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SunTrust RACING

Grand Prix of Miami Preview

HOMESTEAD, Fla. (March 2, 2010) – What’s the battle cry for the SunTrust Racing team at Saturday’s Grand-Am Rolex Sports Car Series Grand Prix of Miami? How about, “Angelelli and Taylor Ride Again.”

Considering Italian driving ace Max Angelelli and three-time sports car racing champion Wayne Taylor thoroughly dominated the 2005 Grand Prix of Miami en route to their second of five victories during a season in which they won the Rolex Series championship, it has a mighty nice ring to it.

This weekend at the 2.3-mile, 11-turn Homestead-Miami Speedway road circuit, however, the Taylor who Angelelli will be co-driving with in the No. 10 SunTrust Ford Dallara of Wayne Taylor Racing is none other than 20-year-old Ricky Taylor, who in the past three seasons has come to be known in sports car racing circles as a bona fide chip off the old block.

Wayne Taylor’s eldest son, the veteran of 21 Rolex Series races driving Daytona Prototypes, will be making his third appearance in the SunTrust Racing machine this weekend but his first in a two-driver event with Angelelli. Ricky Taylor’s previous two SunTrust outings came in the Rolex 24 At Daytona four-driver marathons. In 2008, he co-drove to a top-five Rolex 24 finish with Angelelli, his father and Michael Valiante. And this past January, Taylor, Angelelli and his father were joined by Portuguese former Formula 1 competitor Pedro Lamy in opening the season with a sixth-place Rolex 24 finish.

As always has been the case since SunTrust joined the Rolex Series in 2004, winning races and the season-long championship is the goal as Angelelli and Taylor set out to do it together for the first time as a duo over the remaining 11 races of 2010. Taylor’s role will be to qualify the lightning-fast SunTrust Ford Dallara, drive the opening stint during the race, and then turn the car over to Angelelli for the charge to the finish. This weekend will be Taylor’s first to qualify and start the SunTrust Racing machine in the race. But he’s no stranger to laying down fast laps during the Rolex Series’ thrilling 15-minute qualifying sessions, nor to taking the green flag to start a 2-hour, 45-minute event. In his 21 career Rolex Series starts, Taylor has co-driven to three top-five and 13 top-10 finishes between the SunTrust team, Houston-based Beyer Racing, and Cincinnati-based Doran Racing.

All of that suits Angelelli just fine. The Italian was thoroughly impressed by what he saw of his new fulltime co-driver at the Rolex 24 in January, and he just can’t wait to dig in for the long haul with the mechanical engineering major from the University of Central Florida beginning Saturday evening at Homestead.

Practice and qualifying for Saturday’s Grand Prix of Miami begins Friday, with qualifying set for 3:45 p.m. EST. For the first time, live streaming video coverage of qualifying can be found online at SPEEDTV.com beginning at 3:40 p.m. Saturday’s 2-hour, 45-minute race begins at 5 p.m. with live television coverage on SPEED, and a live radio broadcast provided by the Motor Racing Network (MRN). The detailed event schedule, as well as live timing and scoring during all on-track sessions, can be found at www.grand-am.com.

Max Angelelli, co-driver of the No. 10 SunTrust Racing Ford Dallara:

You had the fastest car all month at the Rolex 24, but had to settle for a sixth-place finish. How do you feel about the SunTrust effort as it heads to Homestead this weekend?

“I’m feeling good about this weekend. I definitely like Homestead and I really like the car we have this year. Last year’s result there (seventh place) was a big disappointment because we had a chance to win the championship and it didn’t work out that way. It was probably the worst experience we’ve had at Homestead as far as getting the car to work with the racetrack. It was hot and it was impossible to find grip, so it was very frustrating because we were fighting for the championship. This year, our car is much different, especially with the new Pirelli tire. It looks like we nailed the setup with many of the changes we made at Daytona. The car was so good, we did not change a thing between the test weekend and the race weekend. That makes me feel pretty good about Homestead and the rest of the season.”

Will that speed from Daytona translate into speed at Homestead, since they are both banked ovals with infield road courses?

“Well, I think Daytona is such a unique track and requires a particular setup, I can’t say for sure what that means about how our car will do at Homestead. They look similar on paper, with the NASCAR oval and the flat road course in the middle, but Homestead is different, as far as I’m concerned. But still, a really important thing we learned about our car during the Daytona test was what kind of changes *don’t* work. That, I think, is going to help us for the rest of the season.”

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Max Angelelli, co-driver of the No. 10 SunTrust Racing Ford Dallara (continued):

The Rolex 24 is history, so now it's down to you and Ricky Taylor the rest of the way. How do you feel about your new fulltime co-driver after what you saw of him during testing and at the Rolex 24?

"I'm feeling very positive, very happy. I'm happy to have such a dedicated 'student,' and he is very dedicated to make this SunTrust program a success. He has made me feel very helpful, and he makes me feel like he's interested in what we all have to say. And I have already learned from him, too. That's the way it needs to be between teammates. I'm very happy with Ricky and I'm confident in what he can deliver."

What did you do during the long break since the Rolex 24?

"I had a very nice skiing trip with my family at the Andalo resort up in the northern part of Italy, in the Alps, although I was struggling quite a bit with my oldest son (6½-year-old Samuele). He's very fast, doesn't always make the corner, and does not listen to his father. I thought it would help if I put him in the ski school, that maybe he would listen to the instructor. But every day the instructor tells me he doesn't listen, so I had to keep finding a new instructor. Maybe Samuele's a lot like his father – he likes to go his own way. I enjoyed the skiing, but you have to be careful there on the ski runs because the 'ski police' check everybody's speed with radar and, if you're going too fast, they impound your skis. So I have to keep extra pairs of skis in my locker at the bottom of the hill."

Ricky Taylor, co-driver of the No. 10 SunTrust Racing Ford Dallara:

How was the Rolex 24 experience for you, and what do you expect, now, as you move forward?

"The 24-hour was what you could expect from a 24-hour race. You can't expect a smooth ride all the way, even though that's the goal. I got so much seat time – about eight hours in the car. I got really comfortable in it, and the car was extremely quick when we were on the track. I never got to drive the SunTrust car on the 2009 spec tire for comparison's sake, but this new (2010 Pirelli spec) tire has really transformed the car and has been a big step forward."

You scored your third-consecutive top-10 finish in the season-finale at Homestead last year. Do you like the track?

"I think Homestead provides a lot of great racing. There are a lot of slow corners and it's actually a lot of fun, even though the lack of grip there has been an issue in the past. You can run pretty wide open on the banking and there are lots of places to pass. It's definitely great for racing and for qualifying. It's kind of similar to Daytona, in spirit at least, and since we had such a good car at Daytona, I would expect that to translate well to this weekend's race at Homestead."

What are your thoughts about qualifying the SunTrust car for the first time this weekend?

"I've qualified a good bit already in the DP cars, back when I was driving for Doran (Racing) and a little bit with Beyer (Racing). So, qualifying is not new to me, by any means. It's a little added pressure this weekend because it'll be my first time doing it in the SunTrust car, but it's also going to be really special. It's all just a matter of keeping it clean in the qualifying session and the first part of the race, give the car to Max in a good position in the race, and let him do the rest. That's the fun part. Otherwise, it's not a whole lot different than what I'm already used to doing. I've pushed 100 percent for everybody I've driven for and this weekend will be business as usual. It's an experienced team and we're all out to do all we can to put SunTrust on the pole and on top of the podium."

Wayne Taylor, owner of the No. 10 SunTrust Racing Ford Dallara team:

What are your overall thoughts heading to Homestead this weekend?

"Based on what we saw at Daytona, we clearly have a really fast car and the only thing that could slow us down was hitting the wall as we were coming out of the pits. Even after we rebuilt the car (during the race), it was fast. I don't know exactly how all that will translate to this weekend's race at Homestead because it was such a disastrous race for us last year as far as trying to get the car to stick to the racetrack. But we have a new (Pirelli) spec tire that is a major improvement, and it's going to be a much cooler race than it was last October. Plus, the race is at night. So it should be better for everybody and a more accurate indication of what we're capable of doing this weekend and for the rest of the season."

Are you feeling good about your championship hopes now that it's down to Max and Ricky in the car the rest of the way?

"Ricky confirmed what we all expected he could do at the Rolex 24. He'll have a little added pressure on him with having to qualify the car and start the race for us beginning this weekend, but he's very calm about it and is taking it all in stride. We've been saying the last few years that we can't imagine the series getting any more competitive but, this year, it looks like it's going to be even more competitive than ever. It looks like anybody out there can win on any given weekend, so there's even less margin for error. That's what makes Grand-Am racing the best around. Our job will be to win races like we did last year, and to win the championship for SunTrust, which we fell short of last year at Homestead. Everybody knows the job they have to do, and it's all shaping up to be incredibly exciting."

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