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SRT Motorsports - 24 Hours of Le Mans - In-Race Quotes #4

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8:00.00 In-Race Quotes #4

SRT Motorsports Racing Manager Gary Johnson and No. 93 SRT Viper GTS-R driver Tommy Kendall comment on the first 16 hours of the 24 Hours of Le Mans.

Gary Johnson – SRT Motorsports Racing Manager

“The 53 car came in for quick stop since the last time we talked and everything went fine with that and they’re back out on the track. The 93 had problems with a tire going down and getting stuck in the gravel trap and then coming back and having to get it cleaned up and have the bodywork repaired. He kind of had a long way to get back because he was under pretty slow power before he had the tire down. But he made it back and we patched it up and we should be good to go. We’ll continue on.”

Tommy Kendall – No. 93 Pennzoil Ultra Viper GTS-R

“Wow that was wild. I got in the car and the yellow came out right away and there was a long, long yellow and it started to rain. The reason for the lengthy yellow was they had to fix the guardrail again. Pretty soon the whole track was wet and everybody peeled in and I was the only car behind my pace car. But we don’t have any intermediate tires so they said if you can stay out, stay out; just be really careful.

“When it went green it was treacherous. I said I can keep it on the road but we’ll have to be careful. After about the whole rest of that stint it was wet or with cold tires and the track finally started to dry when I came in and fueled up and from that point on it was pretty good. I actually had fun. The soft tires were the right tires. I now realize part of why I struggled so bad in the first stint was being on the mediums when it got cold.

“We had about four or five laps to go and then going into Mulsanne I had a left-rear go down on me right as I hit the brakes – which got my attention – and did big tank slappers but kept it pointed straight almost got it slowed down and I didn’t and it ended up in the gravel. They pulled me out really quickly and then limping back at 20 miles an hour when those guys are sailing by you, I know the radios are telling ‘em they do a great job flagging but it’s just a little bit nerve-racking.

“But we got it back. Not quite sure why it went down. It must have been a puncture. There was no warning whatsoever. That’s our first real glitch of the day.

12:00.00 In-Race Quotes #3

SRT Motorsports Racing Manager Gary Johnson and No. 93 SRT Viper GTS-R driver Kuno Wittmer comment on the first 12 hours of the 24 Hours of Le Mans. At the midway point of the 24 Hours of Le Mans, the No. 93 SRT Viper GTS-R is P10 and the No. 53 SRT Viper GTS-R is P11 in LM GTE Pro Class.

Gary Johnson – SRT Motorsports Racing Manager

“Well we’re doing great so far tonight. The weather has gotten a little cooler and the cars are really moving well. We’re triple-stinting some of the tires and the drivers so we’re making up time that way, too. We have to watch certain things, especially the engine temperature, make sure it isn’t too cool so we’ve been taping up some of the grills to take care of that.”

Kuno Wittmer – No. 93 Pennzoil Ultra SRT Viper GTS-R

"Definitely a good last three stints for the SRT team and the Viper. You know usually when you do three or stints in any other car you get pretty wiped out but in a Viper you don't. Luckily we have a good car, comfortable driving it and go fast in it. We didn't quite have the start that we wanted to the race but I think it's slowly changing into our direction and the car's really favoring these temperatures and the tire selections and the chassis adjustments we've been doing. So we're going to keep cracking off some laps, keep running fast, keep running hard and let's see where it takes us at 3 p.m. on Sunday."

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED IN THIS RACE THAT YOU MAY NOT HAVE KNOWN COMING INTO IT BECAUSE YOU JUST DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH DATA? "We come back here again it's going to be a different story, a totally different circus. It is so valuable to run here previously in a race and you learn so much: temperature change, rain, everything. Everything plays into the effect of a car and I think we're lacking a little bit straightline speed right now compared to the other competitors. But you know when I was running with the front runners, the top three cars before, I would catch them everywhere in the brakes and everywhere in the corners so we're dominating them everywhere in the handling department and braking. It's just that we need some straightline speed."

16:00.00 In-Race Quotes #2

SRT Motorsports Racing Manager Gary Johnson, No. 93 SRT Viper GTS-R drivers Jonathan Bomarito and Tommy Kendall and No. 53 SRT Viper GTS-R driver Ryan Dalziel comment on the first nine hours of the 24 Hours of Le Mans.

Gary Johnson – SRT Motorsports Racing Manager

"We had a tough couple of hours right there, a couple of miscues and it put us down a couple of laps. But it's a long race and we'll keep plugging away. The 53 car went off into a gravel trap coming into the pit area. We came in, finished off the pit stop, went back out and realized that the alternator pulley belt was cut. A rock got between the pulley and the belt. We had to come back in and change the belt. The car was actually brought back into the garage. Then, we had a problem with the door not getting closed all the way, so we had to come in again."

THE GOOD PART ABOUT A RACE OF THIS LENGTH IS THAT YOU CAN MAKE UP A GOOD BIT OF DISTANCE.

"Well, it's going to take a while. You don't want to wish bad luck on anybody but things happen to other cars too. Hopefully, we'll keep clean and make it to the end without any more incidents."

Jonathan Bomarito – No. 93 Pennzoil Ultra SRT Viper GTS-R

THIS WAS YOUR FIRST STINT EVER AT LE MANS. HOW WAS THE EXPERIENCE? "It was amazing and tough all at once. The first stint was hard. There was a constant little mist on the track but just in certain corners. That really messes with your head quite a bit. The car is good. The guys are doing a good job. We just need to keep our heads down and keep pounding away laps."

HOW DIFFICULT IS IT TO MAKE THAT DECISION TO PUT THE WET TIRES ON? "I think it was right at the end of Kuno's (Wittmer) stint when it started to get pretty wet and we went to wets (tires). But even when the track looks really wet, it can dry really fast. We went to wets, it dried really fast, we hurt the wet tires and lost too much time right there. That was a learning lesson for Le Mans and this track. We won't make that mistake again."

HOW WAS THE CAR ONCE THE TRACK DRIED AND YOU PUT DRY TIRES BACK ON? "The car is good, has a good balance. We just did a triple-stint on a set of tires and it stayed pretty quick the whole time. I'm pretty happy with the car. It's just a long, long race. We're just a little over five hours or so into this."

Tommy Kendall – No. 93 Pennzoil Ultra SRT Viper GTS-R

HOW WAS YOUR STINT? "It was alright. It got off to a hurky-jerky start with a couple yellows right in a row and it was tough for me. I struggled getting a rhythm in terms of traffic."

"Traffic affected me a fair amount, so I wasn't happy with my speed. I just kept telling myself gas and tires, gas and tires; that's the only reason we want to come into the box. It's a long way to go to the end. I'm going to get some fluids, food, a rub-down and some sleep."

Ryan Dalziel – No. 53 SRT Viper GTS-R

"It went pretty well. We're sticking to our own plan trying to get the two cars to the finish, trying to keep them on pace

and see where we end up. The 53 car has just been involved in a couple of different little incidents but we're going to keep plucking away. To get to the end in these things, you have to fight. We've got a group of fighters here at SRT Motorsports. We'll keep plugging away; a long way to go, obviously. A lot of cars in front and lot of cars behind us so I think we're pretty proud of the job we've done so far.

"That's the most running I've done this week, based on the weather, so it was nice to get a couple of stints under my belt. I'm going to feel much better getting my next stint now. But the car is actually really nice. I guess we've been scratching our heads a little bit on where we need to find our biggest gains; I think we have an idea of what we need to work on. The car is nice to drive right now so I don't think you're going to see too many mental mistakes from the drivers."

HOW BIG OF AN ACCOMPLISHMENT IS IT TO SIMPLY FINISH THIS RACE? "Well, I think the first goal for anybody coming to this race is to finish. If we can finish both cars, that's a double bonus. Anything position-wise is icing on the cake. This is a tough race. You know the weather, everything has kind of gone against us this week.

"But you know the beauty of this program is SRT is in it for the long haul, they're in it to stay. Let's hope we get two good results for the 93 and the 53 and we'll move on to the next one."

WHAT'S THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE HERE AT LE MANS AT NIGHT? "Really, it's always the Prototypes. I've been on both ends of the grid here and it's definitely much tougher when you're a GT car having to deal with the kind of depth perception of the Audis coming up behind you. We're not really battling for a podium position right now. We're definitely going to be on cruise control a little bit just trying to make sure we take care of the equipment and take advantage of anybody else's misfortune at this point."

20:00.00 In-Race Quotes #1

SRT Motorsports Racing Manager Gary Johnson and SRT Viper GTS-R drivers Marc Goossens and Kuno Wittmer comment on the first four hours of the 24 Hours of Le Mans.

Gary Johnson – SRT Motorsports Racing Manager

"We've been trying to predict the weather and it's been difficult to do to say the least. We actually had the 93 car going with intermediate rains (tires) and that wasn't the right choice so they came in and switched out. Right now it's raining in Turns 1 and 2, so a lot of cars are going off there. But overall I think the cars have done really well. The 53 car showed that it could get past some of the other competitors. We are playing a little bit of a safe game here, not stretching the range more than we should; just want to get the laps in and whittling away on the other competitors."

THE CHOICE OF TIRES WHEN SOME OF THE TRACK IS DRY AND OTHER PARTS ARE WET IS A VERY DIFFICULT DECISION. "It is and the drivers give us some feedback but they are not really aware of what's coming with the next half-hour or hour of weather is going to be. Everybody takes a good guess and sometimes you make it and sometimes you don't."

OVERALL ARE YOU PLEASED WITH THE START OF THE RACE? "I am. The cars have shown good durability. We are right where we need to be on range and the drivers are doing a fantastic job so I'm real happy."

Marc Goossens – No. 53 SRT Viper GTS-R

YOU WERE PASSING CARS FOR POSITION WHEN HALF THE TRACK WAS WET AND THE OTHER HALF WAS DRY. "I had a good run. That's why I asked over the radio what are my lap times compared to somebody else because it feels like it's that slow and they told me it was way faster than any GT car. But it's good to have that communication because then you know you can pace yourself at the speed that you're doing but man the conditions are changing so quickly. It rains a little bit over there and dry over there. I didn't feel like I was taking any risks.

"I just got into a good flow, into a good rhythm. The car is pretty decent. We just have to look after our tires because we try to triple-stint them right now and you know we have to be cautious. If we get a triple-stint that's completely dry and no safety car, we may not make it on one set of tires for three stints. It's something else we'll probably learn later on in the race because we didn't have a chance to do that. These guys prepped the car so well it's running right now like a Swiss clock. It's not moving at all. Mechanically everything feels fine. So far I'm confident."

HOW DIFFICULT IS IT TO MAKE THAT DECISION TO CHANGE TIRES UNDER THESE CONDITIONS? "Well there are a lot of things that come into play. I mean, I could see other people struggle as well. I didn't feel like I was struggling as much at the time so our car seems to like that maybe a little better than the others but it's so tough to make a decision. I guess experience comes into play at that point but I felt pretty comfortable on those slicks all the time."

DO THE CHANGING WEATHER CONDITIONS EQUALIZE EVERYTHING AMONG THE COMPETITORS? "I think a lot of it is to do with the setup that you run. We know we're a little slower down the straightaways because of the drag that we have but then we make up elsewhere. Hopefully we can keep making the right decisions during the race and throughout the race and just take it from there."

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