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SRT Motorsports - 24 Hours of Le Mans Race Recap

June 23, 2013, LE MANS, France - SRT Motorsports made a triumphant return to the world's most prestigious sports car race as two identically-prepared Viper GTS-Rs each earned top-10 finishes at this weekend's 24 Hours of Le Mans.

The SRT trio of Ryan Dalziel, Dominik Farnbacher and Marc Goossens (No. 53 SRT Viper GTS-R) led SRT with an eight-place finish while teammates Kuno Wittmer, Jonathan Bomarito and Tommy Kendall (No. 93 SRT Viper GTS-R) were ninth.

"Incredible," said a humbled Tommy Kendall who was competing in his first Le Mans 24 since 2000. "Just over a year ago this team was put together and the car ran for the first time. It's a huge undertaking. For a new enterprise to accomplish competing the way that we have at Le Mans is amazing."

The near nine-mile course which runs on the Circuit de la Sarthe – a mix of closed public roads and specialist motor racing circuit – hosted its first race in 1923 and remains the most prestigious sports car event in the world.

"What an unbelievable race," said SRT President and CEO Ralph Gilles. "To get both cars back in one piece shows that everyone over-performed in my book. We were hoping for a strong finish and we got that. No one on the team ever got frazzled or lost focus even with all the challenges we faced over the 24 hours."

"The entire team stepped it up and everybody feels so proud of the effort. Le Mans is amazing. The 24 hours feels like an entire race season squeezed into one day. To have both cars finish the race makes me feel extremely proud and also shows the future promise of this team."

The Viper's successful return renewed a rich history of past racing success in the race including three-consecutive 1-2 finishes from 1998-2000.

Weather was a major story throughout the event as cool summer skies led to scattered rain showers that affected race strategy throughout the event. The twice-around-the-clock event was hit with several heavy downpours that drenched the course and forced teams to make a decision for wet or dry tires.

The race took a dramatic turn early when Aston Martin driver Allan Simonsen – a close friend of Farnbacher – lost his life in an accident on Lap 3. A shaken Farnbacher used the comfort of his close-knit race team to manage a heavy heart while preparing for his on-track schedule.

"It was very tough," said Farnbacher. "My teammates were fantastic and helped me through the most difficult race of my life."

Once in the car, Farnbacher and the rest of the SRT drivers were challenged by an ever-changing race course and compounded by the steep competitive environment of the LM GTE Pro Class.

"Very difficult situations all race, added Farnbacher. "It was dropping rain in some corners and in other corners it was dry. It was very hard mentally because you never knew what the next corner was going to be like."

Both SRT Viper GTS-Rs did well under the harsh racing conditions that defines Le Mans. Neither car experienced a major malfunction and both teams adapted well to the changing race conditions – mainly intermittent rain showers – that forced teams to make frequent decisions about which tire to use.

"Our big goal for this race was to finish," said Russ Ruedisueli – Head of Engineering, SRT Brand and Motorsports. "You know some people took that for granted. We respect this place and the high level of competition. So to finish both cars is fantastic."

The well-prepared Riley Technologies-built SRT Vipers raced inside the top 10 from the 18-hour mark until the checker flag six hours later. And despite the challenging weather conditions and stiff factory-backed competition from Ferrari, Corvette, Aston Martin, and Porsche, SRT Vipers made international noise proclaiming the powerful American-built V-10 supercar is back.

"It's very special," said a proud Bill Riley, VP and Chief Engineer, Riley Technologies. "It's such tough competition. To compete and finish with both cars in our first race at Le Mans is very special. I wish there would have been a better result but I'm not going to focus too much on that right now."

"Everybody worked hard and worked together as a team. We learned a lot this week and the weeks leading up to the 24. This experience is going to make us stronger and will be a great stepping-stone for everyone associated with the SRT program."

Two Porsche 911 RSR's were atop the LM GTE Pro Class podiums earning a Le Mans class win for the first time since 1998. The No. 97 Aston Martin scored third.

The SRT team returns to action in the American Le Mans Series July 6 at Lime Rock Park.

SRT Motorsports
2013 24 Hours of Le Mans
Circuit de la Sarthe
Final Race Results - LM GTE Pro Class
Sunday, June 23, 2013

1. No. 92 Porsche 911 RSR
2. No. 91 Porsche 911 RSR
3. No. 97 Aston Martin Vantage 8
4. No. 73 Corvette C6-ZR1
5. No. 71 Ferrari 458 Italia
6. No. 51 Ferrari 458 Italia
7. No. 74 Corvette C6-ZR1
8. No. 53 SRT Viper GTS-R
9. No. 93 SRT Viper GTS-R
10. No. 66 Ferrari 458 Italia
11. No. 75 Porsche 911 GT3 RSR
12. No. 99 Aston Martin Vantage 8
13. No. 98 Aston Martin Vantage 9

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