

Joe Bacal and Lexus Persevere for Maiden Victory in Baja 1000

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2010 SCORE Baja 1000 - Joe Bacal 001

Never-Say-Die Effort Caps First Championship Season for Driver, Team, and Luxury Automaker

LA PAZ, Mexico, November 21, 2010 – After suffering the longest night of his young off-road racing career, Joe Bacal and the Cancer Treatment Centers of America-sponsored Lexus LX 570 stormed past the finish line at 7:54 a.m. Saturday morning in a triumphant conclusion to the 43rd Annual Tecate SCORE Baja 1000.

After weeks of careful preparation and the 2010 SCORE Stock Full championship already behind them, cancer survivor Bacal and first-leg co-driver Chris Cocores departed Ensenada at 12:57 p.m. on Thursday with a comprehensive race plan and a quick LX 570, backed by a second driving team and a race-tested support crew. Their plan was to turn the rig over to Bob Ditner and Paul Williamsen early Friday morning at mile 546 but things did not quite go as planned.

“I felt great and we were making excellent time until a wheel came loose around mile 180,” said Bacal. “The loose wheel caused some damage that took quite a while to repair.”

The highly unusual breakdown sidelined the team for more than two hours, but the worst was yet to come. An engine restart issue that emerged after the Primm 300 in September and was thought to be under control, re-appeared after the wheel-related repairs were completed. At this point Bacal and Cocores were just a few miles from checkpoint #5 (race mile 382) at about 2:20 on Friday morning. But the apparent electrical anomaly proved resistant to diagnosis for hours, with hunger, fatigue and the dark, chilly desert frustrating their efforts.

“We knew we could finish on the podium if we could just get to the finish,” continued Bacal. “By now we were exhausted and hungry, and the finishing window was getting very tight. We tried everything we could think of and with just 40 minutes left to get through the next checkpoint, the LX started. At that point it seemed like a miracle.”

But the drama wasn't over yet. Due to communication difficulties on the Baja peninsula, there was confusion among the support teams. With the long layover, a rumor started circulating that Bacal was out and they were starting to head home when an urgent call from Teresa Bacal finally broke through: “The LX is running again!”

Now the JTGrey team would have to run quick and trouble free for the rest of the race—about 680 miles—to reach the finish in the allotted time. And that they did. Bacal and Cocores handed the big LX to Ditner and Williamsen at mile 545 and the pair ran fast and clean to mile 840, averaging nearly 40 miles per hour. They also passed the previously class-leading—but now stationary—#861 Hummer along the way, further energizing the weary team.

At the driver change around midnight Friday, Ditner moved to the passenger seat and Bacal retook the wheel for the final run to the finish. With only a few hours of precious sleep over the last 40+, the adrenaline-fueled Bacal pushed surprisingly hard over the final 222 miles.

“This one was a nail-biter—a real test for everyone,” said Bacal. “But my team stayed with it and we got ourselves back in the race. With the problems behind us we just flew to the finish line.”

Bacal and Lexus' first foray into off-road racing yielded immediate victory in 2009 with a brand-new team and an equally new LX 570 at the brutal Baja 500. Since then, the Cancer Treatment Centers of America-sponsored squad has compiled a perfect finishing record that remains unbroken.

“It’s a testament to the durability of Lexus and the contributions of a great team, including the outstanding Long Beach Racers,” noted Bacal. “We also have an amazing group of sponsors such as BF Goodrich and King Shocks that provide bullet-proof go-fast parts. Plus, the Cancer Treatment Centers of America has my back.”

Bacal and Lexus dominated their class in 2010 with four wins and one second-place finish to run away with the SCORE Stock Full championship. Not content to slow down, the team is already planning their assault on the 2011 season.

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For more information and updates on Joe Bacal, visit www.controlamidchaos.com

Bacal and the JTGrey Racing team acknowledge the following companies for their outstanding products, services and support:

- Cancer Treatment Centers of America (primary sponsor)
- Lexus (LX 570, original parts)
- F-Sport (wheels, performance parts)
- BF Goodrich (tires)
- King Shocks (suspension components)
- KC HiLiTES (lighting)
- Head First Design (graphics and marketing support)
- ARB and Old Man Emu (off road accessories)
- Sparco (seats, safety equipment)
- Mechanix Wear (mechanic gloves)
- Geiser Brothers Racing (vehicle build and prep)
- Powertank (CO2)
- Tomo Therapy (Joe’s radiation treatment)

About JTGrey:

JTGrey Performance Driving, LLC was created in 2007 by Joe and Teresa Bacal to provide expert high-performance driving services (on and off-road) to the auto industry and related companies such as parts suppliers, print advertising and marketing agencies and the commercial and feature film industries, among others. The company is based in Phoenix, Arizona.

JTGrey Racing was created by Joe and Teresa Bacal in 2008 to support Joe’s off-road racing efforts and is also based in Phoenix.

Note to Editors:

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Additional high-resolution images and B-roll are available. Please contact Brad Nelson or Teresa Bacal.

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