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(Not-So) Sweet Home Alabama for SunTrust ***Early Problem With Left-Rear Wheel Ruins Promising Run for Taylor, Angelelli***

Date: April 9, 2011

Event: Porsche 250 (Round 3 of 12)

Series: Daytona Prototype division of the GRAND-AM Rolex Sports Car Series

Location: Barber Motorsports Park in Leeds, Ala. (2.3-mile, 17-turn road course)

Start/Finish: 3rd/11th (Running, completed 94 of 104 laps)

Winners: Scott Pruett and Memo Rojas of Chip Ganassi Racing with Felix Sabates (BMW)

It was another case of what might have been for Max Angelelli and Ricky Taylor during Saturday afternoon's GRAND-AM Rolex Sports Car Series Porsche 250 at Barber Motorsports Park just east of Birmingham, Ala.

The No. 10 SunTrust Chevrolet Dallara of Wayne Taylor Racing duo had by far the fastest car on the 2.3-mile, 17-turn road course but, in the blink of an eye less than 45 minutes into today's 2-hour, 45-minute race, it was relegated to nothing more than a glorified test session. But a good one, at that.

The 21-year-old Taylor had just pitted after leading nine of the opening 21 laps and handed the SunTrust Racing machine over to his veteran Italian teammate. But two turns after Angelelli returned to the racetrack, his left-rear tire began working its way loose, prompting him to stop on course and wait several laps for assistance back to the garage by track workers. Driving the car around the track was not an option as that left-rear likely would have come completely off, which would have led to serious damage.

By the time the SunTrust car was successfully delivered back to the garage on a flatbed and the team was able to investigate the problem and replace the left-rear wheel before sending Angelelli back out, the No. 10 car had lost 11 laps and was, for the most part, out of contention.

"It was a little bit like last year," said Angelelli, who was involved in a late-race on-track incident that ended another promising run for the SunTrust team. "Last year, I threw the race away and I said, 'When you have this opportunity, you can't do that because you don't have opportunities like that all the time during the season.' And this year, I'm going to say the same. This time, it's not because I made a mistake. It's because of an unlucky event that cost us the race, again. I know the championship will be harder, now, but I know the SunTrust team knows how to handle hard championships."

Once back in the race, 11 laps down, Angelelli and the SunTrust Racing machine did not miss a beat. On lap 65, he turned a lightning-fast lap of 1 minute, 23.150 seconds (99.579 mph) that turned out to be the fastest lap of the race by more than .7 seconds over the next-fastest car – the eventual race-winning No. 01 Chip Ganassi Racing with Felix Sabates BMW Riley of Scott Pruett and Memo Rojas.

"Sure, it's very nice to have the fastest car," Angelelli said. "We were the fastest at Daytona, we were the fastest here. We improved our engineering department and we're seeing the results and we're getting better and better. The important part will be taking that fastest car and those fastest laps and translating them into race wins. We can, and we will, do it."

Taylor, who qualified the SunTrust car third and got off to another stellar start, felt even more optimistic after watching Angelelli's lap times compared to the rest of the field over the latter 74 laps of today's 104-lap event.

"I think all we can say is, we just need to go win some races, now," said Taylor, who earned his first career Rolex Series pole at Barber a year ago this weekend with a track-record lap that still stands. "The SunTrust car was unbelievably quick. We put on new tires and, wow. I'm excited, now. I think we can win a lot of races after watching what Max was doing out there. You don't get a good read on scrubbed tires as far as what this car is all about. I think we'll be good everywhere from here on out."

From his third starting position, Taylor easily slipped past Jon Fogarty in the No. 99 Gainsco/Bob Stallings Racing Chevrolet Riley by turn two to take away second place behind polesitter Antonio Garcia in the No. 90 Spirit of Daytona Racing Chevrolet Coyote. Taylor settled into that position until he assumed the lead when the SunTrust team decided to forego a chance to pit during the day's first caution period on lap 12, just 16 minutes into the race.

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Taylor was running comfortably in the lead once the race restarted on lap 16, and he made it extremely difficult for several laps for Rojas in the No. 01 car and Garcia in the No. 90 – both of whom had stopped during that lap-12 caution for fresh tires – to get by. Finally, on lap 22, Taylor’s older tires could not help him defend his lead any longer and he gave way to both Rojas and Garcia, but he settled into third and held off all other challengers behind him for the time being.

When the day’s second yellow appeared on lap 24, just before the 45-minute mark, the team called Taylor into the pit for fresh tires and fuel and a driver change.

Moments after leaving the pit lane, Angelelli radioed that there was a major problem in the rear of the car. He was instructed to stop in a safe place and await assistance back to the garage. And, the rest is history.

Pruett and Rojas’ victory today was their third in three races this season, their sixth in a row, and their 12th in the last 14 Rolex Series events. Fogarty and Alex Gurney brought the No. 99 Gainsco car home in second, followed by Mike Forest and Ryan Dalziel in the No. 8 Starworks Motorsports Ford Riley in third.

With the 11th-place finish, the SunTrust team fell from second to fourth in the championship, 29 points behind the points-leading Ganassi duo but only four points behind the Nos. 5 and 9 Action Express Racing entries, who are tied for second.

“Congratulations to Chip Ganassi Racing – they deserved to win,” said team owner Wayne Taylor, who co-drove with Angelelli to victory here in 2005 en route to that year’s Rolex Series championship for SunTrust Racing. “All I can say is, thanks to everybody who supports the No. 10 car from SunTrust, Toshiba, General Motors, Dallara, Siemens, the whole team. Ricky and Max did a great job today. Things happen. We don’t know, yet, what exactly happened. We’ll investigate and we’ll come back even better for it. I’m really not worried about the points right now. If we keep doing what we are capable of doing, the points will take care of themselves.”

The 2011 GRAND-AM Rolex Sports Car Series takes another four-week break before heading to Virginia International Raceway in Alton for round four, the Bosch Engineering 250, on Saturday, May 14. The 3 p.m. EDT race will be broadcast by SPEED on a two-hour delay beginning at 5 p.m. The Motor Racing Network and SiriusXM 127, Play-by-Play 3, will provide live radio coverage beginning with a pre-race show at 2:45 p.m.

- SunTrust: The Official Bank of Motorsports –

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