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SRT Motorsports Eight-Hour Race Report - Rolex 24 At Daytona International Speedway

January 25, 2014, Daytona Beach, Fla. - The SRT (Street and Racing Technology) Motorsports Viper GTS-R teams paced the way for the GTLM class through eight hours of competition at the Rolex 24 At Daytona International Speedway on Saturday, with both the No. 91 and 93 Vipers leading the class.

SRT Motorsports driver and 2012 IndyCar champion Ryan Hunter-Reay was the third wheelman to climb into the No. 91 Viper GTS-R and pushed the car into the 10th overall position and GTLM lead just prior to the eight-hour mark. Before Hunter-Reay piloted the vehicle, Marc Goossens started the race from the pole position and Dominik Farnbacher drove during the race's second segment with both drivers leading the class for multiple laps.

In the SRT Motorsports No. 93 Viper GTS-R, two-time European Le Mans Series champion Rob Bell drove the third stint for the team and also spent time pacing the GTLM class, as did his teammates Jonathan Bomarito and Kuno Wittmer.

- The SRT Motorsports No. 91 and 93 Viper GTS-Rs both first led in the race's opening hour with first-stint drivers Goossens and Bomarito, respectively.
- All six SRT Motorsports Viper GTS-Rs drivers led laps in the GTLM class during their respective opening stints in the endurance event.
- Working hour eight of the Rolex 24 At Daytona and approaching the one-third complete mark, both SRT Motorsports Viper GTS-Rs have been in lead pack contention throughout the race.

SRT Motorsports Driver and Team Quotes

Ralph Gilles, president and CEO of SRT

What are your thoughts on the team's performance through eight hours?

"I don't want to jinx myself, but I'm really proud of the team running one and two. We've pretty much led from the beginning. The car is really solid – so far so good. The drivers love the car and when they love the car they do good work."

How important is this event for SRT?

"We're racers at heart. A lot of the engineers are racers. A lot of us are racers. It's important to validate who we are. We learn a lot from this. The street car was conceived pretty much as a Grand Touring (GT) and also a GT racer from the factory. We want it to do what it's meant to do. This is great place to showcase it and validate, wave the flag for the brand and that's why we're here."

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

What caught your attention during your first stint?

"There's a line of GTLM cars. We kind of for the first time got to see the strengths and weaknesses of our competitors. We ran up front for I think the majority of the first stint we were right there pace wise. It's a long race. I think one of the biggest things I noticed straight away is traffic. It's very, very difficult and you have to be not just one step ahead, but three or four and I think that the car that can manage that the best will be there at the end. I think we will see more attrition than I thought and that's probably going to be from car-to-car contact."

Were you surprised how aggressive the drivers were being in the first stint?

"It was pretty aggressive. The pace was definitely high, intensity level was high. Some of the moves from competitors and cars in front of me were very aggressive, I think you're right there. I think it kind of comes down to

why are the intensities that high is that the cars – you know everybody's real confident in the cars making it. You can drive them a hundred percent and mechanically the cars are capable. It's just a matter of the cars staying up front the whole time and I think you're going to see this race going '10-10' with driver pushing that hard the whole 24 hours."

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

How was your first stint in the SRT Viper GTS-R?

"There are a lot of things going on out there. There's a lot of debris, a lot of cars spinning, many people not really paying attention. We're doing a good job so far. Now we're trying to keep being on the lead lap until the end."

How bad is traffic?

"Without saying any names, some of the people out there they don't know where to go and it was really hard just to guess where they would go. There was a few times I really had to brake down into first gear in the bus stop in order to get somebody because they didn't know where to go. Other than that, if we keep it clean we should be okay."

How have you been able to develop the car since ALMS competition?

"So far we are driving the same car we drove last year. Of course we developed a few little things here or there, but it's more or less the same car we had last year. We're looking for things we can improve compared to last year, but our car straight out of the box is very strong and I just hope it stays reliable and so far it is."

What happened with the miscue on pit road?

"When I came in we usually leave the engine running, but by accident I turned off the engine because last year we turned off the engine during pit stops and I was still in that rhythm. I know I have to be careful next time and not turn off the engine. Ryan Hunter-Reay couldn't find the ignition – the start button – and that's why we lost a few positions, but we're still on the lead lap and as soon as there is a safety car we're back in business."

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

How has the race been so far?

"The car is running pretty well at the moment. There were a couple of close calls during the race with traffic and especially in Turns 1 and 3 at the start of the race. So rather than try to dive underneath people, I decided to back off. There seemed to be a big traffic jam. Everybody lost some time except the No. 93 car. It took a couple of laps to get back behind Jonathan (Bomarito), but then with both Vipers we got quite a bit of a cushion over the others. Driving slightly defensive in order to keep track position and try to settle into a nice rhythm, which worked out for us during the first stint. The call we made for tires for the second stint seemed to be a little less consistent, so it was a little bit harder work in the second part of my first double stint but we kept hanging into the lead. If we stay out of trouble, which is going to be the hard part today, I think the Vipers will be running up front."

What is your plan to prepare for your next stint in the SRT Viper GTS-R?

"Well, I want to get changed because I'm one of those drivers that sweats a lot, so I need to change and get all my stuff in the dryers. I'll get something to eat and drink a lot to make sure we keep hydrated and stop by the physio to make sure my neck and shoulders are clear again. Then I'll go back to pit lane to stand by because it will be getting close to my time next stint in the car again. I'll take care of myself for a little bit and then standby again in case they need me."

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

How does the car feel in the early segments of the race?

"So far I think we (Wittmer and Dominik Farnbacher) can both say the cars are extremely reliable. It's hat off to the SRT team and Riley Technologies that they can put together again a wonderful program at the beginning of the year. I think if status quo continues and our strategy continues to they way we want it go then we are looking pretty good, but we are just at the beginning of this and the track changes a lot in the middle of the night. When I took over, I was fifth and Dominik was leading and I just started picking off positions. They car is really, really good on and off line. No lock ups – none of that – the car is really strong, so it's just chasing down my little rabbit over here (Farnbacher). It's always very pleasant to run with Dominik."

How bad is the traffic?

“It is what it is and you’ll have gentleman drivers and you’ll have factory drivers like ourselves. It’s difficult to go through this entire race and not put a scratch on the car – that’s the plan – and so far we’re doing pretty good. It’s definitely difficult out there with all the traffic. There’s a big speed gap when it comes to the braking zones. We can literally pass any of the GTD cars on the outside – that’s not an issue – but it’s the speed gap that they’re not anticipating. Sometimes you think their eyes are in their ears instead of in their head going forward. It is what it is and this is world class racing and we’ll give it our best.”

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