



ash - through the esses

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Through The Esses - Wayne Taylor On Sore Backs, Strong Sponsors and more

2/23/2005 - Wayne Taylor On Sore Backs, Strong Sponsors, Special Kids... and Maseratis?

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What do you do when your team has just won a grueling 24 hour race, with a new chassis that you hoped would make a good showing and instead returned the best finish possible? When you have spent countless hours getting ready to run around the clock against an incredibly strong field of like minded teams and drivers? When you have ended your long day's journey into night and back to day again by waving to an admiring crowd filled with the people who work for your primary sponsor? What do you do?



Andrew S. Hartwell / ashautomobilia.com

"I go to my appointment with my chiropractor."

Yes, second time Rolex 24 hour at Daytona winner Wayne Taylor was up for an interview with us today, but first he needed to see his chiropractor. "I broke my neck back in 1982 at a Formula Atlantic race in South Africa. Ever since then I have had lower back problems from the break in the C5 and C6 vertebrae. I go to my chiropractor before and after every race. When I didn't race in 2003 I was fine. But now, with all the pounding around in the car, I have to keep going back to him for a tune up."

"I have initial pain after a race and then some more pain right after the treatment. I have to go twice a week all season long."

Despite the pain in his back, Florida resident Taylor was all smiles when he rode on the door sill of the #10 SunTrust Pontiac-Riley as Max Angelelli steered the car into Daytona's victory lane. The pair of veteran racers were soon joined by their co-driver for this race, Emmanuel Collard, and together they celebrated their 'at home' victory in front of a large crowd of SunTrust employees and media photographers.

SunTrust - an Atlanta, Georgia based commercial banking organization that operates in seven primary states, including Florida - had a large number of its employees at Daytona for the Rolex 24 hour's race weekend. Fully one fourth of the available seating in Gatorade Victory Lane was occupied by these folks. And when their car finally finished it's cool down lap and came into view, they let out a celebratory cheer that could be heard all the way to Sebring!

Taylor loved to hear all that noise.

"The whole relationship with SunTrust has been incredible. We put the whole program together in just 90 days. Then we went out and won the Manufacturer's Championship and I was in it for the Driver's Championship. Then to go to our second season with the win at the Rolex, with all of our SunTrust guests in attendance, was incredible. And to be honest, to have won this race for them is really a relief. I always say to my partners - SunTrust - that we can put all the right ingredients together to compete competitively, but you can never guarantee winning, so when we won the Rolex 24 hour it was a great relief..

"The great part of our relationship is that, while they know banking and financing, they also know that running the race team is our area of expertise. They do not interfere with our operations at all. Having said that, I think we have provided them with a great vehicle for them to showcase their business. Everything that I know today - all the business that our efforts have helped to generate for SunTrust - has resulted in them extending our contract for a third season. The extension was on the table for discussion in June 2005, but things have gone so well to date that they offered to enact the extension now. From my standpoint that made our planning a lot easier. Hopefully this is a program that can go on for many years."

While we had this busy racer and businessman on the phone, we spent some time talking about a few other topics besides the recent race win.

On The Increase In Competition At This Year's Rolex 24

"I knew how hard it is to win the Rolex 24 after having won it back in 1996 (in the Riley & Scott factory MKIII). But I felt that with all the ingredients we put together for our SunTrust Racing effort in Grand Am, we were in a position to win. I felt we had the right pieces to win, I just wasn't expecting the start of the second year of our Grand Am effort to be as competitive as it turned out to be.

"There are teams like Ganassi with three cars and the Tracy Krohn / Kevin Buckler team with two cars, and Howard-Boss Motorsports and several other quality entries. It is hard to win when you go into the race with just one car. The odds were stacked against us but in the end we had the right combination."

The chassis that won this year's Rolex 24 had no prior race experience. Taylor and car builder Bill Riley sold last year's chassis to another team electing to build a whole new car from the ground up to campaign in 2005. That new car could not have made a more electrifying debut.

"I was concerned about the new car honestly. We had won races with the other chassis and Bill and I talked about selling it and building a new one. You are always hesitant about going into the 24 with a new car, but it all sure worked out in the end."

On Expanding The SunTrust DP Team

We wondered if he and Bill Riley considered running a two car effort. They did, but not without a full budget to support it.

"We have had a few partners who have talked about coming on board but, unless we have a full budget there is just no point. I will only do it if the full budget comes and we can do it all at the same level we run the current car. I don't want to be there in a second car just because it is a second car. I want to know we could win with both cars.

"Bill and I have been approached about this, but none of the offers were substantial enough that they could stand on their own. We turned a lot away - not because we think we are smarter or better than anyone - but because the right ingredients just weren't there to make it all work."

On Visiting A Special Place For Special Children

Taylor got another kind of reality check recently when he visited Camp Boggy Creek in Eustis, Florida this week. The camp provides a period of relaxation and fun for children between the ages of seven and 16 who are living each day with a chronic or life-threatening illness. Taylor came away from his visit with yet another priority item for his team to address.

"I can't believe it took me so long to go to the camp. But anyone who goes there is going to find themselves changed by what they see. You can not imagine how kids could be so sick. And they have developed this camp that kids can come to and be with people who have the same disease or illness and live for at least a little while with others who are just like them. The way the camp personnel treat the kids and the families that come there is just incredible!

"They have swimming pools and woodworking shops and a theater where the kids can have a full stage production. They have trees the kids can climb on and go swinging on ropes. They have a full medical facility. There is horseback riding and an area for animals and more. And it is all just so well kept and so many good people and organizations have helped to fund it all. Children from any walk of life are welcome to come to the camp. They come with their families and can stay for an extended period of time.

"I am hoping to be able to talk to just as many people as I can about helping the facility. I plan to talk about it to everyone."

On Looking For A Gold Face

Taylor, naturally, has two wrists, and now he has two Rolex wrist watches. What did he do with the second one, we asked?

"It is in the trophy cabinet with the first one! Honestly, winning the 24 hours in 1996 was such a great thing that I never thought about winning a second one. Now, having won it twice, I am thinking that I have to win it again. I have two Rolex watches and I have two kids (Ricky aged 15 and Jordan, aged 13), now I need a third one for dad!

"The first watch was a black face and the second was a white face. Now I need a gold face! (Laughing)

"And I just got an email from my parents congratulating me and wondering if I might also win Sebring so I could go back to Le Mans. I had to let them know we don't run at Sebring in this series!" (Note: If he had also raced and won at Sebring, it would not have meant another Rolex watch for dad to wear, it would have been a JEANRICHARD Sebring edition timepiece! But Taylor has addressed that by placing an order for the Sebring Edition watch which will be engraved with the number 4 to commemorate his 1996 victory there.)

On The Maserati Rumors

There have been rumors flying about that Taylor and Bill Riley were interested in fielding a new Maserati in the American Le Mans Series GT1 class. Taylor told us that the issue was discussed, but circumstances took the deal off the table.

It was announced as we were writing this that the Maserati will debut at Sebring next month as a full factory effort with Rizi Competizione handling the logistics. The ALMS has worked out an accommodation that calls for ongoing evaluation of the cars performance within the class. As of now, Wayne Taylor is not involved in running the car, but, like all fans of racing, he is looking forward to seeing the beautiful Maserati at speed.

On Keeping His Hands On The Wheel

The fans can expect to see the SunTrust car on track for at least the 2005 and 2006 season. But will they

see Taylor? In a television interview after the race, Taylor seemed to hesitate when asked if he was looking forward to trying again in 2006.

"Yeah, I think I did answer the question by sort of joking that 'I will tell you later'. But I will definitely be racing next year. At this stage, I intend to continue to drive for as long as this relationship with SunTrust continues. I have to say that, if it weren't for the relationship I have with SunTrust, I probably wouldn't be in the driver's seat. Simply because of the amount of work I do outside of the race car to continue to develop new programs that can help both SunTrust and other people in the series. I could spend a lot more quality time doing those things if not driving. But I am in a sense, the product. And I do love driving so I have no intention of getting out right now."

"I am only prepared to get out of the car when my sons Ricky or Jordan have come up to speed! They both have expressed a keen interest in sportscar racing and both recently completed the Skip Barber Racing School. And Ricky recently completed the advance two-day school where he did very well. One day, I would love to run the Rolex 24 with both of them as my teammates!"

Chiropractic considerations aside, we suspect a future Rolex 24 entry list will in fact include the names of all three Taylor family members.

For information on Camp Boggy Creek visit [CampBoggyCreek](#).