



News & Notes



Oak Tree Grand Prix Spotlights GT Classes

Virginia International Raceway returns to its heritage of IMSA GT racing with this weekend's Oak Tree Grand Prix. The two-hour, 45-minute race on Sunday at 4 p.m. ET (live, FOX Sports 1) will showcase the GT Le Mans (GTLM) and GT Daytona (GTD) classes of the TUDOR United SportsCar Championship.

VIR hosted the debut event for the IMSA GT Series in 1971, and returned the following year with the IMSA Camel GT Series. Hall of Famers Hurley Haywood and Peter Gregg won both events in Porsches.

Fittingly, VIR will host the first standalone race for GT classes in the TUDOR Championship, the result of the merger between the American Le Mans Series presented by Tequila Patrón (which raced at VIR from 2012-13) and the GRAND-AM Rolex Sports Car Series (which competed at the circuit from 2002-2011).

Recognized as the world's premier GT class, GTLM typically features 10 factory-backed sports cars from Porsche, Ferrari, Corvette, Dodge Viper SRT and BMW practicing and qualifying within one-tenth of a second. GTD features Ferrari, Porsche, Aston Martin, BMW, Audi and Dodge Viper SRT.

The weekend also includes two 45-minute races for the TUDOR Championship Prototype Challenge (PC) class, set for 5:15 p.m. on Saturday and 10:45 a.m. on Sunday. The sprints will include the IMSA Cooper Tires Prototype Lites powered by Mazda, and will recognize the top finishers from both individual segments in addition to overall winners.

Overall Win An Added Incentive For GTLM Competitors

GTLM drivers in Sunday's Oak Tree Grand Prix have an added incentive. In addition to chasing a class victory in the highly competitive class, they will also be racing for an overall triumph for the first time this season.

"It will be quite a new feeling to race for overall victory at VIR this weekend, but of course it's something we are all looking forward to," said Giancarlo Fisichella, GTLM winner at the most recent race at Road America in the No. 62 Risi Competizione Ferrari F458 Italia. "We don't get this opportunity very often. It's still going to be very competitive in GTLM and there are 19 GTD cars which could help us...or not."

Bill Auberlen took an overall victory at VIR in a six-hour Continental Tire SportsCar Challenge race in 2007, in addition to taking three Rolex Series GT class victories at the circuit.

"It's great to be able to race for the overall win," Auberlen said. "I'm always motivated, but running as the lead class means there will be a little less traffic and a little more glory. When you win this race, all eyes are on you. It's real exciting, and it's great to be able to do it at VIR. It's one of the most fun tracks we race on, and I love going there."

While **Bryan Sellers** is looking forward to going for the overall victory, the driver of the No. 17 Team Falken Tire Porsche 911 RSR feels winning the class is an incentive in itself.

"In today's racing all the classes have so much competition that a win for us is just as valuable as an overall win," Sellers said. "It will be different to race as the fastest class and to see how that affects strategy and how the race plays out. When you are racing for the overall victory it changes how you must 'race' the race. It will be fun to see only a GT race and to see how it is received by the fans."

The Race:
Oak Tree Grand Prix

The Place:
Virginia International Raceway

The Date:
Sunday, Aug. 24

The Track:
3.27-mile, 17-turn road course

The Race Length
GTLM/GTD: 2 hours, 45 minutes
PC: Two 45-minute races

Broadcast Schedule:

Qualifying (IMSA.com)
Saturday: PC - 10:50 a.m.
GTLM/GTD - 12:30 p.m.

Race (IMSA.com)
Saturday: PC/Lites #1 - 5:15 p.m.
Sunday: PC/Lites #2 - 10:45 a.m.



Race (FOX Sports 1)
Sunday: GTLM/GTD
4 p.m. ET

* All times ET

Radio Schedule:



MRN:
3:45 p.m. ET on MRN.com,
IMSA.com

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Tech Corner: Track Walks Provide Key Insight Into Mastering A Circuit

Tech Corner

Auto racing has been a dynamic force throughout the years, regularly changing rules, regulations, pace and form. As the sport progresses, the competitors constantly have to update their driving styles to keep pace.

Arguably, though, the most important part of driver development involves mastering a discipline that takes place outside of the car, one that has been in place since the sport began: the track walk.

Before any practice sessions take place during a race weekend, time is set aside for the drivers and teams to walk the course. The track walk serves two purposes. The first is to provide a first on-track glimpse for drivers who are new to the facility before they head out in a car. The second, more important purpose is to allow the drivers to analyze the track.

Touring a track by vehicle is beneficial, but inspecting the track surface on foot is crucial. The texture of a track can provide a driver insight as to how much grip it will provide. Certain contours of a track, which could appear as a surprise in a car, will be easily spotted on foot. Every bump and crack, every off-camber corner, every subtle elevation change will be seen.

Each track is different in both layout and environment. This weekend, competitors will compete on a completely repaved – and partially widened – layout at VIR. Sand will blow onto the course at Laguna Seca. The sun will beat down on certain corners at Road America while others are protected by foliage. A constant, stiff breeze will blow down the backstretch at Sebring. All of these factors will come into play once the cars take the course, and a driver needs to be as prepared for them as possible.

A track walk is essential even for a driver who has been to the course on prior occasions. Track surfaces can naturally develop minor changes over time due to weathering and usage. If repairs or improvements were made to a section of the track, it might drive completely differently than before. The ambient airflow through a corner will be easily detected while on foot, and can be different if the landscape has changed since the last race.

To quickly navigate a course, a professional racing driver simply needs to have practice in the seat of the car he will be driving. To master a course, to push the car to its limits, to best every competitor and win championships, a driver needs to truly know the course, one step at a time.

VIR Improvements Include Widened Circuit, Paved Paddock

Virginia International Raceway went a long way to level the playing field for this weekend's Oak Tree Grand Prix.

While the GRAND-AM Rolex Sports Car Series raced at the Danville, Va., circuit from 2002 through 2011, and the American Le Mans Series presented by Tequila Patrón competed there in 2012 and 2013, the 3.27-mile circuit was completed repaved and partially widened since last year's race – among an extensive improvements program.

Circuit officials took care to retain the original racing line of the 3.27-mile circuit that opened in 1971, widening the circuit by six feet at several locations to allow more passing opportunities.

"I loved the way the track was before, but now it's even better," said

Patrick Long, driver of the No. 912 Porsche North America Porsche 911 RSR and a DP winner at the circuit in 2006. "In the past there were a few sections that were a little too narrow for side-by-side battles. Now, they've widened the track in certain sections and changed the curb layout. I think it's going to bring a whole new flow to the track."

Tommy Milner, the lone Virginia driver in the TUDOR Championship, is looking forward to experiences the repaved track.

"They've made a bunch of changes this year to a number of places," said Milner, who co-drives the No. 4 Corvette Racing Corvette C7.R with **Oliver Gavin**. "They've repaved the surface and have added some runoff curbing and some room for runoff in some important corners. It was always a chal-

lenge there to be on the right line or you risked having some big moments. I don't think they've taken any of the challenge away; they've made it a little nicer for us on the track for us drivers with multiple classes where you need that extra six inches of road to keep close to your competitors. I'm excited to see how that works."

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GTD Points Race Tightens, MacNeil And Keen Take Momentum To VIR



Cooper MacNeil and **Leh Keen** finished second in the Continental

Tire Road Race Showcase two weeks ago at Road America, tightening up the GT Daytona (GTD) points race with only three races remaining.

It was the fifth top-five finish for the drivers of Alex Job Racing's No. 22 WeatherTech Porsche 911 GT America, who now trail season-long leaders

Townsend Bell and **Bill Sweedler** in the No. 555 AIM Autosport Ferrari 458 Italia by three points, 220-217.

Keen and MacNeil won the GTC class in the inaugural ALMS race at VIR in 2012, while MacNeil and **Jeroen Bleekemolen** finished second in GTC in last year's event, running both times in the WeatherTech Porsche.

"Our championship situation is really exciting leading up to the last couple of races," Keen said. "With just three races left and three points out, we are in a good position. We come to

VIR with a lot of momentum from Road America. Cooper and I won there in 2012 and he was on the podium last year. VIR has just repaved the entire track and made it wider so everyone is excited to get there and go faster."

GTD is more than a two-car race. Co-driving with **Markus Palmtala**, **Dane Cameron** is coming off his third victory of the season in the No. 94 Turner Motorsport BMW Z4, and is now only 12 points behind the leaders with 208 points.

Prototype Challenge Event Spotlights Starting Drivers In Unique Two-Race Format



The starting drivers will be in the spotlight in the Prototype Challenge

(PC) race this weekend at Virginia International Raceway. The class will run a pair of 45-minute sprints for the second time this season – although the procedures will be modified from the rules used for the race at Kansas Speedway.

Back in June, each team's bronze – or silver-rated (amateur) driver qualified and raced in the opening 45-minute sprint. That race set the field for the second 45-minute heat that determined the official order of finish.

For VIR, the bronze or silver driver qualifies on Saturday at 11:15 a.m. ET, and then starts the opening round that evening at 5:15 p.m. Points will be awarded for each position in the opening race, as well as podium ceremonies.

The team has the option of running the starting driver or a gold- or platinum-rated (pro) driver for the second round at 10:45 a.m. on Sunday. Points

from both races will be combined, which will determine the official order of finish and the official points allocation. Ties will be broken by the best result from the first race.

"It's going to be an improvement the format from Kansas," said Duncan Ende, who will start RSR Racing's No. 08 Linospresso USA ORECA FLM09 co-driven by Bruno Junqueira. "Where the starting driver finished at Kansas had little influence on the final result. As long as you finished on the lead lap, you were still on the lead lap for the second race. This format will be interesting. I think VIR will be a better showcase for our cars – it's one of the best places to go racing in this country."

TUDOR Championship, Etc.

Corvette Racing won the GT class in the inaugural ALMS race at VIR in 2012, with **Oliver Gavin** and **Tommy Milner** winning in the No. 4 Corvette C6.R.

The pair return this weekend in the new No. 4 Corvette C7.R. While still seeking their first victory of 2014, teammates **Antonio Garcia** and **Jan**

Magnussen rolled off four straight triumphs earlier this year in the No. 3 Corvette C7.R.

"The track itself is different from anywhere else we go," Magnussen said. "It's very interesting and very old school. To me, it's incredible driving there and a very huge challenge. It's a technical race track and super quick. The Corvette does well there because in the past – and we still do – because the car performs well with good mechanical grip and with aero."

After missing two races, Alex Tagliani is set to make his TUDOR Championship return when he joins **Chris Cumming** in RSR Racing's No. 08 AutomaxUSA ORECA FLM09.

Jack Hawksworth filled in for both races, winning at Indianapolis and finishing fourth at Road America.

Veteran Tony Ave will sub for Jeroen Bleekemolen this weekend in the No. 33 Viper Exchange Dodge Viper SRT GT3-R. Ave won Trans-Am championships in 2010 and 2011. Bleekemolen, who joined Ben Keating in giving the team its first GTD victory at Canadian Tire Motorsport Park, will be racing in Europe.



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The Race:

Oak Tree Grand Prix

The Place:

Virginia International Raceway

The Date:

Saturday, Aug. 23

The Track:

3.27-mile, 17-turn road course

The Race Length:

Two hours, 30 minutes

Broadcast Schedule:

IMSA.com

Saturday, 2:05 p.m. ET - LIVE

FOX Sports 1

Aug. 31, 10 a.m. ET

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Continental Tire Challenge Has Long History At VIR

Virginia International Raceway welcomes back the Continental Tire SportsCar Challenge this weekend, with a two-hour, 30-minute race beginning at 2:15 p.m. ET on Saturday.

While the Continental Tire Challenge has not competed at the circuit since 2011, this will mark the 14th race for the series at the historic 3.27-mile circuit. The Continental Tire Challenge competed at VIR in its 2001 inaugural season, and raced there twice in 2002 and 2006. The series held an annual season-ending six-hour event at VIR from 2005 through 2009.

Eric Curran is the leading Continental Tire Challenge winner at VIR with four victories. The winner of the most recent race at Road America, Curran will be joined this weekend by TUDOR Championship Prototype contender **Jordan Taylor** in the No. 01 CKS Autosport Chevrolet Camaro Z/28.R.

VIR To Play Key Role In GS, ST Championship Battles

With only three races remaining in 2014 Continental Tire Challenge competition, Saturday's race at Virginia International Raceway could play a key role in determining the champions in both the Grand Sport (GS) and Street Tuner (ST) championships.

Trent Hindman enters the race with an 11-point lead over **Andrew Davis** and **Robin Liddell** in GS (242-231). Hindman and **John Edwards** are coming off a fourth-place finish at Road America in the No. 46 Fall-Line Motorsports BMW M3, while Davis and Liddell – three-time winners this season – finished second in the No. 6 Stevenson Motorsports Chevrolet Camaro Z/28.R.

Wayne Nonnamaker took over the ST lead on the strength of four runner-up finishes in the last five races in the No. 42 Team Sahlen's Porsche Cayman he co-drives with his brother Will. Former leader **Eric Foss** switched to a Porsche Cayman, finishing 13th at Road America with **Jeff Mosing** in the No. 56 Murillo Racing entry. Nonnamaker now leads Foss by eight points, 232-244, with **Tyler Cooke** and **Greg Liefoghe** – drivers of the No. 81 BimmerWorld BMW 328i – in striking distance with 214 points. Defending ST champs **Terry Borcheller** and **Mike LaMarra** won their first race of the year at Road America in the No. 23 Burton Racing BMW 128i and 23 points behind Nonnamaker with 209 points.

Staff Sgt. Dwyer Returns To Freedom Autosport Lineup

In his last outing in the Continental Tire SportsCar Challenge, **USMC Staff Sgt. Liam Dwyer** celebrated Memorial Day weekend by joining Tom Long in winning the ST class at Lime Rock Park.

Dwyer returns this weekend in the No. 27 Freedom Autosport Mazda MX-5, co-driving with **Randy Pobst** in his third and final scheduled appearance of the season. Pobst won two races earlier this season at Sebring and Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca co-driving the team's No. 26 Mazda MX-5 with Andrew Carbonell, who will be paired with Long this week.

Dwyer lost his mobility, but not his dreams, when he stepped on an IED (Improvised Explosive Device) and lost his left leg in Afghanistan in 2011. He uses a prosthetic leg to operate the clutch, needing no modifications to the race car. Dwyer began racing at an amateur level shortly after being wounded in Iraq in 2007. He made his professional debut earlier this year with Freedom Autosport at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca in Monterey, Calif.

Pos.	GS Class Drivers	Pts.
1	Trent Hindman	242
2	Davis / Liddell	231
3	John Edwards	227
4	Brad Jaeger	200
5	BJ Zacharias	197

Pos.	ST Class Drivers	Pts.
1	Wayne Nonnamaker	232
2	Eric Foss	224
3	Cooke / Liefoghe	214
4	Jeff Mosing	213
5	Borcheller / LaMarra	209