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2013 SRT Viper GTS-R Goes Through Paces at First Track Test

June 7, 2012, Auburn Hills, Mich. - SRT Motorsports recently completed the first on-track test of the new 2013 SRT Viper GTS-R with team driver Marc Goossens at Carolina Motorsports Park in Kershaw, S.C. Beth Paretta (Director of Marketing and Operations, SRT Brand and Motorsports), Gary Johnson (Road Racing Manager, SRT Motorsports) and Goossens give their thoughts about the new car and how the test went. The SRT Viper GTS-R is expected to compete in the American Le Mans Series GT class later this year.

Beth Paretta (Director of Marketing and Operations, SRT Brand and Motorsports)

"The first on-track test of the new SRT Viper GTS-R went extremely well. Even after all the hard work by the team, it's still incredible how fast everything has come together in the development process. We were even able to expand the scope of the test beyond what would be normal for a first on-track session. We're elated with how the SRT Viper GTS-R responded and look forward to returning to the track soon as we prepare to compete in the American Le Mans Series GT class later this year."

Marc Goossens (Driver, SRT Motorsports Viper GTS-R)

WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO BE ON THE TRACK AND MAKE LAPS WITH THE NEW VIPER GTS-R? "Obviously it was a great feeling. Since we've been in contact with SRT Motorsports and the team from Riley Technologies, this was a moment that we've all been looking forward to, especially during the unveiling of the car at auto show in New York. Once we showed what was coming in the near future, we couldn't actually wait to show even more of it and, for sure, we couldn't wait to get in the car, behind the wheel and see what it was like. We had a lot of expectations there since we were all so motivated to go ahead and drive it; it did what we expected. It responded in a very positive way; it was a pretty good first test that we had there."

WHAT WAS THE MAIN OBJECTIVE DURING THE TEST SESSION? "Well I think to start with, obviously, you know, the guys have been working hard back at the shop to build this car, to put it all together. There wasn't any drama or anything but it's just the way it is with a brand-new car. Before your first time out, you have to make sure that everything works fine. It just happened that way. We went out basically saying like hey, we need to do a system check, make sure that everything runs okay, that everything fits on the car, there's no leaks, nothing happening there. We didn't really have the ambition from day one there to put on a lot of miles. That's probably going to come with test days two and three, but for now I think it was just a system check, a real shakedown, or rollout, how you want to call it and that worked just fine. And I think to go out there and at the end of the first day to be able to already start changing some springs and doing some setup changes to see how the car responded to that, I think was quite an achievement for a first day out for this car. And that's what we did. We had some setup changes. The car was actually responding to it which gave us a little bit of an indication of which way we need to work for the near future, make this car even more reliable and more competitive. There are a couple little things that needed fine-tuning but it's always a pleasure to see that the guys have done a really good job in putting this car together. We can actually speed up the program now and get into some serious testing."

WHAT WERE SOME OF THINGS THAT YOU REALLY LIKE ABOUT THE NEW VIPER GTS-R? "It's definitely the handling. We all expect to have good power from the engine; you can feel it on the straightaway. The car has great potential in any type of racing situation. But what amazed me was that we had everything together when it comes down to electronics in the car."

"I'm talking about shifting procedure; it all worked from day one. We got the traction control working in a proper way. Those are things that I experienced in the past as a development driver that are not always the easiest things to get going from day one. I was pleasantly pleased to see that we had those kinds of things under control, straightaway. We haven't been extracting everything out of the car right now but we can definitely see that there's potential there and that's over the whole line. We just need to explore everything now and go into deeper detail and see how we can get this car as competitive as we can as soon as we can."

Gary Johnson (Road Racing Manager, SRT Motorsports)

"From our standpoint it was a pretty historic day. It was pretty exciting for everybody to see a new Viper GTS-R roll out and go on the track for the first time. I think everybody is excited. Everybody was pretty tired, of course, but everybody was pretty excited. It was an exciting day to see. I think the test was an incredible success. To basically build that car, start it up the first time like the day before and have it run around the whole day and do everything it was supposed to do was a huge achievement."

WHAT WERE SOME OF THE THINGS THAT YOU GUYS WERE IMPRESSED WITH AT THE TEST? "I wouldn't necessarily say there was one area that was great about the car. I think the whole effort was what was impressive. Basically, we created a car from the ground up only using a few production-based components so for all of those systems, the engine, the drivetrain, the body, the brakes, the suspension, for everything to kind of come together and interact like it was supposed to was the amazing part for me. Typically when you start up a new car for the first time or you make a car from the ground up, there are all kinds of teething pains. You can have little issue after little issue that keeps you from running. In this case, Marc (Goossens) almost pushed the start button and drove away (laughs). The impressive part was, for lack of a better term, just the whole mojo of the program was great, that it fired up and everything worked right off the bat. That's really the accomplishment for this test. It's not like we were going there to work on handling or to go out and work on setups or anything. The purpose of the test was really to shake the bugs out of the car, work on all the individual systems and make sure every part of the car was working properly."

WHAT HAS BEEN THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE SO FAR WITH THIS PROGRAM? "For me, it's the timing. That's always the biggest challenge. If you would have seen that car three days earlier there's no way you'd have believed that thing was going to roll off a trailer in three days to drive around the track (laughs). It's incredible to see what a strong race team can make happen in three days' time."

"We've worked extremely well with Bill Riley and Riley Technologies in designing the car. They would put the driver in to make sure the relationships between the brake pedals, steering column and seat position were all lining up. Then when Marc came in, sat in it and he had some issues they immediately cut some pieces off, welded them, repainted them and got everything in line right away. That was just a few days before it was on the road. It was pretty cool to see just how serious the whole team is about getting this car right, right off the bat. "The car we used in the test is car number two. Car number one we finished for the (New York) auto show and we learned a lot just building car number one. So, car number two had the benefit of getting a lot of designing evolutions already before we've even started the on-track test program. It's kind of funny how quickly things become obsolete or quickly become improved. The speed that we're making changes and running this program is really exciting."

WHAT IS THE NEXT STEP WITH THIS PROGRAM? "We have several on-track tests planned before we will show up at our first race event. This first test was more like systems development to make sure the car shifts right, make sure the car cools right, make sure the suspension goes through all its motions and does what it's supposed to, and make sure the brakes feel balanced. It was almost like design verification. Our next stage is really developing the car in two areas. One is a performance development and the second area would be the durability of the car. That's more of a validation. Over the next couple of months, we'll be at several different racetracks, several different environments to really improve the car's abilities as well as find any weaknesses or issues that could arise that could eventually cost us a poor race result or a poor race finish."

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