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Business XML

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Goodyear's dealer event full of energy

Amid pyrotechnics, circuslike performances, some retailers optimistic about new tires, brand

By Jim Mackinnon
Beacon Journal business writer

NASHVILLE, TENN. - Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. began its annual dealers conference Friday with all the subtlety of four hooded ninjas dropping via ropes from a ballroom ceiling onto a stage.

There were pyrotechnics and fog. *Seinfeld* video clips. Live performances by a gymnast, two dancers and a figure skater on synthetic ice. And music, lots of loud music.

Each of the 2,000 or so people in the cavernous ballroom at the Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center was provided a laser pointer as part of the extravaganza to introduce Goodyear's latest products.

It concluded with a live bald eagle named Challenger swooping from one handler at the stage in the front of the ballroom to a second handler atop a wall standing above an American flag at the far, far end of the room.

It seems when you have good news to talk about and you introduce an innovative carbon-fiber Eagle tire as well as new Kelly and Dunlop brand tires, you can never be too over the top.

Riffing off *Mission: Impossible*, complete with a satirical movie featuring the aforementioned ninjas – played by stuntmen on ropes and top corporate executives on stage – Goodyear called its conference “Mission: Innovation 2006.”

The energy level at the 600,000-square-foot-convention center was a far cry from several years ago, said Larry Mason, Goodyear's president of consumer tires in North America.



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