

LEXUS AND VASSER SULLIVAN EAGER FOR SEBRING AFTER TOUGH ROLEX 24 AT DAYTONA

January 29, 2024

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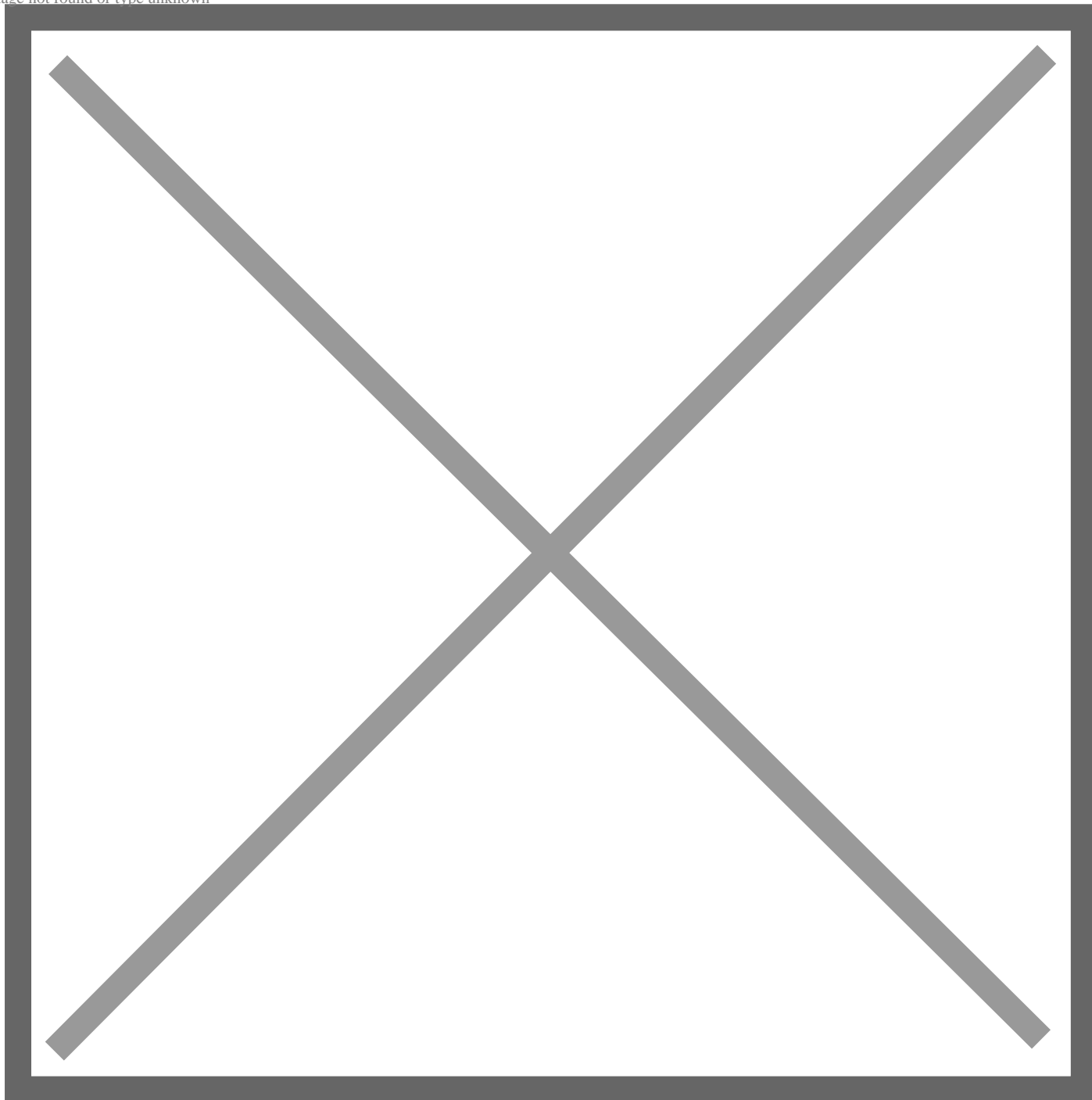


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DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. (Jan. 29, 2024) – Lexus and Vasser Sullivan showed tremendous fight and determination during the 62nd Rolex 24 at Daytona after claiming front row positions for the 24-hour endurance event, however the results did not showcase the team’s overall performance. Challenges on the race track resulted in an 11th-place finish for the No. 14 RC F GT3 in the GTD PRO class and a 15th-place finish for the No. 12 RC F GT3 in the GTD category.

Starting from pole position, the No. 12 Vasser Sullivan Lexus RC F GT3 was in contention for the GTD class win throughout the 24 hours. **Aaron Telitz** started the race sharing the car with **Parker Thompson** over the first few stints, where the No. 12 RC F GT3 was the dominant car early on. After pacing the field for most of the first three hours, they handed the wheel to **Ritomo Miyata** who also led the race in his Rolex 24 debut, running in the top-two the majority of his first run late Saturday afternoon.

Frankie Montecalvo jumped in the No. 12 for a double stint as nightfall came over Daytona International Speedway and ran a consistent pace. Once a yellow flag waved with a little more than 17 hours remaining, **Telitz** jumped back in the Vasser Sullivan Lexus, going from fourth to first on the ensuing restart. He and **Thompson** managed to fight for the lead throughout the night hours and stayed within the top five Sunday morning. On the final pit stop, however, with **Thompson** fighting for a podium position, the car caught fire in the pit lane, which led to a retirement and a 15th place finish. In total, the No. 12 Vasser Sullivan Lexus RC F GT3 led 146 laps.

The No. 14 RC F GT3 started their GTD PRO title defense by overcoming early adversity in the Rolex 24 to finish in 11th place with drivers **Jack Hawksworth, Ben Barnicoat, Kyle Kirkwood** and **Mike Conway**. Starting second, **Barnicoat** took the early lead for the first 40 minutes of the race, leading 14 laps. At the first pit stop, **Conway** hopped in the No. 14 Vasser Sullivan Lexus for his first stint, but was hit by a spinning competitor on the ensuing restart which put the team in the garage for repairs. Through incredible teamwork and efficiency, the crew finished all adjustments in just over an hour to get the car back out in the race.

By clicking off laps and staying out of trouble, the No. 14 team was able to get back into the top ten by midnight as other competitors faced their own issues. Unfortunately, the car had to retire in hour 16 of the 24-hour endurance event due to overheating issues and ultimately came home 11th.

The Vasser Sullivan Lexus RC F GT3s return to action at Sebring International Raceway for the 12 Hours of Sebring on Saturday, March 16. Live flag-to-flag coverage will be on Peacock for authenticated subscribers, along with television coverage on the USA Network from 4:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. ET. To keep up with all the racing action, follow Lexus Racing on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [TikTok](#) by using #LexusPerformance.

Vasser Sullivan Driver Quotes

PARKER THOMPSON, No. 12 Lexus RC F GT3

How would you describe your performance and the team’s performance at the Rolex 24?

“Up until the last hour, the No. 12 Vasser Sullivan Lexus team did absolutely everything right. From the drivers to the pit crew, the engineers, we were the definition of perfection. To have it go away like that has me lost for words honestly. I can’t thank my teammates enough. Particularly Aaron Telitz who did a triple stint there at the end. We wouldn’t have been in that position without his effort. The pit box did an amazing job to keep us in the top race all day long. Unfortunately, we have to wait another 12 months to get another crack at it.”

FRANKIE MONTECALVO, No. 12 Lexus RC F GT3

How was your race with the Lexus RC F GT3 before what transpired in the last hour?

“It was a tough end to the day today. I feel like we were in the top two spots the entire time. It’s a hard blow to end this way. The No. 12 Vasser Sullivan Lexus team did a phenomenal job. Qualifying on pole and then controlling the race for a while. We didn’t have contact until something inadvertent later in the race, which provided some damage. To end like this is a tough one. We had a great run going and had some great points going for us. Going out of the race early like this is tough for us and the team. But I know the No. 12 Vasser Sullivan Lexus team will get this thing back together and we’ll be ready for Sebring.”

AARON TELITZ, No. 12 Lexus RC F GT3

Can you take us through the race for yourself and the entire No. 12 Vasser Sullivan Lexus team?

“I feel so bad for the Vasser Sullivan Lexus crew. I felt like we had a shot at the podium today. The whole team was operating at such a high level. To see it go away like that hurts a lot. My co-drivers did an amazing job throughout the race. Parker (Thompson), Frankie (Montecalvo) and Ritomo (Miyata) absolutely nailed their stints. Everyone contributed and the pit stops were excellent. Just a big bummer at the end, but I know this team will regroup and we’ll be hungry for Sebring.”

RITOMO MIYATA, No. 12 Lexus RC F GT3

Can you describe your first experience at the Rolex 24 and with the Vasser Sullivan Lexus team?

“I tried to take everything step-by-step since it was the first time for me at the Rolex 24 and with the Vasser Sullivan Lexus team. The main focus for my stints was to conserve the car overall, tires, fuel, brakes, everything else. Once we were able to do that, our focus shifted to the finish and the target was going for the win. Unfortunately, it didn’t go the way we had hoped.”

BEN BARNICOAT, No. 14 Lexus RC F GT3

Can you describe the eventful Rolex 24 that the No. 14 Vasser Sullivan Lexus team had?

“Yeah, obviously, on a day like today that we had as a group, team, and family, you can only look to the positives that came from this race. We had a great qualifying result last week and got to start the Rolex 24 from the front row for the first time and take the lead in the first corner, which was special. First stint felt like we had great pace in our Vasser Sullivan Lexus RC F GT3. We were in good control and comfortable, but what happened when Mike (Conway) was in the car was unavoidable. Wrong place, wrong time. That happens sometimes in motorsports. Just bummed for everyone that put so much effort into this race. We kept going after that incident to get as many points as we could. Fantastic job by the Vasser Sullivan crew to get the car ready to go. We were still able to get some points from the day and we did everything we could to maximize what we could. No one in this group deserves what happened to us and the No. 12 Vasser Sullivan RC F GT3 team today, but we are champions and we have a champion mindset. We have championship drive and we’re not going to let this race deter us from going on to achieve great things this year. We’re going to get our heads down and get ready for Sebring.”

MIKE CONWAY, No. 14 Lexus RC F GT3

What happened to take the No. 14 out of the race early?

“Really gutted we had the incident there in the first hour of the race. Not much I could do to avoid the spinning car in front of me. Maybe I could’ve seen it coming, but once it happened, I had nowhere to go. I’m really disappointed as I thought we had a good shot at the podium, so unfortunate we couldn’t achieve that. Also bummed for the No. 12 Vasser Sullivan Lexus team as they had a great shot at a podium as well. Tough day for

the entire Vasser Sullivan team, but they're a strong team and they'll come back swinging. Big thank you to Vasser Sullivan and Lexus for the opportunity to drive the car again. And thanks to Jack (Hawksworth), Ben (Barnicoat) and Kyle (Kirkwood) for helping me. Hopefully we get to do it again."