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SRT Motorsports Post-Race Report - Monterey Grand Prix at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca

May 3, 2014, Monterey, Calif. - The SRT (Street and Racing Technology) Motorsports Viper GTS-Rs finished sixth and seventh in Sunday's Monterey Grand Prix at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca in another trying weekend in California during the fourth round of the 2014 IMSA TUDOR United SportsCar Championship.

The team was encouraged following strong performances in the morning's final pre-race practice session, but the timed two-hour race resulted in a sixth-place finish for the No. 91 SRT Motorsports Viper GTS-R of Dominik Farnbacher and Marc Goossens and a seventh-place result for the No. 93 SRT Motorsports Viper GTS-R driven by Kuno Wittmer and Jonathan Bomarito.

Both teams got caught up in early-race skirmishes that resulted in minor contact incidents. Farnbacher started sixth, but lost positions in the early going and later suffered from bodywork rub following a hit from a prototype. Farnbacher handed off the No. 91 to Goossens just minutes after the race's halfway mark during the team's only pit stop of the race, but the No. 91 lacked the pace needed to improve more than one position by the race finish.

Wittmer, who started the event in the No. 93, raced to as high as fourth while the GTLM teams cycled through mid-race pit stops. Wittmer and Bomarito exchanged positions but an issue with an air-hose regulator slowed the stop. The team spent extended time in the pits before the issue was fixed, resulting in Bomarito beginning his stint one-lap down.

Despite the issue, Bomarito, a Monterey, Calif., native, picked off three positions before the checkered flag to regain the lead lap on his hometown circuit.

SRT Motorsports will seek a stronger finish when the IMSA TUDOR United SportsCar Championship returns to endurance racing in GTLM's fifth round of the IMSA TUDOR United SportsCar Championship in June in the Sahlen's Six Hours of The Glen at New York's Watkins Glen International. The event will mark the third long-distance race of the year, and SRT has placed a car on the podium in each of the year's opening endurance races at Daytona International Speedway and Sebring International Raceway.

Along with endurance-race addition and IndyCar star Ryan Hunter-Reay, Goossens and Farnbacher finished third in the season-opening Rolex 24 At Daytona in the No. 91 SRT Viper GTS-R. The No. 93, with Rob Bell joining Bomarito and Wittmer, then finished second one race later at the Twelve Hours of Sebring in March.

SRT Motorsports Driver and Team Quotes

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

How was your race?

"It was kind of tough. We made a little bit of improvement to the car from what we had in practice, but not enough. We're not way, way off. I think we're about three-tenths off. If you accumulate that time over a stint, we're probably looking at about 10, 12 seconds that we lose over the stint. Definitely not good enough to be up front. We have a lot of data and we'll study it well and we've got some testing coming up prior to the next race. We have quite a bit of a gap now, so we'll have to look at things and make sure next time we get better. We didn't roll off the transporter that well. We need to work to make the car more competitive and we're still not there, so we've got to keep our heads down and keep on working because I think we have the potential to be more competitive than what we've been showing lately. There's a lot of hard work coming up."

What do you most need to improve in your setup?

“We need to find more mechanical grip. I think right now we don’t have enough mechanical grip and, therefore, we make the tire work a little bit too hard, so our tire performance goes down a little too fast. I think it’s all about managing that right now. Pure speed-wise, I think we’re about three or fourth tenths off compared to the fast guys. We don’t necessarily need to look at the ultimate fastest lap in the race, but if you look at the consistency and the average, I think it’s about three, four tenths and I think we knew that in the beginning of the weekend. At some point this weekend, it was seventh or eighth tenths, so I still believe the team did a great job making the car better, but it’s still not good enough. We need to go and study it and make sure we find more mechanical grip.”

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

How was your race?

“That was not the best race we’ve had. We had a good start, but we got pushed out a little bit by the 55 BMW. After that, the 912 Porsche dive bombed me and ran into me and then I think my toe was broken. The toe was off so the car behaved very strange – massive understeer, massive oversteer – so we really had to fight the car. I just tried to keep it on the pavement and not go off, so I didn’t push a lot and then at some point a prototype hit me in the back. I think the tire started to fade away because it touched with the splitter. I just tried to stay alive out there.”

What did you think of Marc Goossens’ performance?

“Marc drove very well and didn’t make any mistakes and was P6 at the end and we at least got points. It could have been a DNF from all the hard hits we had and around us. Overall, we’re not competitive enough and we can’t keep up with all the others. If you look at the times, the BMW was almost as quick as in qualifying when we were almost lacking two seconds.”

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

How was your race?

“It was actually pretty good. Seventh doesn’t really tell our story of how good we were. We had a problem with a change on pit lane, which cost us 30 seconds or something of track position – or it seemed like that much, but it always seems like more when you’re in the car than what it really is. With it staying green the whole time, it kind of killed our race. We actually had a pretty good pace at the end. The guys made good progress with the race car. Like I said, eighth doesn’t really show our potential from the day. There’s a good break here before Watkins Glen to pull all the resources together and do some testing and we’re going to come out strong for the six-hour race.”

When did you decide to conserve for a late push?

“We saw from Kuno’s stint and everybody else’s that the last third of the stint everybody was falling off pretty hard by a couple seconds. We knew we had to conserve the tires on my stint, especially if it stayed green. We just kind of ran the pace the first half of the stint and was then pretty much able to run that pace through the whole stint. Everybody else might have been a little bit quicker initially, but then they were backing up to us really quick at the end there. The guys made a really great call. They were giving me all the information I needed to put the car in that position. That was really all we could do.”

Does tire wear lead to strategy?

“Those were the longest stints with two races with no yellows. We’re stretching fuel as long as we can. We’re stretching tires as long as we can. I like no yellows because you have to drive the car a little bit differently, have a little bit more strategy and put a little bit more thought into it. You can just flat out the whole time and drive the wheels off the car, because you see what happens – nobody had tires at the end. This is kind of new for everybody right now because we haven’t had races that stay green the whole time.”

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

How do you evaluate the race?

“I think it was a tough weekend. Not the result we wanted, but I do think we showed how strong this team actually is. But it was tough to compete against the other competitors with our performance. The car ran flawlessly during my stint and I was able to bring it up into the top-five. I was feeling very, very good. Everything was running right. I think we just got really, really – we had some bad luck on pit lane, so that was the biggest issue. If it wasn’t for that, I think we would have finished in the top-five.”

Matt Bejnarowicz, lead engineer, No. 91 SRT Viper GTS-R

How were you able to make up ground at the end?

“We did have a pit stop that set us back and at that point based on our first stint and from watching other competitors we knew people were dropping up to three seconds a lap on the tire stint. JB (Jonathan Bomarito) went in and tried to be as nice to the tires as possible, because at that point our only shot was to either wait for a yellow or wait for everyone to fall off and be able to make a last 15-minute charge. That actually worked out pretty well. We didn’t get that yellow, but he was able to make that charge at the end and we were able to get past the 912 Porsche, which fell off a little bit more considerably. I think we played a smart strategy, but just didn’t have the overall speed or luck today.”

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