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Grand-Am Rolex Series Utah 250 at Miller Motorsports Park

Source: Team Race Reports
Photos Courtesy of Grand-Am

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GAINSCO/Bob Stallings Racing Report

Source: Adam Saal, Saal Good Communications

GAINSCO/Bob Stallings Racing, Alex Gurney and Jon Fogarty extend Grand-Am Rolex Sports Car Series Championship leads with Utah 250 win

Series-leading fourth 2009 victory puts GAINSCO eight points up heading to Miami Finale

Capping a near-dominant weekend with a series-leading fourth 2009 victory in Saturday's Utah 250 at Miller Motorsports Park, GAINSCO/Bob Stallings Racing and drivers Alex Gurney and Jon Fogarty extended their Grand-Am Rolex Sports Car Series Daytona Prototype Team and Driver

Championship points leads to eight points with just next month's season-ending Grand Prix of Miami remaining on the schedule.

Gurney took the wheel of the No. 99 GAINSCO Auto Insurance Pontiac Riley from pole-sitter Fogarty 43 minutes into the a 2-3/4-hour timed race and led championship rival Max Angelelli and the No. 10 SunTrust Ford Dallara across the finish line by 1.264 seconds just over two hours later. GAINSCO's other primary championship challenger Scott Pruett crossed the finish line in third in the No. 01 TELMEX/Chip Ganassi Racing Lexus Riley just 1.529 seconds behind the winners. Gurney and Fogarty were under pressure from the quick No. 10 and No. 01 cars the entire race as well as the equally fast No. 12 Verizon/Penske Racing Porsche Riley of Timo Bernhard and Romain Dumas that started second.

"The opening stint was good," said Fogarty, who won a series-leading fifth pole in Friday's qualifying. "I had some pressure from the 12 car but it wasn't giving me too many worries because I was more concerned about where the 01 and 10 were and, fortunately, we were pulling away from them slightly. We had the right strategy, the GAINSCO team nailed the pit stops and the car was definitely good. We're very happy overall."

The race was slowed three times for full-course caution periods and that marked the only time GAINSCO felt any real threat. Angelelli in particular was good on race restarts on the long Miller front straight but Gurney was able to keep the No. 99 in front.

"I had to go as early as I thought I could get away with on the restarts because the 10 was a little quick on the straights and I could see he was good through Turn 1 also," Gurney said. "That was the most vulnerable part for sure and it was difficult, but once we got going we had a tiny bit of pace on the competition and that made all the difference. We rolled off the truck yesterday just crazy fast and we were just trying not to mess it up. Sometimes you don't even want to touch the car when it is that good. It seemed like the rest of the guys caught up by the end of the weekend and we saw a very close race."

GAINSCO and its drivers now have 309 points in both the Grand-Am Rolex Series Daytona Prototype Team and Driver Championships. Angelelli, Brian Frisselle and SunTrust have 301 markers and Pruett, Memo Rojas and the Ganassi team are third with 299 points. The great weekend started with Fogarty's fifth pole of the year on Friday, which was also his fourth straight this season and a record 13th all-time in Daytona Prototype competition. The Utah 250 marked just the second race this year along with the Porsche 250 at Barber Motorsports Park in July where GAINSCO was able to win from the pole.

"The fact that you don't always see pole winners converting into victories is a testament to how competitive the series is," Fogarty said. "There's just a ton of good drivers and obviously having two drivers in each car mixes things up a bunch. We just had a great weekend and getting the pole was indicative of our pace and that is always, for the second driver, gives you a little bit of confidence boost in knowing the car is good. A pole definitely puts you into a better mind set at the beginning of a race, and we capitalized on it today. It was just great all around."

Fogarty led every lap from the race start until the team's first pit stop on Lap 16. Gurney then retook the lead for good when the GAINSCO crew got the No. 99 out of the pits first during final pit stops on Lap 30 with 80 minutes remaining. GAINSCO led a race-high 43 of 56 laps – Fogarty's 16 and 27 laps up front for Gurney – while Bernard led the other 13 laps.

The victory was extra sweet for Gurney after his wife Colleen gave birth to their second child on Wednesday morning. Savannah Reese Gurney weighed in at a healthy 7 lbs., 2 ounces and both mother and child are doing fine.

"My wife had a baby girl on Wednesday and I spent one night in the hospital and then flew here from there," Gurney said. "So, a great week and something we will always remember. Winning these races is a big adventure and this just added to that. We will always look back on this with smiles."

The Grand Prix of Miami at Homestead-Miami Speedway will close the 2009 Grand-Am Rolex Series season on Saturday, Oct. 10, but GAINSCO doesn't need to win there to take its second Daytona Prototype titles in the last three years.

"It looks like we don't need to dominate at Homestead, fortunately," said Gurney, who joined Fogarty and GAINSCO in winning the 2007 Rolex Series Championships. "We can finish fourth regardless of what the other guys do so that is a really nice position to be in. We are not going to let up or anything, but we are going to have that in our mind for sure. We made a nice jump today."

GAINSCO has now been on the podium seven times in the year's first 11 races. The team's other wins have come at Virginia International Raceway, Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca and Barber. Today's Utah 250 victory by Gurney and Fogarty also extends their all-time record of Daytona Prototype victories by one duo to 12.

The Grand Prix of Miami can be seen live on SPEED at 1 p.m. ET (10 a.m. PT) on Saturday, Oct. 10.

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Grand-Am Race Report

Source: JJ O'Malley, Grand-Am

Gurney, Fogarty Dominate Utah 250 At Miller Motorsports Park, Take Eight-Point Lead in Grand-Am's Daytona Prototype Championship

Alex Gurney and Jon Fogarty took a solid victory over their rivals in the battle for the 2009 Grand-Am Rolex Sports Car Series presented by Crown Royal Cask No. 16 championship Saturday, winning Saturday's Utah 250 at Miller Motorsports Park.

The pair led 43 of the 56 laps to win the two-hour, 45-minute race on the 4.486-mile circuit. Gurney took the lead in the No. 99 GAINSCO Pontiac Riley on the 30th of 56 laps and paced the final 27 circuits, taking the checkered flag 1.264 seconds ahead of Max Angelelli. Scott Pruett finish third, 1.529 seconds behind the winner, with the top three teams in the championship sweeping the podium.

"We got the pole, fastest lap and the win - we had the whole shebang this weekend," Gurney said after scoring the winning duo's season-leading fourth victory. "It was a great day for the championship. I think we had the pace this weekend."

The Acxiom GT race came down to the wire. Robin Liddell and Dirk Werner getting together coming to the white flag to give the victory to Jeff Segal and Emil Assentato, who came from last to first to win their second race of the season in the No. 69 FXDD SpeedSource Mazda RX-8.

The victory moves Gurney and Fogarty to an eight-point lead (309-301) in the Daytona Prototype point standings entering the season-ending Grand Prix of Miami on Oct. 10 at Homestead-Miami Speedway. Angelelli and Brian Frisselle, drivers of the No. 10 SunTrust Ford Dallara, took sole possession of second place, while Pruett and Memo Rojas are 10 points behind the leaders in the No. 01 TELMEX Lexus Riley.

"You can trust me, all three of us were pushing like crazy," Angelelli said. "We absolutely, for two hours, were running like qualifying. It was the best I could do, and I'm sure it was the same for the (Nos.) 99 and the 01. They all gave 100 percent, I have no doubts. I could see it."

Fogarty led the opening 16 laps before pitting. Timo Bernhard, who pressured Fogarty from the drop of the green flag, led 13 laps in the Penske Racing Verizon Wireless Porsche Riley, before Gurney took over on the final round of pit stops.

"All in all, it worked out really well," Fogarty said. "Alex did a tremendous job. He was in the car for a long time and had to fight off a lot of attacks."

The race was slowed three times for 10 laps by cautions (once for debris, twice to tow stalled cars), with the three championship leaders in the top three positions. Each time, Gurney was able to pull away on the restart.

"The restarts were stressful," Gurney said. "We were a little short on top speed on the front straight and I could see Max closing, so I had to get really good jumps."

Bernhard and Romain Dumas finished fourth, followed by Burt Frisselle and Mark Wilkins in the No. 61 AIM Autosport Ford Riley.

Ozz Negri and Mark Patterson finished sixth in the No. 60 Michael Shank Racing Ford Riley, followed by Joao Barbosa and JC France in the No. 59 Brumos Porsche Riley, Ricky Taylor and Mike Forest in the No. 13 Beyer Racing Chevrolet Riley, Darren Law and David Donohue in the No. 58 Brumos Porsche Riley, and Michael Valiante and John Pew in the No. 6 Michael Shank Racing Ford Riley.



Segal, Assentato Go From Last to First for Second GT Victory

Despite starting last on the 13-car GT grid due to an engine change after qualifying, Assentato and Segal battled all the way to first in the Acxiom GT class. Then, Segal had to do it all over again following a pit stop to take the team's second victory in the last three races.

Segal stayed out under the second caution period, and after a wave-by, managed to join Andy Lally in pulling a huge gap on the GT field. Segal, driving the No. 69 FXDD Mazda RX-8, held a one-minute, five-second lead when the second caution waved after his teammate - Sylvain Tremblay in the No. 70 Castrol Syntec Mazda RX-8 started from the pole by Nick Ham - was bumped off course and became mired in a gravel trap. Segal worked his way back to third, and found himself in the lead after the two leaders spun after contact on Lap 44 of 46.

"(Team strategist) Jerry York called our strategy to perfection," Segal said. "I was sitting in the car fighting back and grinning and just my luck, I was so disappointed when we got that yellow flag. But the car never missed a beat and we came back through the field. I don't know what happened to the (Nos.) 57 and 87, but we certainly were coming. We've been in the wrong place at the wrong time enough times - especially this season - so I don't feel lucky at all. We earned this one - the entire team."

Lally finished second in the No. 66 First Service Commercial Real Estate Porsche GT3 started by Scott Schroeder, who earned his best career finish. Rounding out the podium were two-time defending race co-winners Kelly Collins and Paul Edwards in the No. 07 Team Drinkin' Mate Pontiac GXP.R.

The late incident robbed Werner and Leh Keen the chance to eliminate their lone rival for the GT championship. The drivers of the No. 87 Farnbacher Loles Porsche GT3 finished sixth, and now lead Collins by 30 points (329-299).

"It would be nicer to come to Miami with everything already done," Werner said. "It was in my hands to win the race or clinch the championship and I did not do it. I realized too late I did not need to be side by side, and it was a mistake."

Liddell and Andrew Davis finished seventh in the No. 57 BryanMark Financial/Stevenson Automotive Pontiac GXP.R. Their Stevenson Motorsports team remains alive in the GT team championship, trailing Farnbacher Loles Racing by 29 points (329-300).

Max Hyatt and Jeff Westphal finished fourth in the No. 32 Team Miracle Sealants/PR1 BMW M6, followed by Craig Stanton and John Potter in the No. 65 Magnus Racing Porsche GT3.

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SunTrust Racing Team Report

Source: Laz Denes, SunTrust Racing

The good news for SunTrust Racing co-drivers Max Angelelli and Brian Frisselle after Saturday's runner-up finish in the Grand-Am Rolex Sports Car Series Utah 250: SunTrust's second series championship is very much within reach when the season comes to a close at Homestead-Miami Speedway three weeks hence.

The not-so-good news: the lone car to beat them across the finish line today was the championship-leading No. 99 Gainsco/Bob Stallings Racing Pontiac Riley of Alex Gurney and Jon Fogarty, which widened its lead in the standings from five to eight points and needs only a fourth-place finish or better at Homestead to clinch the title.

And so it was for the No. 10 SunTrust Ford Dallara of Wayne Taylor Racing, which Angelelli had to drive with a vengeance over the final two hours of today's 2-hour, 45-minute event around the mammoth 4.486-mile, 24-turn road circuit just to keep the competition – most notably defending series champion Scott Pruett – behind him. The SunTrust team started the day locked in a second-place tie with Pruett, his co-driver Memo Rojas and the No. 01 Chip Ganassi Racing with Felix Sabates team. Today's runner-up finish gave the SunTrust team a two-point edge over the Ganassi team heading to Homestead.

Angelelli did a masterful job of keeping Pruett behind him during the final hour, holding him off through three restarts but finding himself just not able to beat Gurney in the No. 99 car down the long front straightaway to the fast, left-hand turn one on all three occasions.

"You can trust me, we were all three pushing like crazy," Angelelli said. "We absolutely, for two hours, were like qualifying. This is the best I could do. I'm sure it's the same for the (No.) 99 and the (No.) 01. I have no doubt. I could see it in their eyes."

Gurney, who admitted turn one to be his car's "most vulnerable" segment on the racetrack, accelerated through the final turn and onto the front straight on the way to taking the green flag for all three restarts to help build a comfortable gap on Angelelli.

"If I was going to catch him, that was the only place I was going to catch him, as it turned out," Angelelli said. "Well, he figured out that I was pretty slow through the last corner, so he started accelerating before the last corner. Otherwise, if he was driving by the book, I would have overtaken him, for sure, for position No. 1. Unfortunately, he was pretty good in the last corner on the restarts, put a gap on me, and I couldn't do anything. I was better than him in the first corner after the start-finish line."

Angelelli's battle with Pruett, in the meantime, had its moments over the final hour. At one point, the two made contact, but Angelelli was able to continue in the second position.

"I braked too late, locked up my four wheels and he tried to take advantage," Angelelli said. "It was fair. Obviously, I have to defend my position for the championship. He didn't put me at risk. It's always a pleasure to race with Scott (Pruett), especially when I win. Now, if we want to win the championship at Homestead, we're going to have to win the race. We have pretty much no other option."

Frisselle, who joined Angelelli this season and co-drove to victories at the July 4 Daytona event and three weeks ago at Montreal, and six podium finishes in all, did his best to keep pace in the early going with not only Fogarty but a fast-starting No. 12 Penske Racing Porsche Riley of Timo Bernhard and Romain Dumas. Frisselle, who qualified and started fourth, got by Rojas in the Ganassi car for third by the third lap but could not close a 10-second gap to Fogarty and Bernhard racing in first and second ahead of him.

"Everything was good," Frisselle said. "I had a decent start, but Memo (Rojas) got the position into turn one. I couldn't really contest it because he had a good run. And then, as the stint went on, I was able to get a good run on him and was able to overtake him. But I really couldn't hunt down Jon (Fogarty) and Timo (Bernhard). They were really fast and I was struggling with oversteer. It was pretty uncomfortable throughout my stint. But the team did a great job. They called an awesome race. And Max did an excellent job bringing the car home in second. It's just tight. All three cars are really strong, all great drivers. We'll just have to get it done at Homestead."

Team owner Wayne Taylor, who co-drove with Angelelli to SunTrust's last Rolex Series championship in 2005, was philosophical about the outcome of today's event and felt encouraged that the championship this season is very much within reach.

"We were tied for second place coming in," Taylor said. "We needed to be ahead of the (No.) 99 car. We just couldn't match them today, but we were ahead of the (No.) 01. So now, the (No.) 01 has dropped to third, and we are second. It's going to be tough, obviously, because of the gap in the points (to the No. 99). But it's not over. We're second in the championship. We just have to keep working. Brian did a good job this weekend. Max did a good job. The team was fantastic. There was absolutely nothing else we could've done. That's what we had. The (No.) 99 was quicker, and that was it. The good thing is we have a shot at it at Homestead."

The 2009 Rolex Series season concludes in three weeks with the Grand Prix of Miami at Homestead-Miami Speedway. The 2-hour, 30-minute race is set for Saturday, Oct. 10, and runs in conjunction with the Indy Racing League season finale that evening. Rolex Series race time is 1 p.m. EDT with SPEED-TV carrying all the action live.

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Penske Racing Team Report

Source: Penske Racing

Romain Dumas drove the Penske Racing No. 12 Verizon Wireless Porsche Riley to a fourth place finish in the Utah 250 at Miller Motorsports Park on Saturday after a mishap in the pits cost the team the lead and ultimately its first victory of the season.

Dumas' co-driver, Timo Bernhard, started the two-hour, 45 minute timed event from the second position. Thirty minutes into the event, Bernhard pitted for fuel only setting the pace for race strategy.

After the remaining Daytona Prototype entries pitted under green flag racing conditions, Bernhard moved into the lead and held onto the point for more than 35 minutes before a full course caution slowed the field.

When Bernhard drove down pit road on lap 31 the Verizon Wireless pit crew made ready for a driver change, fuel and four fresh tires. The driver change ended up being the pivotal moment of the race as Bernhard's radio cord became tangled in the car on his exit and despite efforts to rip it free, the cord held and delayed Dumas' stint.

"We were competitive and we lead for a long time," said Bernhard. "Team Penske showed a great performance. I had a problem disconnecting the radio cable to my helmet in the driver change, and we lost a few seconds there that we needed. A little thing that doesn't happen and it happened to us. We never were able to get those seconds back."

Adding to the anxiety, Dumas stalled the car on his exit and required a push from his Verizon team. He was posted in the fifth position for the restart on lap 33 but moved into the fourth position just one lap later after capitalizing on another competitor's mistake. Dumas held on to that position until the checkered flag was displayed one-hour later.

Dumas was disheartened by the mistakes which cost the team a podium finish but he was uplifted by overall performance of the Verizon Wireless team.

"We had the speed to compete, but the mistake in the pits cost us time we needed at the end," said Dumas. "That is how competitive Grand-Am racing is. A little mistake and it was enough to cost us a podium. We have a great car now, now that we have all the power back, we know we can win. We just need everything to be perfect. We will try again at Miami."



Michael Shank Racing Report

Source: Matt Cleary, Sunday Group Management

Michael Shank Racing finished the Utah 250 at Miller Motorsports Park 6th (No. 60 Ford-Riley driven by Mark Patterson and Oswaldo Negri) and 10th (No. 6 Ford-Riley shared by John Pew and Michael Valiante) in round 11 of the 2009 Rolex Sports Car Series Championship.

The team had been looking to add to the organizations' win tally on the 4.4-mile circuit outside of Salt Lake City, but the sprint format race saw a different set of results play out.

The Patterson-Negri combination, which won the race in 2006, started the race from eighth on the grid as Patterson got a good start and had the machine up to 5th before turning it over to Negri. The Brazilian moved back up through the order and fought to a sixth place finish at the checkered flag.

"For us, this was a smooth weekend all around," said Patterson. "We had a great set-up right from the start, and it just kept getting better as we made small adjustments. This was the kind of result that we should have had through the year---P4 to P8, with maybe some podium runs thrown in there. But it just hasn't worked out like that, so it was good to have that kind of weekend here at Miller and of course the Trueman medal was a nice bonus!"

"The result is ok—we worked hard to get the car right and it was good, but just not perfect," said Negri. "I was driving really hard and I thought I had something for Burt, but I got on the marbles because of the slow GT traffic, and it takes three laps to get that off your tires here! But 6th is pretty much what we had today, so it's ok to finish there. The guys worked so hard all weekend and we were hoping for a little bit more, but we'll take this and look for a stronger race to finish at Homestead. I am there all the time working with young karters, so I am looking forward to the race being right in my backyard and to having all my family out for the weekend."

The sister No. 6 entry, which took a breakthrough win in the 2008 race at Miller Park, saw Pew take the green flag from the sixth row, and even though he was able to move up to the top ten, he wasn't fully happy with the handle on the machine. After Valiante took over, he also fought with a challenging car in a deep thicket of Daytona Prototypes, but held on to come home in 10th.

“This team has been great all year, but this weekend we just didn’t roll off the truck where we needed to with the car, and we had to play catch up from the very first session,” said Valiante. “It was just one thing after another in the race, and a tough weekend overall. But hopefully we’ll be back to strong form again at Homestead.”

“The car was a little bit better today, but we still had a very loose car and that was tough on some of these really fast, longer duration corners,” said Pew. “It was a handful and it just kept me from having the kind of pace I’d have liked to set in the early stages of the race. Michael did a great job to be fighting like he was given how tough the car was. Hopefully we can have a little bit better luck racing close to home at Homestead.”

The team won the final two races of the 2008 Rolex Sports Car Series season, and will look to close out the 2009 season on a strong note in three weeks’ time.

“It is great to get both cars in the top ten but it was a pretty tough weekend overall,” said team owner Mike Shank. “Mark and Ozz had a great car but the 6 car just struggled a bit but I think that we should be really strong at Homestead. We had a good test there earlier this year, and we’d like nothing more than to go down there and finish the year with a win.”

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Miller Barrett Racing Report

Source: Sylvia Proudfoot

Miller Barrett Racing survived a wild race and a mechanical failure to earn a top-10 GT class finish in the Grand-Am Rolex Sports Car Series at Miller Motorsports Park on Saturday. The team started 11th in class, raced as high as fifth and finished eighth in the two-hour 45-minute race on the 4.486-mile road course in Tooele, Utah.

Kevin Roush of Upland, Calif., drove the first stint. He started 11th on the GT grid and quickly moved up to fifth. He pitted for a driver change after 41 minutes, meeting the series requirement for a early pitstop. Bryce Miller of Summit, N.J., took over, returning to the track eighth in class. He stopped at the 90-minute mark for tires and fuel, regained two positions to sixth, then had to pit on the last lap, dropping him back to finish eighth. A post-race inspection showed the car had a broken limited slip differential that worsened through the race, forcing the extra pitstop.

The team will stay in Utah to test at Miller Motorsports Park on Sunday, in preparation for the final race of the season, at Homestead-Miami Speedway in Homestead, Fla., on Oct. 10.

Bryce Miller: "I'm really proud of the team. We finished on the lead lap, even with the third pitstop. Something happened with the car – I thought maybe a tire was going down or it might have been a problem with a shock [absorber] or a [sway] bar – and we had to pit for new tires. We fought really hard for sixth position and I think we could have been able to bring it home.

"We're going to be testing tomorrow here on the short course. That will be a good opportunity for us to evaluate the car. We'll be able to take some really big risks and make some big changes with the car setup. It should be a good day learning for us, and hopefully that will carry over to Homestead and translate to another step in the right direction."

Kevin Roush: "It was hot out there when the sun was blazing; it was tough. The car was better. We still had quite a bit of push [understeer], but we were able to hold our position in the field. We even made up a couple of spots on the first lap, which was pretty cool.

"For a new team like us, that's never raced here, we wanted to be more 'Energizer Bunny' than [trying to set the] fastest lap speed. We haven't quite got the balance of the car right, but we can count on racing smarter and maybe playing a little strategy. We actually had a chance for fifth today."

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The Racer's Group (TRG) Report

Source: TRG

After a dramatic series of closing laps, TRG's Scott Schroeder and Andy Lally, in their No. 66 First Service Commercial RE/AXA/Cohen Financial Porsche GT3, took an amazing second place in the Utah 250 at Miller Motorsports Park. After qualifying in eighth place, strong driving by both drivers, clever strategy by Team Owner Kevin Buckler and an on-track altercation by the race leaders led to a jaw dropping series of final laps.

The key decision in the day's race came down to the second round of pit stops and the last minute decision to stay out after the rest of the GT field had committed. This gave driver Andy Lally with a near half-lap advantage over the field until a second caution period allowed the field to catch up. Dropping out of the lead after a dramatic charge from competitors Dirk Werner and Robin Liddell, Andy would fall back to fourth. However, race leaders Werner and Liddell allowed their aggression to get the better of them, coming together with two laps to go and both cutting tires, allowing Lally to finish second.

"Today has just been unbelievable," exclaimed Scott Schroeder, who earned his first career podium in the Rolex series. "Last week we didn't think we'd even be racing, and now we're on the podium. I have to thank everyone at First Service Commercial RE, AXA, Cohen Financial, and Josemanuel Gutierrez for making this happen. Kevin's pit call, along with Andy's sensational laps made the difference, this has been a great day."

For TRG's John Potter and Craig Stanton, a power steering failure led to a hard-fought day, overcoming the odds to an impressive fifth place.

"Towards the end of my stint the power steering started to fade and eventually just stopped," stated Potter, the local hero of the race. "Craig did an amazing job to run the rest of the race with no power steering, and I'm pretty happy with a fifth out of today."

For Team Owner Kevin Buckler, who flew overnight in to Loudon, New Hampshire to oversee his NASCAR operation, can take victory in good solid team work and perseverance.

"Wow, what a race!" said Buckler. "This was a great day. We didn't really have the pace we were looking for, but we were able to finish with some solid driving, pit stops and calls. Scott drove a great opening stint, and Andy pulled his usual miracle run at the end. I was also really happy to see John and Craig take such a strong finish. This is a tough track without power steering but they

made it happen. John's qualifying was amazing and Craig was a rock. They are the Iron Men!! We have such a good team here, I really look forward to a strong finish to the season."

With one race remaining in the season, the team heads next to the final at Homestead Miami Speedway, October 8-10. Car No. 66 currently holds third place in Team Points, and the team is looking for a solid end to the season.

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Farnbacher-Loles Race Report

Source: Roger Garbow, Farnbacher Loles Racing

Miller Motorsports Park has been the site of several epic battles to the checkers and the #87 Shock Doctor/ Intercity Lines/ PlanetPorsche GT3 Cup was part of an intense and thrilling fight to the finish in Saturday night's Utah 250 Grand-Am Rolex Series race. Despite only needing to finish the race ahead of the #07 Pontiac to clinch the 2009 Driver's Championship, the Farnbacher Loles Racing team knew they had a car that could win. With the race winding down, Dirk Werner of Kissenbruck, Germany was chasing Robin Liddell in the #57 Pontiac GXP.R, who had the lead. The two drivers put on an amazing show and pulled away from the rest of the pack, running nose-to-tail for lap after lap on the 4.5 mile course. Liddell was doing all he could to hold off Werner, and as his car started sliding through the corners, Werner saw his chance. Werner did not hesitate to make the attempt.

Braking hard and aiming for the inside line, the #87 came up a few inches short, made contact with the #57, punctured tires on both machines, and ended one of the most exciting duels in recent GT Class history. Werner, and co-driver Leh Keen, of Charleston, NC, would eventually finish the race in sixth place, with both the Team Championship and the Driver's Championships to be decided in the final round of the 2009 Grand-Am Rolex Series at Homestead-Miami Speedway.

Keen knows that despite today's setback, they are still in strong contention going into the final race.

"We've been going for it all year, and that's how we got to where we are in the Championship," Keen said. "We went for the win today and came up short. It's not ideal, but we're with a great team, so we can still get it done in Homestead."

Werner reflects his co-driver's mentality. "My car was really good at the end," Werner said. "I saw Robin (Liddell in the #57 car) sliding around, and he braked early in one turn, and we went into the turn side by side. I was already up on the curb and I think I do not have enough room to avoid contact. It was a little tap, but I got a flat front left tire and it was a long way back to the finish line that slowly."

It took me a long, long time. "It would be nicer to come to Miami with everything already done. It was in my hands to win the race or clinch the championship, and I did not do it."

Eric Lux of Jacksonville, FL, started the two hour and forty five minute race in seventh, but quickly got the #86 Farnbacher Loles Racing/Wheel Enhancement GT3 Cup up into fourth place by the twelfth lap. Lux pitted the Porsche on lap fourteen and handed the wheel over to Porsche Factory

Driver, Wolf Henzler of Nürtingen, Germany. Unfortunately, within a few corners, Henzler reported that he could not shift the Porsche from fourth to fifth gear. The #86 was brought back to the garage and the Farnbacher Loles crew quickly swapped out the transmission allowing Henzler to rejoin the race and finish in 13th place.

Despite fighting with illness, Lux made an impressive start and is looking forward to the next event.

“We started out well, but it was really hard as I have pretty bad case of bronchitis,” Lux said.

“When I handed the car over to Wolf, I was pretty sick. We got up to the front, but as soon as Wolf went back out, it looked like a bearing let go in the gearbox. The crew did an amazing job, as usual, but we were too many laps down to savage the race. We’ll get it back together and get it ready for Homestead.”

Henzler was once again impressed with the Farnbacher Loles Racing crew’s capability.

“Eric was running really good, it didn’t take him long to work his way up,” Henzler said. “But as soon as I took over and left the pits, I knew we had a problem. The crew did a great job swapping out the gearbox but we still had to return to the race several laps down. I wish the team good luck in Homestead.”

Farnbacher Loles Team Principal, Gregory Loles, reflected on the result after the race. “A lot of people thought we would just coast into the Championship considering the points lead we had. But it would be unfair to the series, to the fans and ultimately to ourselves if we didn’t race hard all the time. We had a chance for the win, so naturally we went for it. I’m very proud of our drivers, our engineers, and our crew, for the effort they all put in. We came to Miller as we do to every track - to win. While we came up a bit short, it was an incredibly exciting race. There is still a little more work we need to do at the last race, and then we’ll have achieved all of our goals for the season.”

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AIM Autosport Team Report

Source: AIM Autosport

In a race that featured some tight battles, three cautions that bunched up the field and some bumping and banging, Mark Wilkins and Burt Frisselle put in a very solid drive in the Utah 250 and brought the AIM Autosport No. 61 Ford Riley to a solid, fifth-place finish. With that result AIM Autosport is now alone in sixth place in the championship and just three points back of fifth overall.

Cautions played a significant role in the race with respect to track position and fuel mileage. Mark would hand over the car to Burt from the second position. Burt had to deal with some GT traffic but was still on pace when the first caution brought the entire prototype field into the pits. A fantastic stop by the crew put the No 61 Ford Riley back on track in fourth place. Burt then went side by side with the 01 car in a battle for third and despite going wide in the turn and sustaining some damage, he held position and took up the chase. However, he had fallen back a bit and was now under attack but held his ground.

Burt was passed and fell to fifth just before the second last caution period. This and the subsequent three-lap caution during the final twenty laps of the race meant everyone was on a fuel strategy to race to the end. Burt had some fantastic restarts keeping pace with the No. 12 car - but not enough to make the position. There was some hope that the heated battle for second place might yield another position or two but Burt maintained a strong pace to the end and a solid result.

"We owe this to everyone on the crew" commented Burt after the race. "The pit stops went great and that kept us in the hunt and the car just worked well even after we had contact with other cars. This race was a lot of fun and it was fantastic to be able to put pressure on teams running at the front."

"I have to agree with Burt on the work the crew did" said Wilkins. "Ian (Willis) and Jim (Malicki) threw a new setup at the crew this morning and they got it done in time for practice and we could just tweak it from there." He continued, "the pit stop was awesome which gave us track position and Burt just drove a solid race to the end."

The AIM Autosport crew will head home to get the No. 61 Ford Riley ready for the final race of the season at Homestead-Miami Speedway in just three weeks. Another solid effort there could see the team repeat their fifth place series championship result.

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PORSCHE

Porsche Motorsports Report

Source: Porsche Motorsports

A sticky helmet radio cable might have cost Porsche factory drivers Timo Bernard (Germany) and Romain Dumas (France) a podium finish - and perhaps their first victory of the season - at the Utah 250 Grand-Am Rolex Sports Car series race at Miller Motorsports Park Saturday.

A rare mistake by Dirk Werner (Germany) prevented him and Farnbacher Loles Racing Porsche 911 GT3 Cup teammate Leh Keen (Charleston, SC) from clinching the Acxiom GT championship.

In both classes, it was a day of "what if" for the two leading Porsche teams competing in the Grand-Am Rolex Sports Car Series presented by Crown Royal Cask No. 16, but a day of celebration for Andy Lally (Suwanee, GA) and Scott Schroeder (Piedmont, CA), who finished second in GT in the #66 TRG Porsche 911 GT3 Cup.

"We were competitive and we leading for a long time," said Bernhard. "Team Penske showed a great performance. I had a problem disconnecting the radio cable to my helmet in the driver change, and we lost a few seconds there that we needed. A little thing that doesn't happen, and it happened to us. We never were able to get those seconds back.

Bernhard/Dumas finished only 3.6 seconds out of first place, and 2.1 seconds away from a podium finish.

"I led a lot of laps and we need to keep that momentum going to Miami. We have been so close (to winning) the last two races that is frustrating. We are used to winning, not almost winning," said a frustrated Bernhard.

Bernhard qualified the #12 Verizon Wireless Penske Porsche Riley second, and ran a torrid pace with pole winner and ultimate race winner Jon Fogarty (Bend, OR) in the #99 Pontiac Riley for the first 11 laps around the 4.486-mile, 24-turn road course. They were never more than half a second apart but 10 seconds ahead of the rest of the field when Bernhard pitted early, a strategy move determined after Roger Penske and Porsche Motorsports President Tim Cidric arrived 40 minutes prior to the start of the race after a 12-hour flight from Japan.

Bernhard fell to sixth, 37 seconds behind and began a rapid run to the front, sliding into fourth, where Dumas finished. Fogarty and Alex Gurney (Irvine, CA) padded their Rolex points lead to eight point over second-place Max Angelelli (Monaco) and Brian Frisselle (Aspen, CO) in the #10 Ford Dallara, Third place Memo Rojas (Mexico) and Scott Pruett (Auburn, CA) fell to 10 points behind Gurney and Fogarty. Dumas and Bernhard go to Miami with a mathematical title hopes, but they are 33 points behind in fourth place.

"We have the speed, so it was only track position that made the difference today. We had a very good run. They fly in from Japan and when they (Roger Penske and Tim Cidric) make the strategy call that would put Timo in the lead, but then we did not need the late caution," said Dumas.

"We had the speed to compete, but the mistake in the pits cost us time we needed at the end. That is how competitive Grand-Am racing is. A little mistake and it was enough to cost us a podium.

"We have a great car now, now that we have all the power back, we know we can win. We just need everything to be perfect. We will try again at Miami."

Surprising, Keen and Werner did not clinch the Acxiom GT championship. They entered the race with a 35-point lead and needed only to finish ahead of the #07 Pontiac GXP.R to claim the title with only the season finale at Homestead Miami Oct. 10 remaining.

Oddly, Werner tried to pass the #57 Pontiac GXP.R for the lead in the final two minutes of the race when all he needed to do was cruise home in second to clinch the title. Werner suffered a flat left front tire and hobbled home in sixth place, allowing the #07 Pontiac to finish ahead of him.

"My car was really good at the end," Werner said. "I saw Robin (Liddell in the #57 car) sliding around, and he braked early in one turn, and we went into the turn side by side. I was already up on the curb and I think I do not have enough room to avoid contact. It was a little tap, but I got a flat front left tire and it was a long way back to the finish line that slowly. It took me a long, long time.

"It would be nicer to come to Miami with everything already done. It was in my hands to win the race or clinch the championship, and I did not do it. I got into a situation that I realized too late I did not need to be there (side by side) and it was a mistake."

Keen and the rest of the Farnbacher Loles crew were already celebrating, but their joy was cut off by Werner's slow last lap.

"It was pretty obvious what did happen and what could have happened. We could have won the race, or at least clinched the championship, and both opportunities slipped away. With two minutes left, we were already celebrating, so we'll have to think of this of practice for our celebration for Miami. We're disappointed we didn't clinch the championship here because it was in our grasp and it looked so likely, and then that happened," said Keen.

"It's obviously still exciting to be in this position and we've got a lot to look forward to. We're still in really good shape. We'll just do what we have to do at Miami. We'll have to think a little better, for sure."

Keen and Werner lost only five points, so they will take a 30-point lead over #07 Pontiac driver Kelly Collins (Newport Beach, CA). All other GT title contenders were eliminated Saturday, including TRG driver Lally, who climbed to fourth in the driver standings with his runner-up effort Saturday.

"Our Porsche held up really well," Lally said. "Really what I have to give is credit to the team for making the right strategy calls. Kevin (TRG owner Kevin Buckler) noticed something that normally doesn't go on in the DP that gave us track position on pit stops and under caution. That put us in the lead under yellow, and that let us defend from the front. It's pretty amazing - and fun!"

"This is very special for me," Schroeder said. This is my career best finish in my first year of Rolex racing, and to have an opportunity to race with Andy (Lally) and have a team like TRG behind me is wonderful. Hats off to the guys for giving me such a great car."

The two Brumos Porsche Daytona Prototype entries finished in the top 10, as all 11 DP cars finished on the lead lap. JC France (Ormond Beach, FL) and Joao Barbosa (Portugal) finished sixth in the #59 Brumos Porsche Riley while Darren Law (Phoenix, AZ) and David Donohue (Malvern, VA) were ninth in the #58 Brumos Porsche Riley.

Craig Stanton (Long Beach, CA) and John Potter (Salt Lake City, UT) finished fifth in GT in the #65 TRG Porsche 911 GT3 Cup, just ahead of Keen and Werner, and the newest Porsche Motorsports customer team of Bryce Miller (Summit, NJ) and Kevin Roush (Upland, CA) were eighth in GT in the #48 Miller Barrett Racing Marquis Jet Porsche 911 GT3 Cup.

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Stevenson Motorsports Report

Source: Andrew S. Hartwell / ashautomobilia.com

A Potential Victory For Stevenson Pontiac Ends After Late Race Contact *Robin Liddell's Incredible Charge To The Front Ends With A Bang*

With a lap and a half remaining in the 2 hour 45 minute race at Miller Motorsports Park in Toole, UT, the GT class leading No. 57 Stevenson Motorsports / BryanMark Financial Pontiac GXP.R was broadsided by Dirk Werner driving a Farnbacher-Loles Porsche. In an aggressive move that would have been seen as simple hard racing in an earlier season contest, the Porsche collided with the Pontiac resulting in tire blowouts on both cars. Instead of a 1-2 finish for the pair, they both fell to the sidelines as the rest of the field passed them by. In the end, the Porsche finished in sixth place and the Pontiac in seventh.

In the laps leading up to the collision, Robin Liddell, Werner, and Andy Lally, had been running almost as if connected together through every corner before Liddell finally found a way to get past Lally to take the lead. Liddell: "I did everything I could to keep it clean. I was very conscious of not touching Lally when we were battling. I knew I was faster than he was, but I wanted to make sure I made a clean pass – I didn't want a penalty for contact."

Soon thereafter Werner too was able to pass Lally and in short order he and Liddell were making it a two car run to the end. The action on the track was electric as the two cars battled through every corner running over curbs and at times, side by side, with neither willing to back down in the slightest.

Liddell was somewhat hampered as he was battling severe tire wear in the closing laps and it was only his sheer talent and determination that allowed him to stay ahead of Werner. For the Stevenson Pontiac, the road to their fourth win of the 2009 Grand-Am Rolex Series Presented by Crown Royal No. 16 season seemed to be open to them, if Liddell could just hang on.

Liddell: "I didn't expect (Werner) to be so aggressive, knowing that he was in a position in which he could clinch the title, but he kept pushing. At one point, I couldn't see him behind me, so I knew he

was coming up beside me. I instinctively knew he was coming up on my right side, so I tried to give him enough room so we wouldn't touch, but all of a sudden I got hit real hard.

"We'd worked very hard to come back through the field so I was not about to give the position up easily but I guess he wanted to finish on a high so he made a move."

The resulting collision deflated not only the tires on both cars, effectively ending the race for both drivers and teams, it shredded the Stevenson team's last championship hopes as well.

Team Manager Mike Johnson: "In the end, we are obviously very disappointed with the result and we took another big hit in our race for the championship, but I don't think I could be any prouder of the way our drivers performed on the track, and I would not have asked Robin to drive those last five laps any differently. Unfortunately as a team, we did not have our best race. I missed a potential wave by, our pit stops were sloppy, and we gave the drivers a car that overworked the tires in the long run. Andrew and Robin made us look a lot better than we really were and Robin was as far down as 6th when we pitted for fuel at a track that is very difficult to make a pass on."

Liddell's co-driver, Andrew Davis, started the race and he noted that handling woes had befallen the team throughout the weekend. After several changes made to improve the car's handling and tire wear simply did not deliver, it was all the two professional drivers could do to keep the Pontiac moving forward.

Davis: "The car was very sensitive to our adjustments this weekend. It was hard to find that perfect balance. We struggled with both ends of the car early on in the race. We had some rear grip issues early on during my stint and at the start of Robin's stint as the car wanted to over steer. The car was really good for the first few laps but then it went into over steer so we made a change on Robin's first stop, adding a Gurney flap in the rear. That finally gave us some grip. In the end, we obviously had a car that was good enough to win."

This season, the No. 57 Stevenson Motorsports / BryanMark Financial Pontiac took home the win in the Virginia, Quebec and Alabama races, and they scored a second place at Mid-Ohio. Overall, after 11 races, they have finished in the top 10 in every race except the July race at Daytona, when an engine expired shortly after the race began. While they had hoped to build on the momentum of having finished second in the 2008 overall GT Team and Driver Championships, sometimes the realities of the racing game can drive you off course.

The Stevenson Team is in a tight battle to secure second place in the overall GT Team Championship with the No.07 Team Drinkin' Mate Pontiac and No. 66 TRG Porsche. With one race left to secure the second spot, the Stevenson team is heading down to Miami, Florida with high expectations, a positive outlook, and even a bit of good humor.

Davis: "We have one race left with one more chance to get the Stevenson Pontiac up on the top step of the podium one last time. We feel very confident in what we have been doing as a team. We have raced hard and unfortunately sometimes you have results like we had here. All we can do now is focus on winning the next race."

Johnson: "With the up and down season we have had this year, it has all come back on us to the point where there are just three points separating second and fourth place in the championship, so we are going to take these next two weeks very seriously. We have no choice but to go out and beat the No. 07 Pontiac and No. 66 Porsche at Miami. If we don't, our team will be at the season ending Grand-Am banquet watching from the cheap seats!"

The final race on the 2009 Grand-Am Rolex Sports Car Series presented by Crown Royal Cask No.16 will be held at Miami International Speedway on Saturday, October 10th.

More information about the Stevenson Motorsports team, and the new Stevenson performance shop, can be found at www.stevensonmotorsports.com

For more information on the Grand-Am Rolex Series, go to www.grand-am.com/rolex/
Stevenson Motorsports operates out of a facility located in Jacksonville, North Carolina.

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Grand-Am Official Results

September 18 - 19, 2009

Utah 250

Miller Motorsports Park, Tooele, UT

Pos	No.	Class	Pic	Drivers	Team/Car	Laps	Avg MPH
1	99	DP	1	Fogarty / Gurney	GAINSCO/ Bob Stallings Racing / Pontiac Riley	56	90.330
2	10	DP	2	Angelelli / Frisselle	SunTrust Racing / Ford Dallara	56	90.319
3	01	DP	3	Pruett / Rojas	Chip Ganassi Racing with Felix Sabates / Lexus Riley	56	90.317
4	12	DP	4	Bernhard / Dumas	Penske Racing / Porsche Riley	56	90.298
5	61	DP	5	Frisselle / Wilkins	AIM Autosport / Ford Riley	56	90.252
6	60	DP	6	Negri / Patterson	Michael Shank Racing / Ford Riley	56	90.217
7	59	DP	7	Barbosa / France	Brumos Racing / Porsche Riley	56	90.119
8	13	DP	8	Forest / Taylor	Beyer Racing / Chevrolet Riley	56	90.059
9	58	DP	9	Donohue / Law	Brumos Racing / Porsche Riley	56	90.047
10	6	DP	10	Pew / Valiante	Michael Shank Racing / Ford Riley	56	90.044
11	2	DP	11	Finlay / Wallace	Childress-Howard Motorsports / Chevrolet Crawford	56	89.681
12	69	GT	1	Assentato / Segal	SpeedSource / Mazda RX-8	55	87.361
13	66	GT	2	Lally / Schroeder	TRG / Porsche GT3	55	87.333
14	07	GT	3	Collins / Edwards / Reese	Team Drinkin' Mate / Pontiac GXP.R	55	87.330
15	32	GT	4	Hyatt / Westphal	Miracle Sealants Team PR1 / BMW M6	55	87.240
16	65	GT	5	Potter / Stanton	TRG / Porsche GT3	55	87.234
17	87	GT	6	Keen / Werner	Farnbacher Loles Racing / Porsche GT3	55	86.455
18	57	GT	7	Davis / Liddell	Stevenson Motorsports / Pontiac GXP.R	54	87.003
19	48	GT	8	Miller / Roush	Miller Barrett Racing / Porsche GT3	54	86.376
20	70	GT	9	Ham / Tremblay	SpeedSource / Mazda RX-8	54	85.737
21	21	GT	10	Briody / Prewitt	Battery Tender/ MCM Racing / Pontiac GTO.R	52	83.355
22	40	GT	11	Espenlaub / Foster	Dempsey Racing / Mazda RX-8	51	86.761
23	30	GT	12	Buford / Cameron / Taylor	Racers Edge Motorsports / Mazda RX-8	43	84.241
24	86	GT	13	Henzler / Lux	Farnbacher Loles Racing / Porsche GT3	29	52.591