

RC F GT3 Returns to Site of Inaugural Victory

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LEXINGTON, Ohio (May 3, 2019) – Lexus and the AIM VASSER SULLIVAN (AVS) race team head to Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course this weekend for the first of seven sprint races in the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship GTD class this season taking place on Sunday afternoon. Mid-Ohio marks the third

race of the year for the GTD class after being off for IMSA's most recent event in Long Beach, California.

Lexus currently ranks third in IMSA's GTD manufacturer point standings following the second round of the WeatherTech SportsCar Championship at Sebring in March where the No. 12 Lexus entry finished ninth and the No. 14 registered a 15th-place result. The AVS No. 12 team currently ranks second in the GTD driver and team championship points heading into the first sprint race of the season, while the AVS No. 14 team sits seventh in the standings.

The Lexus RC F GT3 earned its first North American victory at Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course last May with former drivers Dominik Baumann and Kyle Marcelli. The RC F GT3 led every lap around the 13 turn, 2.258-mile Ohio road course with Hawksworth starting from the pole position in the No. 15 Lexus entry and leading the first 43 laps, before Baumann led the final 73 circuits in the No. 14 RC F GT3 to earn the historic victory. Hawksworth also ran the quickest GTD lap of the two hour and 40-minute sprint race with a time of 1:20.536.

AVS drivers Townsend Bell and Frankie Montecalvo continue as full-time drivers in the No. 12 Lexus, while Hawksworth and Richard Heistand will run the entire IMSA season in the No. 14 RC F GT3.

Along with Hawksworth, all four AVS drivers have past experience racing at Mid-Ohio with both Bell and Montecalvo earning victories at the Ohio circuit previously. Bell won back-to-back Indy Lights races in 2000 and 2001 at Mid-Ohio, while Montecalvo was victorious in Pirelli World Challenge competition in 2015 at the Ohio road course.

Sunday's IMSA race begins at 1:30 p.m. EDT with coverage of the two hour and 40-minute race on NBC Sports Network. Fans can also keep up with Lexus Racing on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#) by using #LexusRCF GT3, #LexusPerformance and #LexusRacing, and online at www.Lexus.com/Motorsports.

AIM VASSER SULLIVAN Driver Quotes

TOWNSEND BELL, No. 12 Lexus RC F GT3

What is your outlook for racing the Lexus RC F GT3 at Mid-Ohio and do you have any fond memories of the track?

"Very favorable. It's one of my favorite tracks. I won both of my Indy Lights races at Mid-Ohio. I had my first Indy Car test at Mid-Ohio, so I have a lot of great memories of being at Mid-Ohio. It was a Toyota-powered Indy Car – almost 900 horsepower – and I got to test the day after winning my second Indy Lights race so I've got special memories at Mid-Ohio. Really, that's what got me my first job in Indy Car was that test day at Mid-Ohio. Fun to come back with the Lexus. It's pretty impressive how much this category that I've raced in for several years has evolved because I haven't raced at Mid-Ohio in GTD ever. My last race was in GTLM in I think 2012. It's impressive how the performance has really evolved. They're getting so fast now around a tight track like this."

Does the No. 12 team have momentum going into the sprint race portion of the season?

"We've been lucky. We haven't been particularly special during the first two rounds on pace, but we finished both races which is important, and we had a good result at Daytona. Conditions really helped us there. Looking forward to the sprint races because it's a little more attack mode right from the drop of the green and it starts the sequence I think of more frequent races. The first two races, there's big stretches between events, and once you get in the cadence of racing all of the time there's nothing better."

FRANKIE MONTECALVO, No. 12 Lexus RC F GT3

Do you enjoy racing at Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course?

“I’ve had a couple good experiences at Mid-Ohio. The last time I raced at Mid-Ohio was in 2015 in Pirelli sprint racing. I had a first-place finish on a last lap pass, and I think I was actually racing against the AIM Autosport guys for that position so it’s pretty funny to come back here with them now. I like the track. It has really tight and twisty sections, and it’s hard to pass, which really challenges you. I think it also makes you try to really qualify good. Great track.”

Do you think the Mid-Ohio circuit suits the Lexus RC F GT3?

“I think Mid-Ohio will really suit the characteristics of the Lexus RC F GT3. This car has a lot of strengths and I think with the braking and going through some of these tight and twisty sections should really suit the Lexus RC F GT3.”

JACK HAWKSWORTH, No. 14 Lexus RC F GT3

Are you optimistic about racing at Mid-Ohio after having success there last year?

“I feel much more in the flow with the Lexus RC F GT3 at this circuit than I did last year. The car feels good, I feel really good on this track. I feel like the pace is going to be really strong, so I’m really excited about that. The Lexus works well at Mid-Ohio, which we proved last year. Although, the tires have changed, so that’s always a concern of is it going to be the same coming back this year. At our test, it felt like the car was in a really good window. I’m really optimistic about the race. Obviously going back to shorter races so it’s going to more full on attack mode, which I enjoy. I’m looking forward to it really. I think it should be a good race for the Lexus RC F GT3.”

What are the keys to success at Mid-Ohio?

“I think there’s many things. The car has to be good, which I think it is. I’m happy with the RC F GT3. We need good qualifying from Richard (Heistand). We need to qualify out front, because it’s not easy to pass at this track. We need good pit stops because track position is really, really important here. If we can do that, I think we’ll have the speed to go out with the guys up front and try to win.”

Where do you feel you can get the most performance out of the Lexus RC F GT3 at Mid-Ohio?

“I think in turn 1 and turn 11 – the high-speed corners. The RC F GT3 has got a really good balance front to rear. It creates a lot of downforce – I think more than the competition. It also seems to work quite well in the infield section with the quick change of direction the car is responsive, and it’s got quite a stiff platform, so it responds to the quick changes of direction quite well. I think there’s a lot of things about this track which work well for us.”

RICHARD HEISTAND, No. 14 Lexus RC F GT3

Do you have any racing memories at Mid-Ohio?

“I’ve been here once in 2005. It was my first-year racing in the Skip Barber National, so it’s been a while. But nowadays we have simulators and I’m big into iRacing, so I’ve driven it on the sim. I like the track and I know that the Lexus RC F GT3 did well at Mid-Ohio last year. Early signs from driving it during our test is that it drives well around Mid-Ohio. I’m looking forward to going sprint racing in general. That’s the type of racing I really know. The endurance stuff is newer to me. You get to be a bit more aggressive and I think the racing is a little bit more exciting. We’ve just got to go out and drive the car and do our jobs and see how it shakes out. I’m looking forward to it and I’m excited.”

What are they keys to having success in sprint races?

“I think part of it is that qualifying becomes more important, and I’m the one that’s got to qualify the car. The first stint is more important. In the endurance races, ultimately, the first couple stints of the race the only real important thing is to not crash and to not break the car, whereas now every time you’re in the car it matters. I like that. I’m a competitor, so I like competing and I feel like that’s true competition. I’m just excited to go out and compete and race maybe a little bit more aggressive.”