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SunTrust RACING

Utah 250 Preview

TOOELE, Utah (Sept. 8, 2010) – Students all around the world might just be settling in for another year of academia, but for Max Angelelli and Ricky Taylor, Saturday’s season-ending GRAND-AM Rolex Sports Car Series Utah 250 at Miller Motorsports Park in Tooele, Utah, will have that last-day-of-school feeling, no matter the outcome.

The SunTrust Racing driving duo will complete its first season together and is looking to lock down a solid runner-up finish in the Rolex Series championship behind the wheel of the No. 10 SunTrust Ford Dallara of Wayne Taylor Racing.

With a Memorial Day victory at Lime Rock Park in Lakeville, Conn., to go with six podium finishes and three starts from the pole position through the first 11 races of the season, Angelelli and Taylor have the SunTrust team in second place in the championship, nine points ahead of the No. 99 Gainsco/Bob Stallings Racing Chevrolet Riley of Alex Gurney and Jon Fogarty. All they need to clinch the runner-up spot to the record-setting No. 01 Chip Ganassi Racing with Felix Sabates BMW Riley of Scott Pruett and Memo Rojas is a fourth-place finish or better in Saturday’s 2-hour, 45-minute race around the newly configured 3.048-mile “outer” course at Miller. At worst, the SunTrust team has already clinched its sixth top-three finish in the championship in the seven seasons since it joined the Rolex Series in 2004. And it’s a record that makes Angelelli and his team owner and 2005 Rolex Series championship co-driver Wayne Taylor proud.

Saturday’s season finale also marks for Ricky Taylor the culmination of his freshman year at what he calls Angelelli University. The veteran Italian driver has held classes all season long with Taylor as his pupil prior to every race on the schedule – seriously. They sit down behind closed doors for detailed instruction about all things racing – aerodynamics, brake setup, chassis setup, on-track crisis management, interpreting car feedback, quirks and helpful hints specific to each racetrack, etc. – prior to each racing weekend. And the results have obviously paid dividends for the SunTrust team as it has enjoyed one of its most consistent seasons to date.

After this weekend’s festivities in the Utah desert are behind them, teacher and pupil don’t plan on letting up, by any means. Angelelli (nicknamed “Professor” by Taylor) and Taylor (actually a sophomore majoring in mechanical engineering at the University of Central Florida) have an intense curriculum of classroom sessions lined up for the offseason so that, once they return to Daytona (Fla.) International Speedway for the 2011 renewal of the Rolex 24 in January, they’ll be ready to go one better in the championship chase.

In the meantime, there is still one last piece of business to tend to in Utah this weekend – securing that second-place position in the standings and, in the process, possibly adding a second win to the victory tally for 2010. Class dismissed.

Practice for the Utah 250 begins Friday morning with qualifying set for 5:50 p.m. EDT. Live streaming video of Friday’s qualifying session will be available at www.SPEEDTV.com beginning at 5:45 p.m. Race time Saturday is 2 p.m. with live television coverage on SPEED, as well as live radio coverage on the Motor Racing Network (MRN) beginning at 1:45 p.m. Sirius NASCAR Radio Channel 128’s next-day-delayed broadcast is set for 10:45 a.m. Sunday. 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 head to Utah for the season finale without a mathematical chance to win the championship. What is on your mind as you prepare for the race?

“We can only aim to complete the championship in second place. But still, that would be a huge achievement. Obviously, we only had one win this year and that’s definitely not enough, so we have to have the second one, and we have only one more chance to get it. I only want to deliver what the team expects from me and I don’t want to let them down, and that is my goal.”

You’re guaranteed a top-three finish in the championship for the sixth time in seven seasons since SunTrust joined the Rolex Series in 2004. Can you talk about that achievement?

“Top-three in the championship – that is always a big deal. If you consider why we were not in the top-three the one year we weren’t, it was because of the (transporter) fire (in 2008), so that was an extraordinary event. Potentially, we could have been seven-for-seven. But even six-out-of-seven, if you think how many other teams in the series have tried for so long to finish in the top-three and never could, and we did it almost every year, that is huge. We have to give the credit to SunTrust Racing. We are always right there. We even changed engine manufacturers and chassis manufacturers during that time, and we are still able to keep finishing in the top-three. As far as I’m concerned, I’m driving for the greatest team in the series, and I want to give them another championship, not just a top-three. That will have to wait until next year.”

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

For the first time in five trips to Miller Motorsports Park, you'll be racing on the 3.048-mile, 15-turn "outer" circuit, not the traditional 4.486-mile, 24-turn long course. How will that change the complexion of the race?

"I think it's going to change a lot. We've had a lot of advantages in many of those (nine) corners that they took out, so I think we will lose a bit of those advantages. So we have decided to change our car quite a lot for this year's race. We are gambling and we'll see how it comes out. Our car was performing pretty well on those corners, and we were making up time compared to other people, and they left us with corners I think really weren't as good for us. So we have changed the SunTrust car to address corners they left on the track. That track had 24 corners, so you had corners where you had an advantage, other corners where you were good, and other corners where you didn't have an advantage. The good thing is, we basically know our car pretty well. We did similar things before the race in Montreal and I think it was the best that it has ever been at Montreal."

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

What's on your mind as you wrap up your first season with the SunTrust team this weekend in Utah?

"I'm thinking about how the year has flown by. But if I think about all the individual race weekends and how much effort and thought went into every debrief, everything I learned, all the classes with Max, everything with Travis (Jacobson, technical director), it's been a long year. Yes, we have 'classes' with Max. We do it before every weekend. We have a class, normally with a different theme each time. Now, we have a full winter program with classes lined up with Max. The winter will be about mechanical and aero and feedback and Max's whole thought process. Max wants to sit in front of the room with a big pad of paper on an easel. We call him Professor Max and we joke that it's Angelelli University. Sometimes (younger brother) Jordan (Taylor) joins us. It's pretty informal, but very informative every time. During the season, we would go over important parts of the track we're racing at. You know how, in school, you take away at least a little something from every class you've taken? Well, I've taken away something from each of the 12 races we've done this for, and that's added up to a lot of knowledge. There was a braking class, where we talked about brake setup and how to basically start a weekend without adjusting anything, and then taking it slowly and methodically. Then we had a class on how to drive around problems and how to adapt to the car. That was another big one. Some things are difficult to put into words, but Max shares things more than other drivers ever would. It's been great."

If somebody would have told you at the beginning of the season that you were on a path to win a race, sit on the pole three times as a team, and be in a position to finish a strong second in the championship, what would you have thought?

"If somebody would have told me that last year, I wouldn't have known what to think. Last year (with Beyer Racing), we finished fourth once, and that was like a win. That was unbelievable. This year, I knew I was coming to a team that is always fighting for a championship. But it's hard to imagine actually being in this situation until you actually experience it. Looking back, I think we could've improved two or three results, finished a little higher. The end result probably would've been the same, but with fewer points between us and the Ganassi team. They had a historic year, so hats off to them. I don't know if anybody could have kept that pace."

You've raced on both track configurations at Miller over the years. How do you feel the Daytona Prototypes will take to the "outer" circuit this weekend?

"I raced the 'outer' track in 2008 in IMSA Lights, the exact configuration we're going to do this weekend. We won one race and had a brake failure while leading the other race. I also raced a Skip Barber weekend on the 'outer' course in 2007 and had a second-place finish. Setup-wise, it'll change because there are fewer corners. Travis (Jacobson, technical director) is always ahead of the game and seems to bring the car ready to go for what we've got to run. He brought a great setup to Montreal for the last race and I'm confident we'll be good again this weekend. The parts they cut out of the track were actually my favorite portions of the track. It flowed really well. There was at least one possible passing spot there. But by taking out those nine turns, it kind of helps the whole weekend go a little smoother, where there are not 24 corners to worry about. Turn one is definitely going to be the best passing spot, so it puts even more of a premium on turn one."

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

Your overall thoughts heading to Miller Motorsports Park this weekend?

"I think we're closing out a pretty good season, once again, for Max, for Ricky and for the team. Max has done an amazing job this year, coaching and helping and nurturing Ricky. Ricky has shown us what he's capable of doing at this level, and his future certainly looks bright. The team has done an excellent job keeping us in contention for race wins each and every weekend. I'm glad to see that we're going to race at Miller on the 'outer' track, which is a much better track layout than we've raced on the last couple of years, in my opinion. We'll certainly go and try to stop that 01 team from winning yet another race, but I'm sure it'll be the usual fight between the 99, the 10 and the 01. All in all, it's a great way to finish the season."

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