

Lexus and AIM VASSER SULLIVAN Conclude Successful 2020 Season

November 16, 2020

Image not found or type unknown



SEBRING, Fla. (November 16, 2020) – Lexus and AIM VASSER SULLIVAN (AVS) closed out the 2020 IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship season at Sebring International Raceway on Saturday evening. The Twelve Hours of Sebring didn't go as planned as both AVS Lexus RC F GT3s were damaged after sliding in oil on the race track while running first and second in the GTD class.

Nearly three hours into the event, AVS drivers Townsend Bell and Kyle Kirkwood were running in first and second place, respectively, when they both encountered oil on the track leaked by a GTLM competitor going into Turn 17 sending both cars into the tire barrier. Bell's No. 12 Lexus was in the garage for just over an hour before the AVS crew got the car back on track for the final eight hours of season-ending endurance event where they finished 10th.

The No. 14 RC F GT3 was too damaged to return to the 17 turn, 3.74-mile road course and their championship run ended with a 13th-place result with full-time drivers Jack Hawksworth and Aaron Telitz, along with Kirkwood. The team finishes the season third in the GTD team championship standings after a successful season that included three wins, five podiums, three pole positions and six top-five finishes in 11 races this season. Telitz ends the season third in the GTD driver point standings while Hawksworth ranks fourth as the season comes to a close. The driver duo scored back-to-back wins in IMSA's return to racing in July at Daytona International Speedway and in the sprint race at Sebring. They were also victorious at Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course in September.

Bell and Frankie Montecalvo finish fifth in the overall GTD team standings in the No. 12 Lexus RC F GT3 and finished third in the IMSA Sprint Cup Championship following Laguna Seca. Bell and Montecalvo earned one win, two podiums, two pole positions and five top-five finishes during the 2020 season.

Lexus finished third in the IMSA GTD Manufacturer's Championship on the strength of four wins, seven podium finishes and five pole positions in 11 IMSA races. Lexus, along with Hawksworth and Telitz in the No. 14 Lexus RC F GT3, secured the 2020 IMSA Sprint Cup Championship following the final sprint race of the season at Laguna Seca on November 1.

Follow the Lexus Racing action during the offseason on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#) by using #LexusRCF GT3, #LexusPerformance and #LexusRacing.

AIM VASSER SULLIVAN Driver Quotes

JACK HAWKSWORTH, No. 14 Lexus RC F GT3

Can you talk about today's race?

“We felt pretty good on Thursday night when we practiced, and the race was looking pretty good. We didn't have the fastest car on the track, but we certainly had a car just like at Petit Le Mans that we could finish on the podium with. The guys were doing a good job. We were looking after the brakes and looking after the equipment just kind of cruising around really just trying to stay on the lead lap. We elected on the last pit stop to stay out just because we thought it was safer to be out front and then kind of pit and be in the middle. We saw in the previous stint we were in the middle and there were some close calls with some cars, so we wanted to keep the track position. Unfortunately, a Corvette leaked oil and when Townsend (Bell) and Kyle (Kirkwood) came to the corner it looks like they just hit the oil slick and that was the end of our race.”

What positives can you take away from this season?

“The season as a whole was really positive. We won a lot of races and for me personally it was a pleasure to drive with the people I drove with, a pleasure to work with the people I worked with. We obviously wanted to win the championship so it's disappointing today to be in position to do that, be in position to at least put ourselves there at the end of the race and see what we had. Kind of like we did at Petit. It just wasn't meant to be. It's pretty tough to swallow. I've been racing for a long time and have never seen anything like that.”

AARON TELITZ, No. 14 Lexus RC F GT3

How disappointing is it to finish the season this way after such a great year?

“What a big bummer of a day here at Sebring for our No. 14 Lexus RC F GT3 car with AIM VASSER SULLIVAN. Both team cars got spun out on someone else’s oil in turn 17 because they were the first cars upon it. There was nothing that Kyle (Kirkwood) or Townsend (Bell) could do to save that. Just wrong place at the wrong time. I felt like we were in a cartoon there for a couple of minutes. We were in a position to win the overall manufacturer’s championship so it’s just a bummer the way things turned out today.”

KYLE KIRKWOOD, No. 14 Lexus RC F GT3

What happened to take you out of the race early?

“The race was going pretty much according to plan. Everything seemed to be perfect, really good pace and the car felt amazing. We made a change that pretty much put us in the balance window. Unfortunately, coming down into turn 17 a few laps after the restart the No. 4 Corvette dropped a bunch of oil and both Townsend (Bell) and I couldn’t see it and we were running nose to tail. I watched Townsend’s car go and I thought it was a really strange thing to see and a tenth of a second later my Lexus was uncontrollable. I’m definitely bummed for the team and bummed that this is the way it had to end, especially for the championship. We showed good pace this weekend. Everything was working perfectly, but unfortunately it was something that we can’t control.”

TOWNSEND BELL, No. 12 Lexus RC F GT3

Can you talk about what happened with the oil on the race track that caused damage to your Lexus RC F GT3?

“We got struck by lightning today. Crazy thing is so did the 14. I’m kind of speechless after this one. It couldn’t be a more cruel way to end the season. We fought hard all year and really wanted to deliver Lexus their first manufacturer’s championship and we had everything in place to do it. We were leading, running one-two and just super unlucky that the Corvette let go and dropped a bunch of oil. I had no indication of anything before the incident. Nothing on the windshield of my Lexus, no smoke and just fired into (turn) 17 and the car just snapped on me. And, then to my amazement my teammate Kyle Kirkwood took a really hard hit so I’m glad he’s okay. Luckily, we were able to fix the car and try to soldier on to do the best we could, but it took a lot of time to make extensive repairs. Frustrating, but just can’t plan for those things.”

FRANKIE MONTECALVO, No. 12 Lexus RC F GT3

How was your race?

“The Sebring 12 hour is always a tough one. We started off really strong and had a great start to the race. I made it from sixth to third right off the bat and then pulled a good lead over the cars behind. It was really tough. Michael (de Quesada) and Townsend (Bell) did a phenomenal job and the whole AIM VASSER SULLIVAN team had some bad luck. The Corvette dumped a bunch of oil there. None of us saw anything on the pit stands. Townsend had no idea that it was even there, and we had to watch the replay to see what even happened. Just really bad luck. The team did a phenomenal job getting our Lexus RC F GT3 back out there and putting everything back together. I’m just happy both of the guys were okay, and we were able to bring home some good points and we’ll see how we shake out at the end of the race.”