

Lexus RC F GT3 Teams Test for Upcoming SportsCar Season

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The Lexus RC F GT3 made its official on-track debut in the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship in a pair of tests at Daytona International Speedway in November and December as the manufacturer builds towards its return to sports car racing in 2017.

The RC F GT3 race cars took to Daytona's 3.56-mile road course to prepare for the upcoming Rolex 24 at Daytona, the opening event of the IMSA season in January, when the Lexus entries will make their competition debut.

"It's great to see the Lexus RC F GT3 back at Daytona," said Mark Egger, Lexus motorsports manager. "We've made progress and we're still learning the race car and this is a valuable opportunity for our team to see how the Lexus performs at Daytona in advance of the Rolex 24. We tried to use this test to focus on preparing for the upcoming season and everyone at 3GT Racing and our team partners are working great together. There's still a lot of work to be done prior to the Rolex 24 at Daytona, but our Lexus team is making progress and we're eager to get back to Daytona in January."

3GT Racing will field two RC F GT3 entries in the GTD class of the WeatherTech Sports Car Championship in 2017 for drivers Sage Karam and Scott Pruett in the No. 14 and Robert Alon and Jack Hawksworth in the No. 15 Lexus.

The RC F GT3 entries mark Lexus' first team partnership in North American sports car racing since 2009, when Pruett had considerable success driving a Lexus-powered prototype. The veteran sports car driver won two Rolex 24s with Lexus (2007-08) and tallied 22-total victories in a Lexus in Grand-Am Road Racing.

During the two-day tests, 3GT Racing worked on the performance and vehicle setup with the new RC F GT3 race cars in preparation for the upcoming season and Rolex 24, the longest endurance event on the IMSA schedule at a 24-hour length.

"This has been a long time coming and I'm so excited to be back in Daytona," said Pruett. "I love this place – everything about it – and with Lexus and everything they're doing, this is the start of everything. It's a brand new program for them. Everything we have to learn about the car is new. From my standpoint, moving from a prototype to a GT is significantly different, so there's so much newness to it, but there's so much excitement. I've been in this business a long time and when you can work with a manufacturer like Lexus there's that freshness and that excitement to it all. Instead of just doing it all again, this is all for the first time."

3GT Racing is a Lexus team owned and operated by veteran racer Paul Gentilozzi, and the organization will receive engineering and marketing support from Lexus. During the two tests, the East Lansing, Michigan-based team was also assisted by engineers from TRD, U.S.A. (Toyota Racing Development) and Toyota Technocraft, who built the RC F GT3 race cars in Yokohama, Japan. The cars were delivered from Toyota Technocraft to 3GT Racing in October.

Lexus previously competed in the Grand-Am Road Racing's Rolex Sports Car Series from 2004 to 2009 when the manufacturer claimed two driver's championships (2004 and 2008), three overall victories in the Rolex 24 (2006-08) and 25 race wins.

The 2017 IMSA season opens with the Rolex 24 at Daytona on Saturday, Jan. 28 at Daytona International Speedway. Prior to the season-opening event, the Lexus RC F GT3s will participate in the Roar Before the Rolex 24, the final IMSA-sanctioned test session before the season opener from January 6-8 at Daytona.