

Rolex 24 at Daytona - Daytona International Speedway - January 26-29, 2017

January 25, 2017

The Rolex 24 at Daytona will mark Lexus' return to North American sports car racing as 3GT Racing fields two Lexus RC F GT3s in the GTD class of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship. Lexus raced in the Grand-Am Rolex Sports Car Series from 2004 to 2009 when the manufacturer won 25 races, two driver championships (2004, 2008) and three-straight Rolex 24 at Daytona victories (2006-08). Since its Grand-Am era, Lexus has competed in off-road racing, endurance events and the Pikes Peak International Hill Climb, and now returns to sports car racing to develop its racing culture and learn technologies that transfer to its F and F SPORT production vehicles. To find out more about Lexus' efforts to return to sports car racing, watch the "Road to Daytona" video series on the Lexus Vehicles YouTube page.

Scott Pruett Behind The Wheel of a Lexus ... When Lexus competed in the Grand-Am Rolex SportsCar Series, veteran driver Scott Pruett was tallying wins and championships in Lexus-powered prototypes. Over six seasons in a Lexus-powered entry, Pruett won 22 races – including two Rolex 24 at Daytonas (2007-08) – and two championships (2004, 2008). When Lexus announced its intent to return to sports car racing in North America with 3GT Racing, Pruett joined 3GT Racing and has played a guiding role in the program's development, and has served as a brand ambassador and spokesman for Lexus and the team.

3GT Racing's Full-Time Lineup ... In addition to longtime Lexus driver Pruett, former open wheel racer Sage Karam will join the veteran driver in the No. 14 Lexus RC F GT3, while drivers Robert Alon and another former opener wheeler, Jack Hawksworth, pilot the No. 15 Lexus full-time for the 2017 IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship season. Hawksworth and Karam both come to the team after competing in the IndyCar Series from 2014 to 2016, while Alon moves to the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship's GTD class after capturing three wins in PC to finish second in the series point standings in 2016.

The Endurance Additions ... 3GT's full-time lineup will be supplemented by four experienced drivers for the Rolex 24 at Daytona and Tequila Patron North American Endurance Cup races. Veteran driver Ian James and Gustavo Menezes, winner of the LMP2 class in the 2016 24 Hours of Le Mans and 2016 WEC LMP2 champion, will join the lineup for the No. 14 Lexus RC F GT3, while 18-year-old Austin Cindric and two-time Rolex 24 class winner Dominik Farnbacher join the No. 15 Lexus entry.

Three Rolex 24 Winners ... 3GT Racing's lineup for the Rolex 24 features two former class winners behind the steering wheel, and one steering the program for 3GT. Pruett is among the most decorated racers in the history of the Rolex 24 with five overall victories and 10 class wins, while Farnbacher has two class victories in the endurance event. In addition to the Daytona triumphs by Farnbacher and Pruett, 3GT Racing principal Paul Gentilozzi has two wins in the endurance race, including a victory co-driving with Pruett in 2002.

First Win on the Track ... Farnbacher guided the 2016 Lexus RC F GT3 to a win in its race debut in the VLN series at Germany's Nurburgring in October. Farnbacher and his brother Mario co-drove the Lexus to the overall victory by 33 seconds in a wet race on the famed circuit. The Farnbacher Racing entry competed in the SPX class in the VLN race prior to its homologation for the 2017 season.

Winning off the Track ... Many technologies from Lexus' racing initiatives have transferred to their production cars, including carbon fiber roofs, suspension design and vehicle handling characteristics. For Lexus in 2016, total F vehicle sales (GS F, RC F and formerly IS F) are 2,415. In addition to these models, many other Lexus vehicles offer F SPORT versions, with enhanced bold styling and handling agility that are inspired by Lexus' racing efforts, and F SPORT sales in 2016 totaled 60,269.

Lexus Racing Quotes

JEFF BRACKEN, Lexus group vice president and general manager

What does it mean to Lexus to begin competing at this week's Rolex 24 Hours at Daytona?

"We're excited to return to American sports car racing in 2017 with the RC F GT3 competing in the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship. 3GT Racing is a championship-winning organization that has had success in multiple disciplines, and both Lexus and 3GT Racing teams believe strongly in our teamwork and continuous improvement, which makes this a great partnership. The Lexus high performance philosophy is to take the technologies from racing and apply them to our road cars to create exhilarating sound, precise handling, and ultimately cars that are more fun to drive and an extension of the driver's own personality."

SCOTT PRUETT, No. 14 Lexus RC F GT3

How does a new program prepare for a 24-hour race?

"Man, I love coming to Daytona. This is just a terrific venue and when you think of those great race tracks – Indianapolis and Daytona – those are those ones for me personally that I go into and I get goose bumps. I'm excited to be back and I'm excited to be back with a great program with Paul (Gentilozzi, 3GT Racing team principal) and with Lexus. The group that we managed to put together is a great group of drivers. We've got a lot to learn and we're working hard on it. It's exciting being involved at the ground level and learning a lot like we do and we have a lot to learn as we move forward."

JACK HAWKSWORTH, No. 15 Lexus RC F GT3

How does it feel to come to Daytona with 3GT Racing and Lexus?

"I'm very excited to be a part of this series. I think it's probably the strongest the series has ever been, so that's obviously fantastic. To be doing it with the Gentilozzis – obviously I raced with them in LMPC for a couple years in 2014. I think I did Daytona with them in '15. Paul's (Gentilozzi, 3GT Racing team principal) a real racer. There's not many of them out there, but he's a real racer. He loves to go racing and when the opportunity to join the team came about especially with the fantastic partnership with Lexus and all of the support that they're giving the team it was just a no brainer. Obviously delighted to be here and eager to get down to business."