

LEXUS, VASSER SULLIVAN ANNOUNCE GTD PRO LINEUP FOR 2022 IMSA CAMPAIGN

December 06, 2021

Image not found or type unknown



DALLAS (Dec. 6, 2021) – Lexus will run one full-time entry fielded by Vasser Sullivan in the new IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship GTD PRO class with drivers Ben Barnicoat, Jack Hawksworth and Kyle Kirkwood completing the lineup in the No. 14 Lexus RC F GT3.

Barnicoat will team up with Hawksworth to run the full 2022 IMSA schedule and will be joined by INDYCAR driver Kyle Kirkwood to contend for the endurance championship.

Barnicoat joins Lexus and Vasser Sullivan after four years as a factory driver with McLaren. He most recently competed in the GT World Challenge Europe where he earned two pole positions last season. He also finished seventh in the 24 Hours of Spa and made his 24 Hours of Le Mans debut last season. During his tenure with McLaren, the 24-year-old from Chesterfield, England, played a key role in the development of the McLaren 720S GT3, finishing second in the car's debut at the 2020 Bathurst 12 Hour. Barnicoat has also competed in the European Le Mans Series and finished as runner-up in the Asian Le Mans Series racing in the LMP2 class, earned multiple race wins in the FIA Formula 3 European Championship and the Formula Renault Eurocup and was the 2014 Formula Renault NEC champion.

Hawksworth, who has been with the Lexus program since its inception, returns for his fourth season with Vasser Sullivan. The 30-year-old from Bradford, England, has earned six wins and 10 podium finishes in the last three seasons piloting the Vasser Sullivan No. 14 RC F GT3. In 2020, he and Aaron Telitz won the IMSA GTD Sprint Cup Championship on the strength of three wins and five podium finishes.

Kirkwood returns to the Lexus endurance line-up after competing in six races for Vasser Sullivan in 2020 and 2021. The 23-year-old from Jupiter, Florida, most recently won the 2021 Indy Lights Championship on the strength of a record-tying 10 wins and 14 podium finishes and is set to compete full-time in INDYCAR in 2022.

The 2022 season will mark the fourth year Lexus and Vasser Sullivan have partnered together. During that time, the Lexus RC F GT3 has earned seven GTD class wins, 18 podiums and nine pole positions.

Vasser Sullivan will also run a Lexus RC F GT3 entry in the GTD class with a driver announcement forthcoming.

The Vasser Sullivan Lexus RC F GT3 entries return to the track in the Roar Before the Rolex 24 at Daytona International Speedway on January 21-23 to prepare for the 2022 Rolex 24 at Daytona on January 29-30.

Quotes:

Andrew Gilleland, Group Vice President and General Manager – Lexus Division

“Together with Vasser Sullivan and TRD, we’re continuously finding ways to be competitive in North American sportscar racing and drive the Lexus performance message to new levels. Racing in IMSA has helped strengthen awareness and consideration of Lexus performance models amongst our dealers, owners, and competitors alike. Our momentum is rapidly growing and everyone at Lexus is excited to race for an IMSA championship.

“Jack [Hawksworth] has been integral in the development and success of the RC F GT3 program from day one, and we are thrilled to have a driver of Ben’s [Barnicoat] caliber join the Lexus family. Paired with [Kyle] Kirkwood for the endurance rounds, our GTD Pro entry aligns perfectly with the Vasser Sullivan and Lexus Racing program. They are young, quick and poised to fight for the top step of the podium all season long. We know we’ve got something special here and we’re excited to get out and earn our first GT championship together beginning with Rolex next month.”

Vasser Sullivan Team Principals Jimmy Vasser and James ‘Sulli’ Sullivan

“We are taking Vasser Sullivan Lexus to the next level, and building this bench of exceedingly competitive drivers is the next step to producing the kind of results we expect. Jack and Kyle have done an outstanding job for us capturing poles, consistently finishing on the podium and winning races. Ben’s ability and competitiveness in the world of sports cars has proven he belongs with us, we are energized to announce him today and have him join Vasser Sullivan Lexus.”

Ben Barnicoat

“I’m absolutely thrilled to be joining Lexus Racing USA. Hearing the future plans and ambitions that the Lexus brand has, to really write themselves into the history books of motorsport, is truly inspiring and really excites me about this program and my future with Lexus.

“I can’t wait to get to work with the Vasser Sullivan team and my super-fast teammates Jack Hawksworth and Kyle Kirkwood in our IMSA GTD PRO campaign with the Lexus RC F GT3. After meeting Jimmy and Sulli for the first time and seeing the team in action at Petit Le Mans last month, it’s clear to me that they are the team to be with in IMSA right now. The level of professionalism, along with the dedication and hunger to win races and championships was incredible, and I can’t ask for any more than that as a driver. I have a lot to learn with it being my first full season of IMSA, but I have an incredible car in the Lexus RC F GT3 and the best team of people around me to learn from and achieve our goals. We will be a force to be reckoned with. The green flag at the Rolex 24 in January can’t come soon enough!”

Jack Hawksworth

“I couldn’t be happier to be continuing this journey with Lexus as we venture into the GTD PRO category. I’ve been a part of the Lexus family for over five years now and I can honestly say I’ve never been more excited about where the program is and where it is going. We have a fantastic group of people within the Vasser Sullivan team and with the addition of some new faces, the team is continuing to push forward in the never-ending pursuit of excellence. Partnering alongside Ben and Kyle gives us a young and hungry line up, but with plenty of experience and I look forward to starting our on-track work together at Daytona. Thank you to everybody at Lexus, TRD and Vasser Sullivan for their continued support! I can’t wait to get out there and give it 100%.”

Kyle Kirkwood

“It’s fantastic to be back with Vasser Sullivan in the Lexus RC F GT3 for the 2022 season. This is my second year driving the endurance rounds in the No. 14 Lexus. We had a shot at winning every race in 2021 and unfortunately things didn’t go our way, but 2022 should be our year. We have the car, the crew and the drivers to make it happen.”