



SunTrust Prepped for Another Rolex 24 Win

Angelelli, Taylor and Briscoe Look To Celebrate Iconic Race's 50th Anniversary By Driving All-New Corvette DP All the Way to Victory Lane at Daytona

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. (Jan. 24, 2012) – They're celebrating 50 years of America's iconic endurance race this weekend, and perhaps no team wants to put the icing on the anniversary cake more than the No. 10 SunTrust Corvette Dallara DP of Wayne Taylor Racing, which looks to pick up where it left off after a dominating run through the final two-thirds of the 2011 GRAND-AM Rolex Sports Car Series season.

The SunTrust team, featuring regular co-drivers Max Angelelli and Ricky Taylor alongside IZOD IndyCar Series star Ryan Briscoe, opens the 2012 season debuting a whole new look for this weekend's 50th anniversary edition of the Rolex 24 At Daytona. But it's hoping to continue its race- and pole-winning ways while showcasing its head-turning new Corvette DP body style and a stunning new orange-and-white SunTrust paint scheme.

If the team's performance at this month's Roar Before the 24 test days on the 3.56-mile, 12-turn Daytona (Fla.) International Speedway road course is any indication, the SunTrust team should be a solid contender for another overall race win in the annual 24-hour marathon that begins Saturday afternoon.

At the three-day test three weekends ago, Angelelli, Taylor and Briscoe combined to lead four of the eight on-track sessions, and Angelelli clocked the fastest lap of all 57 car-and-driver combinations that took part while the SunTrust team experienced zero mechanical issues with its brand new racing package for 2012.

That's the kind of consistency and performance exhibited by Angelelli and Taylor through the final eight events of 2011 – a dominating stretch during which they won three times, started on the front row for all eight races (including a near-series-record six consecutive poles by Taylor), finished on the podium seven consecutive times, and led almost 60 percent of all laps contested (514 of 897) over that span.

Despite the strong run, Angelelli and Taylor had to settle for second in the season-ending points for the second year in a row to the Ganassi Racing with Felix Sabates duo of Scott Pruett and Memo Rojas, which proved to be virtually unbeatable over the opening four events of the season. The SunTrust team's finishes of fifth, third, 11th and fourth in the first four races coupled with the Ganassi duo's victories at the opening three events and a second-place finish at the fourth race laid down a points deficit that was just too much to overcome.

Still, it was SunTrust's best season since the Italian driving ace paired with three-time sports car racing champion Wayne Taylor – Ricky's father and current team owner – to win the 2005 Rolex Series championship in dominating fashion. Angelelli and Ricky Taylor combined for more wins (three), podiums (eight), laps led (614) and qualified on the pole more times (six) than any season since that 2005 SunTrust title run. Taylor's 312 laps led in 2011 were more than any other Rolex Series driver while Angelelli's 301 ranked second. And Taylor, the 22-year-old mechanical engineering major at the University of Central Florida who is in only his second full-time season with the SunTrust team, led laps at all 12 events to extend his personal streak of races led to 17, a Rolex Series record.

To get a better handle on the 2012 championship chase, Angelelli, Taylor and Briscoe, the 30-year-old Australian who drives for Team Penske in the IndyCar Series with Helio Castroneves and Will Power, could certainly benefit from the kind of performance Angelelli, Wayne Taylor and Frenchman Emmanuel Collard did in winning the 2005 Rolex 24. That year's SunTrust Racing trio qualified on the front row and led a race-high 282 of 710 laps en route to the top spot on the podium. Angelelli and Wayne Taylor then went on to win four more races, stood on the podium 10 times in all in 14 events and, in the process, never gave up first place in the point standings and set a record that still stands by finishing all 2,056 race laps contested on the season.

It's always a tall order in a race where simply finishing 24 grueling hours is an accomplishment. But the SunTrust team has hoisted the first-place trophy at Daytona before, certainly knows what it takes, and has all the ingredients to cook up another winning recipe.

Practice and qualifying for the 50th Rolex 24 At Daytona begin Thursday morning with qualifying set for 3:45 p.m. EST. Race time Saturday is 3:30 p.m. with SPEED kicking off 15½ hours of live TV coverage beginning with its prerace show at 2:30 p.m. SPEED.com will stream live video online from 11 p.m. Saturday to 9 a.m. Sunday, when live SPEED television resumes through the race's conclusion. Live radio coverage will be provided by the Motor Racing Network (MRN) and Sirius NASCAR Radio Channel 90 in multiple segments – Saturday from 3 to 5 p.m. and 7 to 7:30 p.m. (MRN only), and Sunday from 9 to 9:30 a.m. and 1-4 p.m. Live timing and scoring during all on-track sessions can be found at www.grand-am.com, and on mobile devices at m.grand-am.com/laptrax.

Max Angelelli, co-driver of the No. 10 SunTrust Racing Corvette Dallara DP:**Being the 50th anniversary of the Rolex 24, there's a considerable amount of buzz around this year's race. Does it feel special?**

“First of all, it's always different. But this year, it's really different because of the huge anniversary and for what GRAND-AM is putting together to celebrate the 50th – bringing together all the champions, all the activities, the old cars. I'm so glad to see the huge reaction from the fans. Everything is sold out, they're expecting huge attendance. That's a huge motivation for me to make sure all the fans will enjoy the race and we put together a nice show for everybody. I'm a racer and I want to make sure the fans will have the best time possible.”

If the team's test results earlier this month are any indication, this should be a successful weekend. Do you agree?

“We actually had what I would rate as our best test in a very long time. It was really smooth, really nice and easy. What really made the difference was that we were able to test twice in December with the new body, already, so that really helped us and paid dividends and made everything go so smoothly this month. Since the test, everybody has been looking at every bit of the data to make sure everything will be ready for the race. I feel confident we will be competitive, once again.”

Has the transition to the new Corvette package gone as smoothly as it has appeared?

“It was a great team effort to put this new package together and get it right in time for the race. In racing, if you don't work together, you will have more problems than success. Pratt & Miller did a nice job marrying its new Corvette body to our Dallara chassis. Modifications were made to the Dallara chassis and there was a meeting in the middle, so to speak. The operation has been a success. I like the new car. The look is narrower and it feels narrower inside, but it's still roomy. It feels very safe. It feels little more like a racing car rather than a Saloon car or GT car. In the past, we had huge interior space but, now, the space is less but it still is plenty. It feels like a proper racecar. The way we drive it is the same as before. The bodywork is generating different levels of downforce. This is where things are different – the amount of downforce and top speed. Drive-wise, it is very similar once you get it figured out.”

In addition to a highly competitive Daytona Prototype field, you'll be out there racing with more than 40 GT-class cars this year. Are you particularly concerned about all that traffic?

“For me, GT cars are never a concern. For me, the GT cars offer great opportunities where I can gain or lose on the racetrack. It's entirely up to me. The goal is to use the GTs to catch up if I'm behind and increase my lead if I'm ahead. I've always treated it like a positive.”

This will be your ninth Rolex 24 with the SunTrust team and the 11th of your career. Has it become routine?

“It is not a routine. It can't be a routine because, once it's a routine, you enter into a mode of making mistakes. If you feel it's just a routine, you open yourself for a major mistake because you start underestimating the challenge and the difficulty of the race and the event itself. The event is very long. People think it's just one race. It's actually feels like a full week of work. The first free practice on Thursday is just as important as the race itself. Any mistakes in free practice will be reflected in the race. So every lap of practice is just as important as the race laps. It will be difficult. This is the only race I arrive basically a week before because I want to have time to relax with the Taylors, doing our ping pong tournaments and things like that and going to the movies. It's a total family atmosphere and is a nice, calm atmosphere for me – so comfortable, you have no idea. Once we get to the racetrack, I can be sure I have had plenty of rest. Once the race gets going, I'm very lucky because I can sleep between all my stints regardless of the time of day. The noise doesn't bother me. It's actually quite soothing.”

Ricky Taylor, co-driver of the No. 10 SunTrust Racing Corvette Dallara DP:**You're coming off what appeared to be a very strong three-day test earlier this month with the new Corvette. Was it as good for you as it seemed?**

“It was a great three days. We were all kind of anxious to see what the new Corvette would be like on track and if we'd get the kind of pace we had last year. It turned out the car is not only good-looking, it's fast. I think Pratt & Miller did a very nice job. They've won Le Mans and all those ALMS (American Le Mans Series) championships, so they definitely know what they're doing. They're proving what a good engineering group they are. They certainly built us a good car for this year. I'm looking forward to the 24-hour. We had a good three days. I think if we showed up at the 24-hour with the same car we had at the test, I'd have no problem with that.”

Last year's solid performance over the final two-thirds of the season gives you plenty of momentum to start 2012. Your thoughts?

“Last year, we had a fantastic year. As far as the SunTrust car goes, we didn't want to change anything because we had so much speed last year. We finally had it figured out and we felt like we could finally challenge the Ganassi team for wins week in and week out. I'm excited to know now that we can pick up where we left off with the new Corvette. The 50th anniversary of the Rolex 24 is so special. We always say we treat this one like its own championship because it's that big and it's that special to us. We're going to give it everything we have but, in the back of our minds, we know we also have to get a very good start to the year because you can lose a lot of points at this race with so many cars and so many competitive cars, and the Ganassi team never seems to have a hiccup.”

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Is it different driving the new Corvette bodywork than the Dallara you have grown accustomed to the last two years?

“It’s not too different to drive. Daytona is a very tricky track in the way that it’s got such long straights and such a technical infield. You really have to set the car up for straight-line speed so you can keep up with everybody else and to be able to pass. For Daytona, we’re not too out of the box with the Corvette or in too new of a territory. I think when we get to the smaller tracks like Barber and Mid-Ohio and the street course at Belle Isle, that’s when we’ll have to learn a lot more about its aero balance and those sorts of things. So far, so good. It’s really comfortable to drive and not too steep of a learning curve from the driver’s seat. It’s all good.”

It’s the ‘Max, Ricky and Ryan Show’ once again, this year in the driver’s seat. Are you excited about that?

“It’s the same lineup we had last year. We all got along very well and we all liked the same things on the car. Ryan is super, super quick. I think we have one of the strongest lineups in the field and definitely one of the strongest teams in the field. Hopefully, I can keep up my end of the bargain and not make any mistakes and support the team as best I can. I’ve got great mentors around me. I don’t think any young driver has the resources I have in terms of help. I have my dad on the team, Max, Ryan, and everybody behind me is just mentoring me well. It’s a huge help for me and I’ve got a lot of experience and a lot of things to rely on. I’m really enjoying it and last year I learned a lot. Every year I learn a lot. Hopefully, I can keep improving and keep learning and we can have another good year.”

What are your thoughts about the extraordinary number of GT-class cars that will be on track with you this year?

“It’ll definitely be a busy time out there – one of the busiest years that I’ve ever done at the 24-hour. The main thing isn’t the number of GT cars, it’s the difference in drivers. When you come up on a good driver, you pretty much know where he’s going to brake and where he’s going to turn in and pretty much know when they’re going to go offline. Then there are some people who you don’t know what they’re going to do and, when they try to get out of your way too much, that’s when the confusion starts. It’s a consistency thing. It’s impossible to know who’s in every car, but you have a rough idea. Sometimes, you can see from a distance what they’re doing. Sometimes, when you’re out there for an hour or two, you pass the same cars a couple of times and know who to look out for and who you can trust. But sometimes, you just have to close your eyes and go. It’s a long race, so I think the traffic’s going to be a big factor and make it one of survival because it will catch some people out and ruin some people’s day.”

Ryan Briscoe, co-driver of the No. 10 SunTrust Racing Corvette Dallara DP:**Are you ready to kick off your racing season guest driving with the SunTrust team for the second year in a row at the Rolex 24?**

“I’m just really excited about it. There is a lot of buzz about it this year, although it’s certainly always been a very important race. It means a lot to do well at this race and win. Maybe because it’s the 50th anniversary, the winner will get talked about more than other years, so it would be very special. We’ve got a strong car, as we saw at the test earlier this month, so I think we’re in really good shape. But it’s one of these races where you just never know. I’ve done it a few times with the SunTrust team, already. Max is a past winner and Ricky’s the son of a two-time champion, so everybody knows what it takes. I hope it all runs smoothly and we are able to stay out of trouble. It certainly is taxing on your body, but I’m feeling fit. Having two, good, fast teammates is huge. It’ll be important to stay focused.”

The team performed very well at the Roar Before the 24 test days. Is it safe to assume that means good things for this weekend?

“The test went well and I think coming off the test with no damage, it’s given the team a really good chance to spend a lot of time reinforcing everything, double- and triple-checking the car for the race, making sure we’re ready to go. It hasn’t been a mad rush at this point, although there was in the lead-up to the test. Since then, it’s been a matter of going through everything thoroughly and making sure everything is ready to go the distance. It’s a lot of work, but this team is very well-organized. This is basically the fourth time I’ve done this with Wayne (Taylor), including the Penske-Taylor operation a few years ago. We’re doing it with the same three-driver lineup for the second year in a row. Everything is in place, so we’re looking to have a very strong result, if all goes well.”

Being an IndyCar regular, you don’t race on a regular basis with multiple classes of cars. Is it difficult to be out there at the Rolex 24 with GT-class competitors?

“The big thing in a 24-hour race is that it doesn’t matter who you race. You just need to stay out of trouble, then go racing with an hour or two to go. With the format of the race, it’s easy to get laps back if you fall behind. What traffic can do is take you out of the race. It’s really important to be patient with traffic, be really careful around cars you’re not familiar with. I think we’ll be hearing a lot of Wayne’s voice over the radio if we happen to get too caught up racing when it’s not time to race, yet.”

Wayne Taylor, team owner of the No. 10 SunTrust Racing Corvette Dallara DP:**Your overall thoughts heading back to Daytona for the 50th anniversary of the Rolex 24?**

“Daytona, for me, as I’ve said many times before, is my home race. It’s one of the biggest races in the world and I’m fortunate to have won it twice. There’s nowhere in sports car racing I’d rather be than in the winner’s circle at this event. Fifty years – oh, wow. It’s obviously a historic event, probably one of the best lineups of drivers I’ve seen. At the same time, there are a lot of new entries. There is a ton of GT cars, so that will make for an outstanding race in the GT class. I think, this year, attrition will play a big role, probably more than it has in recent years simply because of the number of cars and the number of GT cars and the difference in some of the drivers who are in those cars. So, I think the DPs need to do everything they can to stay out of trouble and stay on the lead lap until Sunday morning.”

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Being the first race of the new season, yet such a very important race, what is the role it plays in the championship each year?

“Winning championships is very difficult. But I think the Rolex turns out to be a crucial part of the championship because, if you leave here with some good points, it puts you in a good position. If you leave here with bad points, then you are in trouble. We had a string of two or three races where we had some issues we shouldn’t have had last year but, by the end of the season, we were the car to beat. Ricky’s led 17 races in a row, he had six poles, we had a good program. But we still ended up second in the championship because the Ganassi team made up so many points in the early part of the season and that made it really difficult for us. This year, we’ve just got to be smart with the new cars, not really understanding, yet, who’s going to be fast this year. I think it’s going to be the smartest group that’s going to win the championship this year.”

You certainly appeared to have a car to beat at last year’s Rolex until an early incident set you back. How frustrating was that, even though the team was able to fight back for a strong, fifth-place finish?

“Ricky was incredibly frustrated about it. The only consolation was (Juan Pablo) Montoya actually apologized immediately on the radio for what he did to the 10 car. I don’t think he did it on purpose, but it was a move that cost us dearly. It dropped us seven laps down and put us in a really difficult position. We made back all but one of those laps, but running around under caution for three hours because of fog in the early morning hours really kept us from making it all the way back, as it turned out. I’m sure it’ll be like that this weekend, as competitive as ever from the drop of the green flag. You always want to lead, but the way to win this race at the end is to be smart during all the hours leading up to it.”

You’ve won the Rolex 24 twice in your career as a driver, in 1996 with Doyle Racing/Riley Technologies and, most recently, for the SunTrust team in 2005 en route to that year’s Rolex Series championship. Can you reminisce just a bit about the 2005 win?

“It was just our second year as SunTrust Racing, so we were all especially proud of the achievement. The thing that made that race special for me, personally, was the fact it was with Max and with Emmanuel Collard, who we’d worked with for years and years, and all three of us being sports cars drivers and not from some other series. I really thought that was a cool thing. We really just had a flawless race. Nobody put a wheel wrong and the SunTrust car just ran perfectly. I can’t even compare that to my win in 1996 because they’re all different. I would say that ’96 was more difficult because of the issues and the race conditions we had to deal with. But 2005 was really, really special. It was special because of Max and Emmanuel. We led a ton of laps and, from there, we went on to complete every single lap of every single race that year and won the championship. It was all pretty incredible.”

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