel, but also it often means making savings when it comes to engines. This translates into making the engine run for longer periods without cutting back on performance.

Michael De Maegt: And this is where DLC coatings come in. Applying DLC coatings to components not only increases the lifetime of the components, but also extends the lifetime of the entire engine. So not only do you save on components, you also save on time spent checking the different components after every race. It's a win-win situation that can save you valuable time and money.

Q How can investing in DLC coatings benefit companies that are trying to trim costs?

Mark Boghe: Investing in DLC coatings essentially buys you two major benefits. Firstly, the hard and low-friction layer will improve the wear resistance of the component, resulting in a stable performance for the lifetime of the coated component. Secondly, the low-friction properties of the DLC coating reduce the friction losses, resulting in more power available at the wheels.

Q What is a practical example? What would be the typical investment, and when would it pay off?

Michael De Maegt: Another use for DLC coatings is to refurbish components. By that we mean taking back coated and used components and re-coating them. This way, there is no need to buy a new component. When you apply the DLC coating to any component you are protecting it against wear and all the stress put on it, no matter how significant the impact during performance. This means it remains in a perfectly usable condition. Bekaert is providing this service to racing teams so that they do not need to continually invest in new components - instead we simply re-coat existing ones for them.

It is worth adding that re-coating is slightly more expensive because you first need to remove the old coating to guarantee perfect performance of the new coating, which inevitably increases the total cost. Nevertheless, over time this still proves a far more cost effective option than simply going out and buying a new component.