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SRT Motorsports No. 91 Viper GTS-R Scores Podium Result in Season-Opening Race at Daytona

SRT Team Captures Third-Place in Nation's Premier Endurance Race

January 25, 2014, Daytona Beach, Fla. - The No. 91 SRT ® (Street and Racing Technology) Motorsports Viper GTS-R team claimed a third-place GTLM class finish in the season-opening Rolex 24 At Daytona, the inaugural event of the new IMSA TUDOR United SportsCar Championship, with drivers Dominik Farnbacher, Marc Goossens and Ryan Hunter-Reay piloting the car to the podium result.

Each driver of the No. 91 led laps in their opening stint after the team started from the pole. However, the group had a power steering fluid line rupture in the overnight hours and rushed to the garage for repairs. The SRT team returned to the track after a rapid, 15-minute repair in the garage and fought constantly for the rest of the race to regain positions and laps while also keeping an eye on the attrition of the GTLM competition. The team was down a number of laps to the leader at one point before engineering the comeback for a podium finish.

"The performance was good, but the kind of racing this is now you have one little mishap and you have to fight your whole way to get back," said Bill Riley, vice president and chief engineer of Riley Technologies, after the race. "We had a power steering line fail. We got 12 laps down and we ended up four laps down by just continuing to fight. It's a shame because we didn't have any other issues besides that. After that, the hood or the body never had to come off the car, so it was pretty much a flawless run besides that. We fought all day, we didn't give up and we're on the podium."

The podium finish was the sixth for SRT Motorsports team since returning sports car competition in the 2012 season. The third-place showing also put Viper back on the podium at Daytona International Speedway after winning the 2000 Rolex 24 overall in the marque's last appearance at the World Center of Racing.

The sister No. 93 SRT Viper GTS-R finished sixth after the team started the race in a similarly competitive situation as the No. 91. After starting third in class and seeing each driver – Rob Bell, Jonathan Bomarito and Kuno Wittmer – each lead at least one lap in their respective race-opening driving stints, the No. 93 quickly joined the No. 91 as the primary class pacesetters in the first third of the race.

Coincidentally, just minutes after the No. 91 returned to the race after the nighttime repair, a contact incident forced the No. 93 from the lead lap and into a lengthy run of pit-side repairs to fix the front end. Like the No. 91, Bomarito, Bell and Wittmer fought back from several laps down and back into the top five top-five in class by mid-morning on Sunday.

By then, the No. 91 had worked its way up to fourth place, one spot ahead of their teammates, but any hope of the No. 93 moving even further up in the running order quickly came to an end when a second problem emerged. The entry came to a stop on course with a driveshaft flange issue that put an end to any SRT dual podium aspirations as the No. 93 lost several laps back in the garage for additional repairs.

Despite the No. 93's disappointing finish, SRT Motorsports should be well positioned in the early season point standings for the IMS TUDOR GTLM Team Championship.

The IMSA TUDOR United SportsCar Championship moves on to race at Florida's Sebring International Raceway on Saturday, March 15, for the annual 12 Hours of Sebring.

- The SRT Motorsports No. 91 Viper GTS-R started the race from the GTLM pole position after Goossens

qualifying run, with the No. 93 Viper positioned directly behind after qualifying third in class.

- Both the No. 91 and 93 SRT Viper teams led laps within the race's opening 30 minutes with first-stint drivers Goossens and Bomarito, respectively.
- All six SRT Motorsports Viper GTS-Rs drivers – Bell, Bomarito, Farnbacher, Goossens, Hunter-Reay and Wittmer – led laps in the GTLM class durng their respective opening stints in the endurance event.
- The No. 91 SRT Viper team experienced a failure in the power steering line that dictated a 15-minute repair during the race's middle portion. The team was able to rebound after making repairs and take home a third-place result.
- The No. 93 SRT Viper overcame a contact incident during Saturday's evening hours to return to the top-five in the GTLM class on Sunday, but was thwarted by a driveshaft flange issue on Sunday afternoon.
- After making repairs to the driveshaft, the No. 93 SRT Viper returned to the track and finished sixth.
- The 52nd running of the Rolex 24 At Daytona marked the inaugural event of the new IMSA TUDOR United SportsCar Championship.
- The series next competes at Florida's Sebring International Raceway on Saturday, March 15. Prior to the event, the series will host a two-day test at Sebring on February 20 and 21.

SRT Motorsports Driver and Team Quotes

Ralph Gilles, president and CEO of SRT

How difficult has endurance racing become?

"That's really the whole thing about these 24-hour races. To have so many classes have one-two finishes – nearly photo finishes – after 24 hours shows you how tight the field is. No one is making mistakes. We're getting better. But it's down to luck and just that one unfortunate thing, but, hey, it's racing."

What are you impressions on the new combined series?

"The energy is unbelievable. The crowd that was here on the pit row, I've never seen anything like it. It's rivaling some of the best motorsports in the world. I could tell just on the social media and activity in our social media side of SRT, everyone is watching. They're paying attention to a very exciting series and it feels like a new chapter in American racing. I think it's going to be fantastic for fans and the racers as well."

Gary Johnson,SRT racing manager

How did the SRT Viper GTS-Rs look over 24 hours?

"The teams in both cars really did a fantastic job. They were so quick and had such a great chance of winning. It was a shame that we had such a minor issue that kind of took so many laps out of the equation because I think that car – the 91 – could have easily won. Even after the 91 went out, we thought the 93 had a good chance. Cold tires coming out of the pit is one thing that Bill (Riley, lead engineer for the No. 91) warned everybody about and unfortunately it bit us. It does make it pretty exciting in thinking about the upcoming races and how I know we'll be competitive, so I look forward to those."

Marc Goossens,driver, No. 91 SRT Viper GTS-R

How was your race?

"I think everybody has seen it – I mean driver-wise, pit stop-wise – we had a couple of issues going wrong like doors not closing after a driver change and things like that, so there's still a couple of things we need to address. But in general, I think the team executed the pit stops perfectly except maybe the last one. I had a rough time at the end because they didn't want me to push too hard – make sure I roll the car to the finish – but then that way it's hard to keep focus, especially after 22 hours. You start to get tired. It's tough to keep focus. We decided to do a slow pit stop on the last one and you see that the guy is going to a different rhythm and then you loss a wheel nut. We got a stop and go for that. Other than that, it all ran very smoothly. If you see how many laps we lost because of the power steering issue and then you watched the race, I think it's far to say the 91 should have won this one."

What makes this team so strong?

"It's teamwork. We have some great guys on the pit stand doing strategy for us. All the drivers did well. It's just some technical issues that we're not in control of. It's unfortunate that it happens, but at the end of the day it's still a podium finish at the 24 Hours of Daytona. I think it's a great return for Viper and SRT Motorsports at this venue and mainly I think very important that we take valuable points for the championship. This was only the first race.

There's a lot more to come this year."

Dominik Farnbacher,driver, No. 91 SRT Viper GTS-R

How do you evaluate today's race?

"I look at it with a happy eye and with a crying eye because we could have won. My teammates – Ryan (Hunter-Reay) and Marc (Goossens), they did an outstanding job, as did the sister car – we were just driving our butts off and the mechanics worked so hard. It's a little bit disappointing. We could have – we ran the same pace the front runners did equally as fast and I think we could have been there the last couple of laps, but that wasn't the case. We also can look at it in a good light because these are important points for the championship. Third place – that gives you quite a lot of points. That's very important for the future. Other than that, I want to thank my teammates for the outstanding job this weekend and let's go win at Sebring (International Raceway)."

Ryan Hunter-Reay,driver, No. 91 SRT Viper GTS-R

How strong was your car?

"I'm really proud of the team, proud of our teammates, my co-drivers, the engineering, everybody at SRT. We definitely had the car to beat. I can't tell you how agonizing it was in the waning hours of the race there driving a car I knew was capable of winning it being so many laps down. We clawed back from whatever it was – 13, 11, 12 laps, I guess. It's unfortunate. It's more frustrating right now because I know how good the car was."

Bill Riley, lead engineer, No. 91 SRT Viper GTS-R

How was the race?

"The performance was good, but the kind of racing this is now you have one little mishap and you have to fight your whole way to get back. We had a power steering line fail. We got 12 laps down and we ended up four laps down by just continuing to fight. It's a shame because we didn't have any other issues besides that. After that, the hood or the body never had to come off the car, so it was pretty much a flawless run besides that. We fought all day, we didn't give up and we're on the podium."

Were you proud of the way your team reacted to adversity?

"We had the accident in the middle of the night on the 93 and they fixed that on pit lane. It's just kind of the drive of this team and it starts from top all the way down to the bottom. Everybody pulls the same direction all the time."

Rob Bell,driver, No. 93 SRT Viper GTS-R

How was your race?

"Any 24-hour race is difficult and we had our share of issues, but we also had a very fast Viper. We worked hard to make up ground after our first incident and appeared poised for a top-five result, but the late-race mechanical issue hurt us. The crew did a tremendous job to get the car back out on the track quickly and the No. 91 ran a great race and recovered well after their power steering issue to take a podium finish."

Jonathan Bomarito,driver, No. 93 SRT Viper GTS-R

How was the endurance race?

"The team as a whole, both cars – it's hard to describe how hard these guys work and the heart and soul they put into this race and every race for that matter. It's an incredible group of people, they want to win, they have the desire to win and we're going to be there. But to put a Viper on the podium is a great day for SRT."

How did your team react to the issues?

"They're amazing. Everything we threw at them throughout this race they reacted to, fixed the problem and got the car back on track. I don't think anybody could have done it faster."

Kuno Wittmer,driver, No. 93 SRT Viper GTS-R

How was your race?

"I think we had some highs and lows throughout the entire race. It's a 24-hour race and things always get complicated – sometimes they go smooth and sometimes they don't. Everything started off pretty good and when you think everything is going great it goes south. When you have a team like this with SRT and with Riley (Technologies) and they guys, they never stop digging and we have to appreciate how hard these guys work because they don't get any sleep and the drivers do. We finished. That's the most important thing. It's the Rolex 24 At

Daytona – it's a race we all want to win and it's a race I'll never stop trying to win at. It's the first race of the championship and we collected points."

Did this race prove how competitive this new series might be?
"This is definitely going to be the standard that ever championship in the world is going to look up to. It was just the proof today. We could run hard – literally qualifying laps for 24 hours. There was no, 'Let's back off a little bit in this corner. Let's back off a little bit there.' No, it was flat out every single corner, every single lap and that's what brings everything together. I'm really looking forward to the Sebring (International Raceway) race now."

Matt Bejnarowicz,lead engineer, No. 93 SRT Viper GTS-R
How do you feel about the team's performance?
"I was pretty proud of it. We definitely had some challenges and the crew and the team were ready to take on anything and they never said quit. I think it a lot of times someone might give up or not attack a repair, but since we stuck to it and we were committed to finishing we wound up working our way back to P3 and I think that's pretty incredible for the amount of challenges we faced."

How did the cars look?
"I'm really proud of the speed in the cars and I think we were the cars to beat, which is a bit disappointing then because I think if we stayed out of some trouble we would have been challenging for first-place at the end of the race."

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