



Long Fight, Early End for Stevenson Motorsports in Rolex 24 At Daytona

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Daytona Beach, Fla. (27 January 2013)- Stevenson Motorsports did not start the 2013 GRAND-AM Rolex Sports Car Series season the way the team had been hoping to. After fighting back from a series of setbacks through 595 laps of competition, a transmission problem forced a premature retirement for the Camaro GT.R. The race-ending issue was the final body blow after what was a heavyweight effort from the team, which carried the GM Racing flag with the Camaro GT. R driven by John Edwards, Robin Liddell, Tommy Milner, and Jan Magnussen.



After opening the race from seventh on the GT Class grid, the Camaro made progress up the order, moving up to lead on lap 69, and then again on lap 92. But the time at the front came largely through strategy rather than speed, and the pace was not one that was sustainable after the car suffered some unusual mechanical ailments.

“We started well,” said Team Manager Mike Johnson. “We knew we didn’t have a fast car. We knew we had a battle before the green flag dropped, and we had to probably push a lot harder than some of our competitors did, just to maintain staying at the back end of the lead lap. We just kept pushing and fighting, and I think it just eventually bit us. The whole race never really went well for us. It wasn’t a typical Stevenson race.”

Another challenge developed when a brake line issue reared its head, forcing the squad to cope with the problem. The time spent in the garage meant that the car was now very deep in the running order. Being fully aware of the point structure, the team was committed to making the most out of the race, making repairs to the car to fight back and keep putting in lap after lap, making the slow climb back up the order.

“But the problems happened,” continued Johnson. “We always kept our composure, and we battled back. I think we were as far down as 16 laps and 25th place, and we got back up to 13th, 10 laps down, and we did the last two hours without first or second gear and we were passing cars doing it. I guess the only good news is that we’re walking out of here with 15th place points, versus 20th or 30th. We just have a lot to do before we get to Austin if we’re going to be where we expect to be.”

Unfortunately, all that effort came up short as a transmission went from bad to worse to the garage after the Camaro had finished 595 laps. The team was classified 24th, but will earn the same amount of points as the car finishing 15th.

“What happened is just racing, but I’m proud of my guys after that brake situation,” said team owner John Stevenson. “In all my years of doing this, I’ve never seen anything so bizarre in my life as a brake line pinching a hole in it. The guys did a hell of a job getting the car back out and it looked like we were going to get a chance to maybe get back up there somewhere in that top-10. But second gear was going and then gearbox gets weaker and we’re losing the motor. But sometimes that’s just racing. Mike (Johnson) did a great job on the box as he always does and the crew was good, the drivers were consistent and smooth as you can ask anybody to be and that’s why we’ll do it again. We’ll be back in Texas ready to go!”

“As usual the Stevenson crew is one of the hardest working and best prepared,” said Edwards. “But unfortunately we’re dealing with a very sensitive gearbox while most of the other cars that came over from Europe with a GT3 base have paddle shifters and autoblip, and everything so that’s one of our biggest concerns that they don’t even have to think about. It was really disappointing to put in all the effort after the brake problem and push through the night and get our laps back and then in a sense it was all for nothing because we still ended up with the same amount of points we would have had if we would have just parked it and gone home and slept in our beds!”

“It was not just a disappointing outcome, it was a disappointing performance,” added Liddell. “We actually didn’t really have any pace for anybody last night. Pretty much all the Audis, Ferraris, and Porsches were quicker than us, and all we could do was hustle the hell out of the car and try to keep up with them. You know with four professional drivers that was probably something that played into our strength, but in order for us to get a result of any description, we were going to have to have a perfect race, and in the end we weren’t able to do that for different reasons.

“At the end of the day, we’ve got a great crew, we had good drivers, the car was well-prepared, but we just didn’t have a car which actually had the performance to win this race against the competition. That’s the bottom line; I don’t think there’s any way of getting away from that really, so it’s quite frustrating.

Stevenson Motorsports will return to both GRAND-AM Continental Tire Sports Car Challenge and Rolex Sports Car Series competition March 1-2 at the Circuit of The Americas outside of Austin, Texas.

SPEED is slated to broadcast the Daytona race on February 2nd at 4:00 PM (ET).

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