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SRT Motorsports - SRT Viper GTS-R ALMS Race Advance - Round 10 - Road Atlanta

October 15, 2013, Auburn Hills, Mich. -

FOLLOW SRT MOTORSPORTS TEAM

- View the latest installment of Beyond the Checkered Flag focusing on the SRT Motorsports pit crew at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oGYzmk5Xhz4>

SRT VIPER GTS-R READY FOR ROAD ATLANTA

- SRT Motorsports will field two SRT Viper GTS-Rs in Saturday's Petit Le Mans.
- The driver lineup for Road Atlanta: Jonathan Bomarito, Kuno Wittmer and Tommy Kendall in the No. 93 Pennzoil Ultra SRT Viper GTS-R; Dominik Farnbacher, Kuno Wittmer and Ryan Dalziel in the No. 91 SRT Viper GTS-R.
- Viper GTS-R (Beretta, Wendlinger, Duez) won in GT Class at the 1999 ALMS Petit Le Mans at Road Atlanta.

FOLLOW THE ACTION

- Race Broadcast – 10/19/13, FOX Sports 2, 11 a.m. (EDT)
- Live Streaming – 10/19/13, ALMS.com, 10:30 a.m. (EDT)
- Live Qualifying – 10/18/13, ALMS.com, 1:05 p.m. (EDT)
- Season Encore – 10/20/13, FOX Sports 1, 4 p.m. (EDT)

TV SCHEDULE (Saturday, Oct. 19)

- 11 a.m. – 12 p.m. (EDT) FOX Sports 2 (Live)
- 2:30 – 6:30 p.m. (EDT) FOX Sports 2 (Live)
- 6:30 – 8 p.m. (EDT) FOX Sports 1 (Live)
- 8 – 9:30 p.m. (EDT) FOX Sports 2 (Live)

FROM THE TEAM LEADERS

"It's a tough track to set up for and the other problem, racing-wise, is it's a short lap. If you have a problem or a hiccup, you're going to go a lap down pretty quick and it's hard to make laps up. You really have to be perfect to win at Petit Le Mans. There's a huge curb in Turn 3 that you have to run over to get a good lap time and that's probably the biggest thing that can hurt the car."

--Bill Riley, VP and Chief Engineer - Riley Technologies

"The car and driver are always doing something at Road Atlanta. It's a lot different than Le Mans that has real long straightaways. Road Atlanta is a much shorter track, so there isn't much separation between cars. The track is very condensed for the amount of cars in the race. Our drivers are always busy and mentally loaded as the corners require total concentration and the Prototypes approach quickly. The drivers just never get a break physically or mentally and the car never gets a break."

--Matt Bejnarowicz, Lead Engineer - SRT Motorsports

QUICK FACTS

- Saturday's race at Road Atlanta ends the American Le Mans Series era. ALMS and Grand-Am merge next year to form the Tudor United SportsCar Championship.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Production SRT Vipers are built at the Chrysler Group's Connor Avenue Assembly Plant in Detroit.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"Petit Le Mans at Road Atlanta will certainly be a tremendous challenge but everyone at SRT Motorsports is ready. It's a tough racetrack but I think it's one that is well suited for our SRT Viper GTS-Rs. We have done well this season on tracks with long straightaways and high speed corners. At both Sebring and Le Mans we proved that our cars are quite durable and able to withstand the punishment of endurance races. We had a very quick turnaround from VIR (Virginia International Raceway) to Road Atlanta but everyone on the team has been working hard to prepare for the final race of the season."

--Gary Johnson, SRT Motorsports Racing Manager

DRIVER QUOTES:

"The SRT Viper GTS-R has been very strong at Road Atlanta in the test the last two days (Sunday and Monday), big improvements over last year. The car is very driveable and we're still making improvements. We know what we have to work with and what we have to tackle."

--Dominik Farnbacher – No. 91 SRT Viper GTS-R

"For a driver, it's a big challenge to go fast round Road Atlanta. You can't afford to make a mistake because the walls are pretty close to the track. There are plenty of challenges. We've proven our speed and reliability during the year. We're very strong and very competitive."

--Marc Goossens – No. 91 SRT Viper GTS-R

"I'm extremely excited and grateful to be part of the SRT Motorsports program for the endurance races. The SRT Viper GTS-R has shown great speed the past few races. I have no doubt the car is going to be fast. Hopefully we can have a good, clean race Saturday."

--Ryan Dalziel – No. 91 SRT Viper GTS-R

"Although we have three drivers for the race, it's physically exhausting and mentally draining. The only time you can relax is on the back straightaway where you're able to take your hands off the steering wheel, get a little blood going in your fingers and see where you're at in relation to other cars."

--Kuno Wittmer – No. 93 SRT Viper GTS-R

"I think Road Atlanta might be one of the toughest tracks from a traffic perspective. We're faster than the GTC cars and slower than the Prototypes. These discrepancies get bigger in the faster parts of the track, especially the fast corners. It's hard to navigate traffic both forwards and backwards."

--Tommy Kendall – No. 93 SRT Viper GTS-R

"We did some things during the test this week that we haven't had the opportunity to do on race weekends. You're so limited on time that you don't want to risk going down a certain route and it not work. We had the time to try some things that we have in our playbook."

--Jonathan Bomarito – No. 93 SRT Viper GTS-R

FULL SRT QUOTES PACKAGE - PETIT LE MANS

Gary Johnson – SRT Motorsports Racing Manager

"We are certainly honored to be participating in the final race of the American Le Mans Series presented by Tequila Patron. While we are excited about 2014, we shouldn't forget what Dr. Don Panoz has done for sports car racing in the United States.

"Petit Le Mans at Road Atlanta will certainly be a tremendous challenge but everyone here at SRT Motorsports is ready. Road Atlanta is a tough racetrack but I think it's one that is well suited for our SRT Viper GTS-Rs. We have done well this season on tracks with long straightaways and high speed corners. At both Sebring and Le Mans we proved that our cars are quite durable and able to withstand the punishment of endurance races. We have performed very well in both endurance races this season so we're optimistic about our chances.

"We had a very quick turnaround from VIR (Virginia International Raceway) to Road Atlanta but everyone on the team has been working hard to prepare for the final race of the season. Our drivers and engineers have spent time at a simulator to focus on our setup.

"We have two tests and four practice sessions scheduled prior to the race including a night practice on Thursday so we have time to come up with a good qualifying and race setup.

"Petit Le Mans was one of the four races we ran last year as we prepared to compete full-time this season. I'm certain there are things we can use from competing there last year but keep in mind we're constantly making improvements to these cars. Every time we are on the track we learn something that makes our program better."

Jonathan Bomarito – No. 93 Pennzoil Ultra SRT Viper GTS-R

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO GO FAST AT ROAD ATLANTA? "Road Atlanta is a good track and it's a lot of fun. You have to have good speed and aero-balance. The track is pretty difficult to get a good setup. The car has to go through the high-speed corners well and it's helpful to take advantage of the curbs in a few areas. Good power is really important off the hairpin corner that leads onto the big straightaway. It's just a combination of things. The engineers have a lot of work to get it all right."

HOW DIFFICULT IS IT TO RACE THERE WHEN THE SUN GOES DOWN? "I got a few laps in last year during the night practice and it's definitely very dark in spots. It helps to get some track time in that Thursday night practice before the Saturday race to get comfortable in those really dark spots. You have the Prototypes coming up on you pretty quick and you can't do a lot about it in the esses. You can feel their impatience behind you."

IS TRAFFIC ONE OF YOUR MAIN CONCERNS AT ROAD ATLANTA? "In sports car racing traffic is always on your mind, always a concern. The last three tracks – Circuit of the Americas, Virginia International Raceway and now Road Atlanta – all have a high-speed esses section which is extremely long. If you get stuck behind cars or if cars get stuck behind you, it affects them quite a bit because there's no room to pass. Patience is key. This is a 10-hour race instead of a two-hour and 45-minute race. Hopefully patience is a little more common."

IS THE TRACK PHYSICALLY DEMANDING ON YOU AS A DRIVER? "You don't get much of a break at Road Atlanta. It's kind of one corner after another. From Turn 1 to that back straight, it's very busy. And with that many cars on the track, you're constantly working both mentally and physically."

YOU HAVE THREE DAYS OF TESTING PRIOR TO THE RACE. HOW BIG OF A FACTOR IS ALL THAT TRACK TIME AS YOU WORK YOUR WAY TOWARD THE RACE WEEKEND? "It's actually a big factor but it's a double-edged sword. If you roll off the truck really good, you wish you could just go racing right then. If you have a lot of development to do and are off the pace, then it's good to try to get caught up."

"One of the bigger things with that much track time is the wear and tear on the car, the risk levels that you're putting the car through, all the miles that you are putting on the car. That's a lot of work for the crew, a lot of late nights. It just makes for a long week."

Kuno Wittmer – No. 93 Pennzoil Ultra SRT Viper GTS-R

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGING CHARACTERISTICS OF ROAD ATLANTA? "Road Atlanta is one of the most daunting circuits in North America. Even though you have three drivers, it's physically exhausting and mentally draining. There's a lot of G-loads, a lot of G-forces in the corners. Taking the No. 93 Pennzoil Ultra SRT Viper GTS-R through corner one (Turn 1) at 120, 130 miles per hour in fifth gear is quite difficult. Throw in 35 or more cars, the nighttime where there is not much light around the track and it becomes very difficult to keep focused."

"The difficult part is from corner one to five especially at night when there's no lights. I would say the only time on the track that you have room to relax is on the back straightaway where you're able to take your hands off the steering wheel and free them up, get a little blood going in your fingers and look around to see where you're at in relation to other cars."

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE POSITIVES AND NEGATIVES WITH SO MUCH TESTING TIME DURING THE WEEK

PRIOR TO THE RACE? "There is a lot of track time. We were on track Sunday and Monday taking advantage of the test opportunity and have another session on Wednesday. Then we have the official practice and qualifying leading up to the race on Saturday.

"We want to go for the pole in our SRT Viper GTS-R for bragging rights. However, after the first hour or two at an endurance race, qualifying doesn't really matter. Last year we qualified at the back of the field but after an hour we were leading."

HOW IMPORTANT IS THE NIGHT PRACTICE ON THURSDAY AS YOU PREPARE FOR THE RACE? "The nighttime practice is actually the most important session. I would even put it more important than qualifying due to the fact that every driver must complete a certain amount of laps during night practice to be able to drive at night during the race. If I don't get to drive in night practice, I will not be able to drive at night in the race. That puts a lot more strain on the two other drivers.

"The plan for nighttime practice is to get the three drivers their required laps to be eligible to race at night and then focus on getting everyone adjusted to racing in traffic at night. Road Atlanta is extremely tough at night."

Tommy Kendall – No. 93 Pennzoil Ultra SRT Viper GTS-R

"I'm looking forward to Petit Le Mans for a lot of reasons. It's my first race back in the car since Le Mans so it's been a long layoff for me. I'm anxious to get back in there and have some fun. For me, it will be the first track that I've gone back to with the car for the second time. Last year, Road Atlanta was kind of the start of us making some big strides. We were in the conversation for the first time last year at Road Atlanta. The idea is that you have to dot all the i's and cross all the t's which is easier said than done in a race of that length.

"I think Road Atlanta might be one of the tougher tracks from a traffic perspective. You've got some long, fast stretches that are hard to let traffic by and get by traffic easily. For us, we're kind of in the middle. We're faster than the GTC cars and slower than the Prototypes. Those discrepancies get bigger in the faster parts of the track, especially the fast corners. Coming under the bridge and down to the start-finish line is one of those areas. It's the same thing from the hill (Turn 1) all the way through Turn 5. It's hard to navigate traffic both frontwards and backwards. To win one of these you've got to stay out of trouble but if you are always opting on the safe side, you lose too much ground. That's the balancing act."

THIS IS THE FINAL RACE FOR ALMS. CAN YOU PUT INTO PERSPECTIVE WHAT DR. DON PANOZ HAS DONE FOR SPORTS CAR RACING? "I watched from afar what Don Panoz did. He recognized something that in hindsight is really obvious: the importance of Le Mans itself and aligning with what is done over here to build interest, support and value for the manufacturers that are participating.

"The GT class, in particular with the manufacturers that want to play, is a direct result of being so strongly aligned with Le Mans. We're hoping that when we get back together next year it'll go to new heights. It's truly a merger of strength where both sides have built stable platforms that have a lot of interest from both competitors and fans.

"But Don's genius was in seeing the importance of the link to Le Mans. Without that link it's hard to say how it would have played out but the people that love the exotic cars, the GTs and so forth, owe Don a big thanks."

Marc Goossens – No. 91 SRT Viper GTS-R

"Petit Le Mans at Road Atlanta is probably one of the biggest races of the season on the ALMS calendar. There are more teams coming over to do that race than what we usually have in the ALMS. It used to be the place where Audi and everybody else came out for the simple reason that if you can win Petit Le Mans at Road Atlanta, you get an automatic entry for Le Mans. That makes the race very special to start with.

"The place is known for all the fast corners, the esses going down the hill, the elevation changes, a very long straightaway on the back straight and some very challenging corners like Turn 1 and the final corner. For a driver it's a big challenge to go fast around Road Atlanta. You can't afford to make any mistakes because the walls are pretty close to the track. There are plenty of challenges and it's the final race of the championship. If one of our Vipers could win, that would be a guaranteed spot at Le Mans for next year so there's a lot at stake."

THIS IS THE FINAL RACE IN THE HISTORY OF THE ALMS. HOW SPECIAL WOULD IT BE TO RUN WELL AND HAVE A CHANCE TO WIN THAT RACE? “Knowing on Saturday night when the checkered flag falls that you participated in the last ALMS race is going to be special as you look back at what Don Panoz created a number of years ago when he brought the Le Mans rules to the States and created his own championship. That was a big moment and everybody was wondering how long it would last. Well it did last and I think they put on a good show the entire time. But like everybody has been saying, it’s time for the two championships to come together into one good, solid sports car series in America.

“But for us, we won’t treat it as the last ALMS race. We’ll treat it as one of those races we want to win. It’s no different than the last race at VIR. Our ambitions are the same. We’ve proven our speed and our reliability during the year and we’re working very hard to be competitive at the highest level. We’ve had a couple of pole positions. We’ve had a win and several podium finishes. There’s always going to be people that say ‘Maybe that was their lucky event of the year.’ I don’t think so because I think we’ve shown that we’re very strong and very competitive. It would be great if we could finish the year off with another win and why not put both cars on the podium again?”

HOW BIG OF A FACTOR IS VISIBILITY ONCE DARKNESS SETTLES IN OVER ROAD ATLANTA? “Nighttime is very important. We have experience from doing Le Mans this year. When it comes down to aiming headlights in the right directions and all that, we should be pretty close before going to Road Atlanta. It’s one of those tracks where a great part of it is in the dark. That’s one challenge that comes with sports car racing and endurance racing. I can’t see it being any different than Sebring or Le Mans.

“It’s pretty hard to beat the darkness of Le Mans. To go around the roads in France at night, they’re like black and there’s no lights at all around it. At Road Atlanta there is a big glow in the infield where the fans are and there are lights from the paddock. I think Le Mans is much darker and I think Sebring is just as dark as Road Atlanta. It’s been since June we drove the car in the dark so it’s always a little bit of adapting in the practice sessions. I think we’ll do just fine with that.”

THERE HAS BEEN A LOT OF TESTING TIME PRIOR TO THE RACE AT ROAD ATLANTA. ARE THERE BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ELEMENTS TO BEING ON THE TRACK SO MUCH BEFORE THE RACE? “We just look at it as positive. The more track time we get, the more we learn about the track, about the different weather conditions. All we do is collect data to improve the car not only for that event but also for the future. The more track time we get is perfect. We want to be on the track as much as we can.

“Now obviously there is a 10-hour race following the practice but when it comes down to spare parts and all that, we are well equipped. Hopefully everything runs reliable so we don’t need any of the spares. We’ve done a good job this year keeping the car out of trouble. I can’t see why Road Atlanta would be different or why it would be a problem.

“I think the difficult part for the team was to get away from VIR (Oct. 5) and get prepared for testing at Road Atlanta. I spent some time at the shop before coming to Road Atlanta and the guys were in complete control of everything.”

Dominik Farnbacher – No. 91 SRT Viper GTS-R

“The last race of the season is this weekend; I can’t believe how quick everything went. The race at Road Atlanta is always a classic and this one is going to be historic because it’s going to be the last race of the American Le Mans Series.

“I think it’s very important to do well there because if you do well, it’s good momentum for next season. Last year we had a very good race there in preparation for a full season this year. I think the racetrack suits the racecar. You use a lot of curb in order to get quicker. The car needs to last of course. It’s an endurance race, the second longest after Sebring. The SRT Viper GTS-R is very enduring and strong. It shouldn’t be a problem for us.”

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CRITICAL AREAS OF THE TRACK? “I think Road Atlanta is the track with the most elevation on our calendar after Laguna Seca. It’s important to get through Turn 1 and up the hill with a lot of speed, not lose momentum. Turn 3 is another very important corner. It’s over a curb and leads you downhill to the esses. If you don’t get a good run over the curb in Turn 3, you lose a lot of time. So setup-wise, we need to find a good

balance between downforce and top speed because you don't really have a lot of overtaking opportunities. The only one you have is down the back straight. If you make too much downforce in the car you will not be able to overtake people there so it's very important to find the perfect balance between top speed and downforce and a car which is very good over the bumps."

HOW IMPORTANT IS THE NIGHT PRACTICE? WHAT IS THE VISIBILITY LIKE AT ROAD ATLANTA AT NIGHT?

"Visibility is a big factor. The night session is very important to us. You have apex lights on the outside and the main headlights in the front which basically give you the straightforward looks. It's very important to set up the lights there and to find the rhythm. You usually look for a spot on the racetrack like braking markers, braking points but in the dark it's hard to see them. You need to be aware of that. It's more or less a rhythm in yourself and confidence in the car. If you get a lot of seat time in the car in that night practice session, that will be a factor for the end of the race and could decide the winner.

"I think we can still get second in the manufacturer championship and driver championship. We'll still keep fighting. We're not there to just drive. We want to win and show that the product is one of the best on the market. For me, this race is important. I want to win this race.

"Road Atlanta is a track that's very hard on the car. If we run into any trouble there, we can see where the weak spots are. We hope that won't happen. It's a long race and a great indicator of how we will be in the Rolex 24 at Daytona and 12 Hours of Sebring next year."

Ryan Dalziel – No. 91 SRT Viper GTS-R

"I think the biggest challenge in the race is traffic. Of all the endurance races that we do, it's probably the busiest. One of the biggest difference is the speeds between the classes. Staying out of trouble is the key to success there. The SRT Viper GTS-R has shown great speed in the past few races. I have no doubt the car is going to be fast. Hopefully we can have a good, clean race and finish the season on a high note."

IS THE TRACK PHYSICALLY DEMANDING FOR A DRIVER? "It's not a bumpy track but it's very busy through the first half and then quite busy through the second half with a long stretch in the middle where you have kind of a breather. It's definitely a demanding track. The good thing is it's not too hot in Atlanta this time of year. I know the guys have worked really hard on the car since I last drove it.

"I'm definitely looking forward to it. Getting back in the car at the test was like the first day of school. It's so different to everything else that I drive during the year. I'm happy with the success I've had and couldn't be happier to be part of the program for Petit Le Mans."

HOW IMPORTANT IS THE NIGHT PRACTICE? "It gets dark very quickly. You go from two or three laps in daylight to nighttime. If you were trying to plan ahead, you would try and utilize the finishing driver during night practice only. Typically that's the way it works. You like to keep one driver in as it gets dark. It's always harder for one driver to get in and get mentally adjusted for the night light. I'm sure that's what we'll do. I'm there very much in a supporting role."

THERE IS A GOOD BIT OF TRACK TIME LEADING INTO THE RACE. IS THAT BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE?

"Every year you go to Sebring and Petit and look at the schedule, you see huge amounts of track time but it goes fast. There's always a lot of yellows, a lot of reds during practice. And to be honest, we're still developing this car and have lots of things that we want to try. We're there to continue to develop the car. It's the last race of this year but it's looking into next year at the same time. The time goes fast so although there is a lot of track time, you've got to make the most of it."

Bill Riley – Vice President and Chief Engineer, Riley Technologies

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES AT ROAD ATLANTA FROM AN ENGINEERING PERSPECTIVE? "It's a tough track to set up for and the other problem, racing-wise, is it's a short lap. If you have a problem or a hiccup you're going to go a lap down pretty quick and it's hard to make laps up. You really have to be perfect to win at Petit Le Mans."

THERE ARE A LOT OF ELEVATION CHANGES AT ROAD ATLANTA. HOW MUCH STRESS DOES THAT PLACE ON THE CAR? "There is a huge curb in Turn 3 that you have to run over to get a good lap time and that's probably the biggest thing that can hurt the car."

HOW BIG OF A FACTOR IS THE LENGTH OF THE RACE? "I'm not too worried about the endurance of the car because we had a strong effort at Sebring and then a good race at Le Mans. The challenge is if something goes wrong, you get in a small accident or have to take the hood off and go a lap down."

ON THE LACK OF LIGHT AROUND THE COURSE ONCE THE SUN GOES DOWN. "We're going to go with that same lights package that we put in the car for Le Mans so we should be okay."

HOW BIG OF A FACTOR ARE THE TEST DAYS AT ROAD ATLANTA IN PREPARATION FOR THE RACE? "It's great for us. The car is so different from how we ran last time at Road Atlanta. The test time gives us a good indicator of the improvements we've made."

Matt Bejnarowicz – Lead Engineer, SRT Motorsports

FROM AN ENGINEERING PERSPECTIVE, WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CRITICAL PARTS OF THE TRACK AND WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO RUN WELL AT ROAD ATLANTA? "Road Atlanta is definitely a high-downforce track because of the high-speed corners both coming down the hill, going up the hill, Turn 1 and through the esses. There are very demanding corners. But on the flip side, Road Atlanta has a lot of curbing that you have to run to set a good lap time. The car has to be compliant enough to run those curbs but have the downforce.

"What makes Road Atlanta unique are the compression corners, especially going up Turn 1. There's pretty heavy camber to the track and heavy compression on the suspension. You really struggle to find a good compromise of a soft car for the curbs, a high-downforce car that really wants different springs to support the car and then a car that can tolerate the compression so that you're not skidding on the ground. The priority is to put downforce in the car and then figure out a way to keep the car off the ground and still run the curbs. Then you need to make sure your top speed is acceptable otherwise you will have no chance to make a pass at the end of the long straight, or worse yet, be passed easily."

HOW BIG OF A FACTOR IS THE RACE DISTANCE? "It's definitely an endurance race. The car and driver are always doing something at Road Atlanta. It's a lot different than Le Mans (which) has real long straightaways. Road Atlanta is a much shorter track, so there isn't much separation between cars. The track is very condensed for the amount of cars in the race. Our drivers are always busy and mentally loaded as the corners require total concentration and Prototypes approach quickly. They just never get a break physically or mentally and the car never gets a break. "

THERE IS A LOT OF TRACK TIME SCHEDULED PRIOR TO THE RACE. HOW DO YOU MANAGE THAT? "In terms of time and mileage, we just have to account for that and rework parts of the car before the actual race. We did a scheduled engine change after the Promoter's Test to make sure that we have a fresh motor in both of the cars. We'll take a look at all the gearbox internals to make sure that we're running lower mileage gear sets, the brakes will get services and we'll take a look at the suspension. We anticipate that we're going to do a lot of running and have planned maintenance time on the cars."

HOW IMPORTANT IS THE NIGHT PRACTICE? "The series has a required mandatory driving time at night before you're allowed to compete and that can be hectic, especially if you have an incident that causes a red flag and reduces the time on the track or if you have a problem on the car yourself. The main priority of that night session is to cycle the drivers through, get a little experience for them, make sure the lights are aimed right and make sure we check the box on the mandatory driving time."

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