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Contact Laz Denes

True Speed Communication

(256) 717-8014 or Laz.Denes@TrueSpeedCommunication.com

www.TrueSpeedCommunication.com

Online Media Kit Available at: www.TrueSpeedMedia.com

SunTrust RACING

Utah 250 Preview

TOOELE, Utah (Sept. 15, 2009) – When the curtain came down on the four-race “Solid Is Lightning Fast” summer tour of the Grand-Am Rolex Sports Car Series three weekends ago at Montreal’s Circuit Gilles Villeneuve, SunTrust Racing’s Max Angelelli and Brian Frisselle were spraying victory champagne for the second time in their last four outings.

The unique promotion of SunTrust’s mobile and online banking products, featuring an eye-catching silver paint scheme on the No. 10 SunTrust Ford Dallara of Wayne Taylor Racing, finished at Montreal on the top step of the podium, just like it started on a magical Fourth of July afternoon at Daytona (Fla.) International Speedway.

In show business, every performer knows it’s always best to leave the audience wanting more. While that may not always be the case in racing, Angelelli, Frisselle and the SunTrust team certainly want more of the same in the way of victories as the championship chase heats up and the season winds to a close. So they’ll get their chance to give an encore performance with the silver paint scheme, featuring the words “Solid Is Lightning Fast” on the sidepods of the SunTrust car, when they head to the desert just west of Salt Lake City for Saturday’s Utah 250 at Miller Motorsports Park.

The mammoth 4.686-mile, 24-turn road course at Miller is where Angelelli and the SunTrust team powered their way to a solid second-place run in last year’s 6-hour, 45-minute season finale and their third consecutive finish in the top-two. Each of the previous two seasons, the SunTrust team was equally impressive on the racetrack at Miller with a dominating racecar and the Rolex Series championship up for grabs. But late-race electrical problems after leading a race-high 53 laps in 2006, and a flat tire that led to a race-ending oil fire in 2007, left the team wondering what might have been.

Behind last year’s runner-up finish at Miller, and the momentum of victories in two of the last four races this season, the SunTrust team is right back in the thick of the Rolex Series championship with two races to go. Angelelli and Frisselle are just five points out of the lead, locked in a second-place tie with the No. 01 Chip Ganassi Racing with Felix Sabates Lexus Riley of Scott Pruett and Memo Rojas. As was the case in 2007, the SunTrust and Ganassi teams find themselves chasing the No. 99 Gainsco/Bob Stallings Racing Pontiac Riley of Jon Fogarty and Alex Gurney. But this time around, Saturday’s event is only the penultimate race of the season, and Miller’s traditional 1,000-kilometer race distance has been shortened to a 2-hour, 45-minute sprint.

That spells race action aplenty on arguably the most demanding track on the Rolex Series circuit with its 24 turns and 2-minute, 30-second-plus lap times, paying more of a premium than ever for qualifying and track position than during the lion’s share of a 1,000-kilometer enduro. Angelelli, Frisselle and the SunTrust team certainly feel up to the task, and they know full well just what they want to do for an encore. By dusk Saturday in the Utah desert, the racing world will know.

Practice for Saturday’s Utah 250 begins at 12:30 p.m. EDT Friday with qualifying set for 6:50 p.m. The green flag flies for Saturday’s race at 5:30 p.m. with SPEED-TV carrying all the action live. 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:

Miller Motorsports Park seems to be a track where the SunTrust team has had a very fast racecar each of its previous three outings. Do you expect that to be the case once again this weekend?

“It’s usually a very good track for us. I guess I just like the track a lot. We’ve gone there with two different cars (a Riley chassis in 2006 and 2007 and the Dallara in 2008) and we were fighting for the win in both kinds of cars, even though we didn’t get the result for one reason or another. Our team likes to work at the track because it’s a very nice facility. Our car likes the track. Our engineers and the drivers like the track. So, I have every reason to expect we will be strong there again this weekend.”

With the race being shortened from 1,000 kilometers to a 2-hour, 45-minute sprint, do you expect it to play out differently? And with the championship so tight with still another race at Homestead to go, will you and the team be playing it conservatively?

“Anyone who knows me knows that ‘conservative’ is not in my dictionary. We’re definitely going for it because I know our competitors will be going for it. It’s a short race, so it will just be a question of pace. It seems like the pace was already quite fast even when it was an endurance race. But it can be faster, which you will see this weekend.”

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

You mentioned after your race win at Montreal that you are just amazed at how you're still in contention for the championship after more than the usual number of results out of the top-10. What does that say about your season, and the Rolex Series?

“Normally, you might be able to get away with one bad result and still be fighting for the championship by the end of the season. If you have more than that, you are usually out of contention. This year, the top three teams have had several bad results, which says a lot about the competitiveness of the series. It's left all three of us still fighting for the championship. Things are more competitive than ever this season. This is why so many teams and drivers have a chance to win every week. And this is why even the top teams make mistakes, and drivers make mistakes that lead to bad results. But even though it's been that kind of a season for our team, we are absolutely where we want to be. I'd like to leave Utah with a comfortable lead, that's for sure. But we'll just do what we know how to do best and hope that it is good enough at the end.”

Brian Frisselle, co-driver of the No. 10 SunTrust Racing Ford Dallara:

Here you are, five points out of the championship and locked in a three-way battle with the usual title-contending teams with two races to go. Is this what you imagined when you signed up for the SunTrust program for this season?

“I totally expected us to be in contention at this point. I think this team is right where we're supposed to be, contending for the championship with two races to go. Of course, it's always good to be the team in first and, as strong as a team this is, that's where we feel we belong. But, in reality, crazy things have been happening this year to not just us, but the other teams, as well. In any season, there are always going to be ups and downs and things happening that throw a wrench into your plans. But, overall, this year has been really a special one for me. Last year, on paper, the SunTrust team was definitely one of the strongest ones in the paddock, but for a lot of reasons, not of its own doing, it turned out to be its only 'off year' since it joined the series. Things are going so much better, now, and we're really glad to be right where we are. It's going to be an incredible last two races.”

You've had a couple of top-six finishes at Miller the last three seasons, so it would make sense to say you like the track?

“Yeah, for sure. We finished fifth with the Michael Shank team a few years back and I really have liked it since then. Last year, we ran sixth with the AIM team. I really like the challenge of having so many corners to get through. The track's got a lot of different corners, and even some elevation changes. The first two corners are high-speed and fun to drive, and they are followed by some hairpins, and then a nice mixture of corners the rest of the way. Being a sprint race now, I think, will change the complexion of the race. Qualifying is going to be more important, like it is at all the sprint races. There usually weren't a whole lot of yellows when it was an endurance race, so there could be more yellows this time, but not necessarily. Still, you'll want to get up front and build as large of a gap as you can. If you're not in front, you definitely want to stay as close as you can to the leaders. Trackwise, it's wide and there are good passing zones, so it definitely lends itself to some good racing. It'll be interesting, for sure. It's been a good track for the SunTrust team, for the most part, even though the results don't all show it. We'll just have to make sure we elevate our game and hope to come out of there with either the point lead, or a really good shot at it.”

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

You've had a great racecar over the years at Miller but the results weren't there to show for it until last season's runner-up finish. How do you feel going back there this weekend and run a sprint race for the first time?

“I can't help my thoughts that we had some bad times there, but I think we feel we can have a good car and I think we can come out of there with a great result. At the same time, there will be a lot of pressure on us and the other two teams fighting for the championship. Everybody will have to do their job, recognizing that there's a championship at stake, but also not freak out. We just need to get ahead of the (No.) 99 car and beat the (No.) 01, as well. I just have this really good feeling because I feel we have a good team. We've done a heck of a lot over the last year-and-a-half and I really believe all our hard work is going to pay off in these last two races.”

Does the fact that this is a sprint race and not an endurance race change your mindset and/or your strategy heading in?

“We've had a few not-so-great moments this year, some not of our own doing. At same time, we've always run up front, and we've already won two races this year with two to go. We're just going to go flat out for 2 hours and 45 minutes, push as hard as we can, have the best pit stops, the best strategy, and hopefully come out with a solid points lead heading to Homestead.”

– SunTrust: The Official Bank of Motorsports –

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