

Lexus Wins 2023 GTD PRO Manufacturers Championship

October 16, 2023

Image not found or type unknown



BRASELTON, Ga. (Oct. 14, 2023) – Lexus clinched the 2023 IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship GTD PRO Manufacturers Championship at the Petit Le Mans at Michelin Raceway Road Atlanta on Saturday. **Ben Barnicoat** and **Jack Hawksworth** also won the GTD PRO Drivers title and the Vasser Sullivan No. 14 Lexus RC F GT3 clinched the GTD PRO Team championship. It marks the first full-season IMSA GT titles for Lexus and Vasser Sullivan, as well as Hawksworth and Barnicoat.

Hawksworth and Barnicoat scored podium finishes in nine of 11 races this season, including wins at the Long Beach street circuit and Watkins Glen International. Hawksworth also led the GTD PRO class with four pole positions this year, winning the 2023 Motul Pole Award for most poles in class. Hawksworth has been a part of the Lexus GT program since its inception in 2017, while Barnicoat has raced the RC F GT3 for two seasons. Endurance racers **Kyle Kirkwood** and **Mike Conway** also contributed to the Manufacturers title with endurance race starts in the Lexus RC F GT3 this season.

Lexus and Vasser Sullivan previously won the 2020 IMSA GTD Sprint Cup Championship as the top team across all of the sprint races that season.

Aaron Telitz and **Frankie Montecalvo** finished the 2023 season third in the IMSA GTD championship. They were joined by endurance racer **Parker Thompson** during the four endurance events this year. The highlight of the season for the No. 12 RC F GT3 came at Watkins Glen International in June when the trio dominated and won the six-hour endurance event and gave the Lexus and Vasser Sullivan the first double victory in program history.

The 2024 IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship season begins at the Rolex 24 at Daytona on January 27 and 28. To keep up with all of the racing action, follow Lexus Racing on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [TikTok](#) by using #LexusRCFGT3, #LexusPerformance and #LexusRacing.

Vasser Sullivan Driver Quotes

JACK HAWKSWORTH, No. 14 Lexus RC F GT3

What does it mean to win the first GT championship for Lexus in your seventh season?

“It’s been amazing. For me personally, I’ve been with the program since it was formed at the end of 2016 all the way through the different teams and people who have touched this program over the last seven years, and to see it grow has been incredible. It’s not always been easy. We’ve had a lot of ups and downs along the way. It’s been quite the journey really. I just feel very grateful and thankful to Lexus and TRD and Vasser Sullivan who have stood by me and put their trust in me for a long time. To finally get a championship alongside two fantastic drivers in Ben (Barnicoat) and Kyle (Kirkwood), it’s been a dream come true for me this year. It’s been an awesome journey and I’m very proud of what we achieved this year.”

What does it mean to get the GTD PRO championship with the Lexus RC F GT3?

“It means a lot to get one with the RC F GT3 for sure. I’ve been driving this car since 2016 so to finally get a championship done with it is pretty special. Over these seven years, yes we have a homologated GT3 car, but again this is credit to Jimmy and Sulli and everyone at TRD. They’ve found ways to squeeze more out of it every single year and then squeezing more out of the race team. That’s how we managed to do it. Getting 1% better every couple of months. It’s really special to get one with this car. There’s advantages and disadvantages to having a car which has been around for longer. Obviously, we know this car exceptionally well. We know what its strengths are and what its weaknesses are. When you bring out a new platform there’s always growing pains with it and understanding it and what not. Right now, we have a car which is capable of winning races, and we know how to use it. From that perspective, it’s an advantage for us as well.”

BEN BARNICOAT, No. 14 Lexus RC F GT3

What does it mean to win the GTD PRO championship in your second season with the Lexus and Vasser Sullivan program?

“In 2021, I made my IMSA debut here with a different team, but that’s where I sat down and met all of the individuals at Lexus Racing and Vasser Sullivan. If you would’ve told me at that point that in two years’ time that I’d be a GTD PRO champion, I don’t know if I would’ve believed it or not. Of course, that’s what we all set out to do and that’s why I was hired and brought into this program. It’s been phenomenal. I’m very lucky to race alongside Jack (Hawksworth). He’s definitely one of, if not the best guy in IMSA right now. There’s no one else I’d rather go racing with. All of the Vasser Sullivan engineers giving us an amazing Lexus RC F GT3. I’ve been able to slot into the family exceptionally well, it’s the first title in my second year, and I plan on staying around and hopefully getting a few more.”

KYLE KIRKWOOD, No. 14 Lexus RC F GT3

What does it mean for you to see the team accomplish this success this year?

“It’s amazing. The amount that this team has grown over the past years. This marks my fourth Petit Le Mans with the Vasser Sullivan team. I started out with the 12 car and then moved over to the 14 car quickly. The amount that this team has grown, how much that they’ve filled in their shoes and how much better they’ve gotten over the years that I’ve been with them is phenomenal. The fact that the Lexus RC F GT3 has been in circulation for so long and now it seemed like a very dominant year for Vasser Sullivan and Lexus is something that is so cool against these manufacturers that have been involved for many decades. I’m proud to be a part of it. (James) Sulli (Sullivan) and Jimmy (Vasser) took me under their wing in 2020 when I didn’t have a ride because of Covid, and we haven’t looked back since and have had a lot of success together and I’m happy to continue this journey with them and watch them succeed.”

JEFF BAL, Senior Manager | Lexus Motorsports, Experiential Marketing & Sponsorships

What does it mean to have Vasser Sullivan earn the first GT championship for Lexus?

“We’re relatively still new to competitive GT racing so this is a tremendous accomplishment for everyone involved. Congratulations to Jack (Hawksworth) and Ben (Barnicoat) and Kyle (Kirkwood) and everyone at Vasser Sullivan on this championship. They don’t just race for themselves and for the Vasser Sullivan team in the paddock, but it’s for the 245 dealers and the nearly 400 Lexus guests that are here tonight cheering on the hillside. The growth and attention to the program has been growing consistently each year. To earn this championship with the Lexus RC F GT3 is truly an incredible accomplishment.”

What has the relationship been like with Vasser Sullivan?

“For all of us, it was a tremendous leap of faith. We were at a point in our program where we had some struggles quite frankly with a car that wasn’t originally first designed to be a GT3. It started with a conversation and phone call to (Jimmy) Vasser and Sulli– they were IndyCar guys and hadn’t spent much time in sports cars, so it was a leap of faith together. And with their ability to build this team together and the comradery and to realize that everyone has a role and it’s defined, you could see it here with the drivers. They’re like brothers. As we are with our dealer network, we’re fiercely loyal and we wouldn’t want to do this and couldn’t do this without anybody but Jimmy and Sulli and this team. That’s the future for us.”

AARON TELITZ, No. 12 Lexus RC F GT3

How was your race?

“Obviously, a massive disappointing day all around for the Vasser Sullivan team other than the 14 car taking the green flag and clinching the first ever GT championship for Lexus. Not much else went right for us today. Our car was really fast in the beginning of the race, but I noticed early on that we had a bit of an issue with the drive train of our car, and it just never got better. By the time Parker (Thompson) got in about midway through the race, it was so bad that we had to stop and fix it and the guys did an amazing job to do an entire rear-end change on our car in about an hour and get us back out there to pick up valuable spots to clinch third in the GTD championship. Not the way we wanted to end the season and we would’ve liked the 12 car to finish higher in the championship but we’ll celebrate with our 14 boys and we’ll be back stronger next year.”

FRANKIE MONTECALVO, No. 12 Lexus RC F GT3

How was your day?

“Crazy day. It’s kind of a shame. I felt like we had a car there to be able to battle at the end. The team gave us a great car all weekend and we’re gutted from getting taken out from the top five. The Vasser Sullivan team did a phenomenal job changing the gearbox out and getting that done in 45 minutes to an hour. I think it’s going to make the difference in our championship points to get the car out there because it moved us up a couple spots and I think that will be what it takes to clinch third in the championship. A team effort here. Congratulations to the entire 14 team and Jack and Ben for winning the GTD PRO championship. I want to thank everyone at Vasser Sullivan and Lexus for another great season.”

PARKER THOMPSON, No. 12 Lexus RC F GT3

How was your race?

“We’re capping off our season here at the Petit Le Mans with the Vasser Sullivan crew and Lexus Racing. Unfortunately, not the way we wanted it to end for the 12 side. We had a fast Lexus RC F GT3 today, but some gearbox issues about four hours in took a pretty easy ride in the top three down to scrapping away to get as much points as we could to seal up third in the championship for Aaron (Telitz) and Frankie (Montecalvo). They so deserve it. I can’t thank them enough as teammates. I’m glad to help get them third in the championship. Then, on the other side of the garage, to see the 14 boys – Jack (Hawksworth) and Ben (Barnicoat) along with Kyle Kirkwood win the championship. So deserving for them. Jack has been around a long time and with this program he has led this Lexus RC F GT3 pretty much through its IMSA campaign. So, to see this guy get what he deserves which is the highest crown in the world of sports car racing is awesome. Huge congrats to Ben, Jack and Kyle. Couldn’t pick three guys that deserve it more.”