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SRT Motorsports - 24 Hours of Le Mans - Tommy Kendall Diary - Entry 1

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I've been in Europe two weeks. I got here for the test (June 9) and we went through that. Didn't get a lot of running in but we learned some stuff. After that, we had six days off. I went to Paris, met up with my wife, and had a great time taking in the sights. Really enjoyed myself; that city is something else. We rented the little Velib' bikes that you can pick up and drop off all over the city and spent the day seeing the sights.

Then I crossed the channel to England for two days to film some SPEED Test Drive footage and then back to Paris for a day. Once we got here, there's not a lot going on but it's actually nice. Some of the guys are a little crazy, feeling cabin fever. I've actually enjoyed it, getting settled. We've got these little cabins here, they're like a mobile home. They're brand new, kind of IKEA-style inside, three bedrooms. Each car has its own cabin. It's close quarters but fun. Life around Dominik Farnbacher is like traveling with the circus. He is just one of a kind in a purely positive way – just a total free spirit and fun to be around. That's been great.

The buildup for this race is remarkable. It's such a big event; it's our version of the Indy 500 the way it's stretched out. Some people, it might make 'em crazy but I think the pageantry adds to the meaning. Everything is bigger.

Tech inspection as an event is bigger than a lot of races I've been involved in. There are probably 30,000 fans there for the two days. Not only do they have programs that you sign but a lot of 'em have made their own autograph books, hand-lined, with your name filled in ahead of time with a space to sign.

And it's a real tech inspection. Your paperwork has to be exactly right. If the wording is flipped, you get refused. I mean, it's very, very official and so there's some stress involved.

The payoff is when you get through tech and you do the team photo. A lot of time goes into how we are going to line up the cars, line up the people. Those photos are your memento, a keepsake. That, to me, summed up more than a year of total dedication and commitment by a ton of people to get to this point.

On Tuesday, we had an autograph session at the track and then team photos on the circuit last night. When I woke up Wednesday morning, I was happy that we were going to finally do something other than take pictures and get inspected. It was time to burn some high-test racing gasoline and hear some engines.

Rain put a little damper on Wednesday's practice but we got in some quality track time.

The schedule here just underscores how different this event is. The first on track activity Wednesday was at 4:00 p.m. The first on track activity Thursday was at 7:00 p.m. It's almost like you never have to get off U.S. time. The whole

jetlag issue where you can't fall asleep at night and you don't want to get up in the morning actually works in your favor if you stay on it. You force yourself to try to get on it because you think that's what you're supposed to do but it would really behoove you to stay up late every night. Race day, we'll be at the track early but the race doesn't start until three o'clock.

Again, the schedule is just so odd. We were on the track four to eight Wednesday and then 10 to midnight. That's the night session, even though it's not even dark yet at 10. Race day Saturday is literally the day after the shortest night of the year so there's probably about five hours of total darkness, which is nice.

We had practice seven to nine and 10 to 12 Thursday night. There's absolutely nothing on track on Friday. That's when the parade takes place downtown. I'm looking forward to it as well.

There was a lot of nervous energy in the driver briefing today. Like I said, a lot of work has gone into this, a lot of anticipation. Now, the real work starts. We've got a lot to do. A lot of these teams have been coming year after year after year and I'm sure even they are a little bit nervous but it's a little more automatic for them in terms of what's going on and what to expect and so forth. We're just trying to make sure we've thought of everything that can happen and have plans in place and be prepared. Now it's doing what we do – race.

Based on the data we gather during the June 9 test session, Kuno (Wittmer, a teammate) flew back to Canada with Matt (Bejnarowicz), the engineer on the 93 car, to work on some things we thought would improve performance.

Straightaway speed is really, really important here. They tried some things that they thought would work but they didn't. They kept working and discovered some things they hadn't thought of before that did work. We're anxious to find out if what they found correlates as well on the track as it did during their test.

Until tomorrow, have a great day.

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