



Grand-Am Rolex Series EMCO Gears Classic At Mid-Ohio

Source: Team Race Reports

Photos Courtesy Grand-Am or the respective team



Lexus Motorsports Racing Report

Source: Lexus Motorsports

Scott Pruett and Memo Rojas overcame three early pit stops and falling a lap down in their #01 Telmex Lexus to win today's EMCO Gears Classic at the Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course. Starting from the second position, Rojas came into the pits under caution on Lap 2 to satisfy the mandatory pit-stop rule requiring a stop within the first 45 minutes of the race. During his stop, the team took on fuel, but it was determined by Grand-Am officials that the race had yet to complete a green flag lap. The ruling resulted in a stop-and-go penalty with the team being held in the pits for an additional 10 seconds with Rojas falling to the back of the field.

Yet, the reigning series co-champion charged back into the top-10 before having contact with another prototype while overtaking him for position. The contact would send Rojas' #01 Lexus back into the pits for a tire change and dropped him a lap down and into 15th position. Once again, the resilient Mexican driver came back through the field and into the top-10 before handing off to Pruett under a full-course caution on Lap 38. The Chip Ganassi Racing team's quick pit stop put Pruett back on track in seventh-place.

From there, the most-decorated sports car racer in American history quickly moved into the top-five by Lap 45 and eventually assumed the lead under caution on Lap 67. Pruett then stretched out as much as a three-second lead over second place and more than a 10-second lead over third place before a full-course caution with just over 30 minutes remaining bunched up the field. Despite repeated runs at him by former Toyota F1 driver Ricardo Zonta, Pruett led the final 45 laps for the team's second consecutive victory.

The Rolex Sports Car Series returns Saturday, July 4 with the Brumos 250 as the preliminary show for the Sprint Cup at the Daytona International Speedway. The one-day event will be televised live on SPEED beginning at 2 p.m. EDT.

- Today's victory at Mid-Ohio is the 25th for Lexus in Rolex Sports Car competition and the second of the 2009 season. The manufacturer has now won two or more races in every season since its debut campaign in 2004.

- The win is a record 22nd for Scott Pruett and the ninth for teammate Memo Rojas. It is also the 23rd for Chip Ganassi Racing -- also a Rolex Series record.

- In leading a race-high 45 laps today, the #01 Lexus has now led each of the six races this season -- one of only two teams to accomplish that feat and has now led more laps than any other team in the series. Individually, Pruett has a commanding lead with a 191 laps led this season.

- The Lexus-powered Ganassi team has now registered two wins and four top-two finishes in six Mid-Ohio races since entering the series in 2004.

Memo Rojas, #01 Telmex Lexus: "It was one of those races where everything bad happened early and we lost that lap early. If you would have asked me an hour into the race if we would be in Winner's Circle I would have said no way. My hat's off to this team for making some great calls. We made our lap back, then took the lead and won the race."

Scott Pruett, #01 Telmex Lexus: "Lady luck was surely shining on us today. I thought we were out of that one early, but the entire Ganassi team, Telmex and Lexus just did a great job today. I hope that was as much fun to watch as it was to race. Ricardo Zonta and I were both driving like it was qualifying out there, except trying to carve our way through traffic at the same time. "



SunTrust Racing Report

Source: Laz Denes, True Speed Communication

On a day when the driving duo of Max Angelelli and Brian Frisselle appeared to have put their No. 10 SunTrust Ford Dallara of Wayne Taylor Racing in position to score their first Grand-Am Rolex Sports Car Series victory of the year, an ill-timed yellow made all the difference in the world between first place and eighth, where the SunTrust car crossed the finish line at the conclusion of today's EMCO Gears Classic at the Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course in Lexington, Ohio.

Still, the SunTrust team proved to have the dominant car through the middle portion of today's 2-hour, 45-minute affair that covered 111 laps around the 2.258-mile, 13-turn road circuit. Frisselle drove a marvelous opening stint from the fourth starting position, turned the car over to Angelelli in second place, and the Italian worked his way into the race lead for 27 laps as he was nearing his final fuel-and-tire stop of the day. It was the sixth time in six races this season the SunTrust team has led laps.

But, with Angelelli in the lead on lap 64 by a huge margin over the rest of the field, a full-course caution came out for a stalled car on track just as he passed the entrance to pit road. The rest of the frontrunners – albeit far behind him on track, were able to dive into the pits on that very lap and execute their final fuel-and-tire stops while Angelelli and the SunTrust Racing machine had to negotiate one more lap of the circuit before his chance to pit. That dropped Angelelli all the way back to seventh, and on a track known for making it difficult to pass, the rest was history.

“When we have such a good car, it’s just ridiculous to finish in this position,” said Angelelli, who with Frisselle saw a three-race podium finishing streak come to an end. “We can’t afford to finish in this position if we want to win the championship. It was just bad timing on when that yellow happened. We were already by, but with such a big lead on everybody else we were racing, they were able to dive into the pits and we had to go around one more time.”

Late in the race, with some 30 minutes to go, Angelelli was running in sixth coming out of what turned out to be the final caution of the day. With his eyes firmly focused ahead on salvaging a top-five finish, he was instead pushed out of the way from behind on the restart by Michael Valiante in the No. 6 Michael Shank Racing Ford Riley. While Angelelli gathered up the SunTrust car on the outside of the 180-degree right-hand turn called the “Keyhole,” two other cars were able to follow Valiante and dropped Angelelli back to ninth. Angelelli was able to pick up one position by the checkered flag for his final finishing position of eighth.

"I was really not happy with that last restart," Angelelli said. "I cannot race like that because we are racing for the championship and he has absolutely nothing to lose. It's a tough situation and I'm not happy with what happened."

Frisselle, meanwhile, lost a position to the No. 76 Krohn Racing Ford Lola of Nic Jonsson on the opening lap, but didn't take long to win the position back and continue his march toward the front, chasing early race leader and former teammate Mark Wilkins in the No. 61 AIM Autosport Ford Riley for the final 19 laps of his stint."

"The opening stint went really well," said the 25-year-old Frisselle. "Unfortunately, I didn't have the best of race starts. I missed a shift, so I lost a position to Nic. It was unfortunate, but I was able to get back by him and, once I did, I caught up to the leader. I wasn't able to get by the leader. He had a great pace. He was good down the straightaway, probably running a little less aero than us. But, our car was great. The team was calling a great strategy. We just got caught out by an unfortunate yellow. We've got to put it behind us and keep in the hunt for the championship. We're third in the points, not too far out of the lead. Watkins Glen (two weekends ago) was a big lesson on how quickly a leader can lose a lot of points. We needed better luck today. But, from here, we just need a lot of strong results, which we're more than capable of producing."

The race-winning No. 01 Chip Ganassi Racing with Felix Sabates Lexus Riley of Scott Pruett and Memo Rojas scored its second consecutive victory and broke a first-place tie in the championship with the SunTrust team. The No. 01 now leads the No. 99 Gainsco/Bob Stallings Racing Pontiac Riley team of Alex Gurney and Jon Fogarty by 11 points (175-164). The SunTrust team is just one point back in third place with 164 points, and one point ahead of the fourth-place No. 12 Penske Racing Porsche Riley team of Timo Bernhard and Romain Dumas.

"I'm really at a loss for words after the way our day ended up," team owner Wayne Taylor said. "We put ourselves in perfect position to win our first race of the year, and it all basically came down to one ill-timed yellow that turned our day upside-down. In the big picture, we're still very much in position to win the championship with half a season to go. That's what we can hang our hat on as we leave here and go on to the next one."

Next up for the Rolex Series competitors is the annual Fourth of July weekend Brumos Porsche 250 at Daytona (Fla.) International Speedway. This year's traditional Thursday-night event moves to Saturday afternoon, July 4, as part of a first-ever doubleheader with the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series Coke Zero 400 Powered by Coca-Cola set for later that night. The 250-mile (or 2-hour, 30-minute, whichever comes first) Rolex Series race will start at 2 p.m. EDT with live coverage on SPEED-TV.



Michael Shank Racing Report

Source: Matt Cleary, Sunday Group Management

With two bullet-fast Ford-Riley combinations entered for the EMCO Gears Classic at the Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course, Michael Shank Racing was looking to shake the bad racing luck that has hounded the team on the home track in Rolex Sports Car Series competition on Saturday.

And after leading the time sheets in several of the test sessions over the two-day race weekend, the 300 friends, family, and guests from Westfield Insurance that were on hand to support the team were all looking forward to a strong outing. But unfortunately, the bad luck reared its head only moments after the start of the race as Mark Patterson was knocked off-course and into the gravel trap on the opening lap of the race.

“That was the least gentlemanly maneuver that I’ve seen, and I say that even though that driver is a friend of mine,” said Patterson. “We were all sliding around on that first lap, and you had to be patient getting back to power. I was running with the Brumos car no problem, but then I just got hit from behind. He didn’t hit me that hard, but it doesn’t matter—it was hard enough to ruin our race. It was just not necessary, and not a thinking move. We are not angry at the driver as much as just upset about what this will do to us in the points.

“We’ve had the most unfortunate luck at Mid-Ohio, and it’s most disappointing for our friends at Westfield. We had a podium car this weekend and we’d have loved to have brought them up there with us, but it was just not meant to be today.”

The sister No. 6 Ford-Riley of John Pew and Michael Valiante also had to overcome some challenges to make it to the finish, but with Pew getting a strong start and Valiante setting the fastest lap of the race, the two combined to take sixth at the checkered flag. Pew’s race plan was changed when he had to make an extra pit stop early in the race after running in the top 6.

“I passed a GT car going into turn seven, but then he turned into me as I went by and that flattened the tire,” said Pew. “Fortunately, the team saw that instantly on the telemetry and I was exactly where I needed to be to make pit lane when they radioed me to come in. The car was really hard to drive initially—not just for me, as I could see everyone sliding around before the tires got up to temperature. It took some time, but then they got better. Michael drove his heart out and it’s too bad we weren’t able to stick to our original plan because we could have been back on the podium today, no question.”

Valiante, who was also slowed after contact from the side saw the team take extra time on a pit stop to repair a damaged rear wing rather than risk it becoming dislodged on –track, kept his head down and drove a race that was described as “bionic” by the television announcers.

“The track was a lot different from what it had been all weekend long and even though we weren’t as fast today as we have been through the weekend, we still had the car to beat today,” said Valiante, who looked as though he was just returning from a trip to the grocery store rather than two hours of intense Rolex racing as he got out of the car. “We had a lot of ground to make up, and I just didn’t want to take too many risks but we were still able to move up at the finish.”

Shank agreed with the announcers impressions of Valiante’s charge.

“That was one of the best drives I’ve seen,” said Shank. “There is no doubt that with the pace we had with these cars, we could have been 1-2 today on top of the podium. But just too much bad luck today to do that, so it’s pretty disappointing. I don’t know what we have to do to get the results we want to here at Mid-Ohio, but now we’ll focus on Daytona and the second half of this season. We showed that we know how to win races and we’ve certainly had fast cars everywhere we’ve gone, but now we just need to put everything together and avoid this bad luck to get us back up on the top of the podium again.”

The No. 60 returned to race action, with Negri playing both sportsman and speedster as he kept out of the lead pack’s battle for position while setting a string of fast laps before drivetrain issues forced him back into the pits.

The team’s hard work will continue on Monday as the team participates in the series open test at Mid-Ohio before returning to race action on July 4th at Daytona International Speedway for the Brumos 250.



KROHN Racing Report

Source: Barbara J. Burns for Krohn Racing - Burns Group Unlimited

The No. 76 Krohn Racing Ford Lola of Nic Jönsson and Ricardo Zonta finished second in Saturday's EMCO Gears Classic race at Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course in Lexington, Ohio. Krohn Racing's podium finish was their second in less than a week, after team owner/driver Tracy W. Krohn, Eric van de Poele and Jönsson captured a third place finish in the Risi-Krohn Ferrari 430 GT at last weekend's 24 Hours of Le Mans race in Le Mans, France.

Jönsson started the Proto-Auto Lola from the fifth position on the grid and climbed into the top three. He pitting on Lap 25 of the 111-lap race, to turn the wheel over to Zonta, who methodically worked his way up from the seventh position to give the team a second-place finish. Zonta gave eventual winner Scott Pruett a hard run for the final 40 laps. Pruett finished with just a 0.491 margin of victory over the former Formula One Brazilian hotshoe.

Nic Jönsson, driver, No. 76 Krohn Racing Ford Lola:

"We had a decent qualifying. We qualified fifth, although I think we could have been third. We had a good car from the beginning of the race. We got a lot of pick-up on the tires and it was almost impossible to drive for four or five laps. It was just holding on for life. Then the yellow came out and we had to do everything over again. It was a very rough first 45 minutes. I hung on and tried to keep the car up as high as possible. I handed it over to Ricardo in fifth. Ricardo got in and did an absolutely stunning job. He was in the car for a long time and it was hot in there. He did a fantastic job and kept plugging away. I think we had a decent race car. We still have a few more little things to do but the car is getting more competitive. It's right there now. Again, I can't say enough about Ricardo's performance today. The Krohn team did an awesome job. The pit

stops were flawless and the strategy was right on the money. I also want to give a big thanks to Tracy to give us this opportunity to be out there and run up front when he's not able to be here. This second place today, following up the third place on the podium with Tracy and Eric (van de Poele) last week at Le Mans, feels really good. Hopefully we'll have some more wins here in Grand-Am this year."

Ricardo Zonta, driver, No. 76 Krohn Racing Ford Lola:

"The race was good. I didn't have much time in the dry before jumping in the car for the race, so I had to get used to the car in the dry. The car was quite good, and the mechanics and the crew worked very well. The strategy worked very well so I am very happy about our result. I tried very hard to overtake Pruett at the end but we didn't have enough speed on the straights, too much downforce. We couldn't really battle Pruett because of that. If you just keep the car inside the corners you cannot overtake the other guy. The only place to pass was on the straights and we didn't have the speed for it. It was good points for the team. Of course, there is not much chance for the championship anymore but I think if you keep it on the podium every race it would be very nice."

Tracy W. Krohn, owner/ driver, Krohn Racing:

"It really was a great race. We had a good chance of winning there at Mid-Ohio. My hat's off to the Ganassi team. They had a good bit of luck with pit stops and yellows; otherwise we could have won the thing.

We are continuing to improve this car and running at the top of the field. We just need a little bit more out of the car and we're going to be right there. The battle between Scott and Ricardo is what Grand-Am racing is all about! It was fun to watch. Ricardo stepped in there pretty hard a few times and with traffic. I was very impressed with the results. Pruett and Ricardo showed how to do it. That's what you want -- guys battling it out wheel-to-wheel.

Nic had to deal with some funky tires at the beginning of the race and did so extremely well. He brought the car in at an opportune time and it worked out for us.

I'm ready to get back in the race car at the next event at Daytona and can't wait to see everyone and get back at it."

David Brown, Team Manager/Engineer, Krohn Racing:

"We're pleased with the results. It's not often you can run the same times as the 01 car, and faster than the 99 car. The car was quick. I think the 01 car was possibly the only car quicker than us and very similar in times, which is, I think, a step forward for us. So we are quite pleased about that. Apart from the results, the fact that the car's performance has increased to that level is good and we think we understand why, which is a nice thing. We're quite encouraged by that.

We didn't really have any major issues in the race. Nic got a lot of pickup on the tires at the beginning, along with everybody else. It took a long time to clean them up and they never really came in completely so we were quite keen to get those tires off the car and put a fresh set on. Pit stops were absolutely wonderful. We were running a bit warm once and we made a cooling change during a pit stop and it went very well.

The strategy really was that we sat in the factory before we left to come to the race and planned our strategy. Precise details like which lap we would stop on we had to decide at the time. The strategy itself was exactly what we had planned to do."

Scott Pruett and Memo Rojas claimed their second victory of the season in No. 01 Ganassi Telmex Lexus Riley.



GAINSCO / Bob Stallings Racing Report

Source: Adam Saal

GAINSCO/Bob Stallings Racing and drivers Alex Gurney and Jon Fogarty took sole possession of second place in the 2009 Grand-Am Rolex Sports Car Series Driver and Team Championships with a third-place finish in Saturday's EMCO Gears Classic at Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course.

Although GAINSCO came up just short in its bid for a record third consecutive win at Mid-Ohio, the team is still firmly in the thick of the 2009 Grand-Am Rolex Series Championships at the halfway point of the season. GAINSCO, Gurney and Fogarty now have 164 points and are within 11 points of championship leaders Scott Pruett and Memo Rojas, who won their second consecutive race Saturday in the No. 01 Ganassi Racing Lexus Riley. GAINSCO and Ganassi are 2009's only repeat race winners with the No. 99 team taking victories earlier this year in April's Bosch Engineering 250 at Virginia International Raceway and last month in the Verizon Festival of Speed at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca.

"It was a good finish," said Gurney, who took over from starting driver Fogarty just 40 minutes into the 2-¾ hour timed race. "We seemed to be really good on the long runs but on the restarts I just couldn't get the rubber pick up off of the tires. I just felt slow on all of the restarts, really sliding around a lot. But once we got going we were pretty good and I think we were able to match the pace of the two front guys. It would have been nice if the yellows fell a little bit different, maybe we would have had the lead, but all in all it was okay."

Fogarty started from the pole and led the first two laps only to lose his lead after the first of the race's four full course caution periods. The GAINSCO team decided to bring Fogarty to the pits for a strategic stop that fulfilled the mandatory 45-minute pit stop requirement.

"It was a pretty wild first lap," Fogarty said. "It was like dirt track racing and was pretty fun. I was kind of looking forward to doing more of it but then we went yellow early. That kind of mixed up the strategy and put us down in the field but I just went to work and started making up positions. We had really slippery conditions all around and it was pretty odd, really. I thought after a full day of sunshine and cars running all day there would be some grip on the track, but it was pretty slippery."

Fogarty raced back to fifth before handing over to Gurney who, after falling as low as eighth after pitting under green, passed several competitors as he charged back to the front of the field. Gurney pitted for the final time with one hour and 10 minutes remaining and returned to the race in fifth place. He passed the No. 58 Brumos Porsche Riley of David Donohue for fourth with 56 minutes to go and cracked the top three when he slipped by the No. 12 Penske Racing Porsche Riley of Timo Bernhard just under 40 minutes from the finish.

With half of the Grand-Am Rolex Series schedule's 12 races now in the books, Gurney, Fogarty and GAINSCO are shifting focus to the final part of the season.

"We have got a lot of good tracks coming up for us," Gurney said. "We just have to keep our focus and keep on pace and we will be in good shape. The 01 stretched the points out a little bit today but we gained on everybody else. So we just need to keep pushing, make it faster and hope for the best at these next few tracks."



Porsche Motorsport Racing Report

Source: Andy Schupack, Porsche NA

FROM LAST TO FIRST, FARNBACHER LOLES PORSCHE CAPTURES GT CLASS WIN AT MID-OHIO; PORSCHE POWERED DAYTONA PROTOTYPES ALL FINISH IN TOP TEN ATLANTA

The #87 Farnbacher Loles Racing Porsche 911 GT3 Cup entry came from last-to-first place Saturday to capture the Acxiom GT class victory in the EMCO Gears Classic at Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course. The victory was the second straight for Leh Keen

(Charleston, SC) and Dirk Werner (Germany) and boosted their stranglehold on both the drivers and team championship points lead as the Grand-Am Rolex Sports Car Series presented by Crown Royal Cask N0. 16 passed the halfway point of the season.

The three Porsche-powered Daytona Prototypes missed the podium but all three finished in the top 10 on the lead lap, with the #12 Verizon Wireless Penske Porsche Riley of Porsche works drivers Timo Bernhard (Germany) and Romain Dumas (France) placing fourth.

"From last to first is pretty cool," said Keen. "That was our goal - winning the race after starting last - but we would have been happy with a podium finish protecting our points lead.

"I have to thank my crew for giving me an awesome car. This was a great win for us..

Keen had broken the Mid-Ohio track GT qualifying record Friday, but his time was disallowed after the car failed technical inspection - the ride height was too low, the result of a damaged rivet on the under-tray. "

Keen started the race dead last, 16th among the GT entries. He carefully carved his way through traffic, mindful of the faster Daytona Prototypes approaching rapidly from the rear. He even overcame a stop-and-go penalty for an improper pit exit (crossing the yellow line marking the track too early). Keen was up to 5th in class by lap 13 and took the GT lead on lap 38.

"It was very easy for me to bring it home," said Werner, who led the final 43 laps. "Leh did a great job bringing the car to the front. All I had to do was take care of traffic. It was a perfect day for me. I don't know what to do to thank the guys (the Farnbacher Loles crew) except to do it (win) again the next race."

"A pretty good result for the Penske Porsche," Bernard said. "But it was discouraging to see them pull away from us little by little because we down on the power and we can do not a thing about it. We put on a good show for the spectators, and that is important but not our top concern. We should win."

Penske Racing Report

Source: Penske Racing

Penske Racing co-drivers Romain Dumas and Timo Bernhard drove the No. 12 Verizon Wireless Porsche Riley to a fourth-place finish in Saturday's Emco Gears Classic Presented by KeyBank at Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course.

Dumas turned a fast lap of 1:19.076 seconds, posting a speed of 102.797 miles per hour on Friday to secure the sixth starting position in round six of the 2009 Grand-Am Rolex Sports Car Series presented by Crown Royal event.

As Dumas rolled off at the start of the 2 hour 45-minute timed event, crew chief Bill Vincent relayed a message to the pit crew from race strategist, Tim Cindric.

"Be on your toes," said Vincent. "We are going to make a lot of changes and we don't know what they are yet. Be ready with tires, be ready with fuel. Be ready for a change to strategy just before going over the wall. Just be ready."

Dumas drove the car to third place in the first 25 laps of the event before turning driving duties over to Bernhard.

"The [No. 12 Verizon Wireless Porsche Riley] was for sure better during the race," said Dumas. "The crew made several changes after qualifying yesterday and then a few more after practice this morning; all positive changes and it paid off."

On lap 51 of the 111-lap event, Bernhard went off track while passing a GT sports car and was posted ninth after making a pass down pit road to receive fuel and have the grill of the red and black Porsche wiped clean.

"I was trying to pass the GT car and he moved over but I was already up next to him," said Bernhard. "I went off track but was able to return without any damage."

Bernhard battled high-temperatures in the cockpit during his stint but fought through the heat to maintain a top-five for Penske Racing at the 2.26-mile, 13-turn road course.

"It was very hot in the Verizon Porsche," said Bernhard. "I knew when I got passed [on lap 76] I needed to focus a little more. We were close to the finish and I felt like we were in contention if something happened ahead of me."



Farnbacher - Loles Racing Report

Source: Roger Garbow

It was a rough start and a dramatic finish, but the Farnbacher Loles Racing team notched another victory while Leh Keen and Dirk Werner extended their Grand-Am Rolex points lead in the EMCO Gears Classic at the Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course. It looked as if the team would record their third double podium of the season as Dominik Farnbacher held onto the second spot behind his teammate for nearly an hour as the race wound down, before contact with a Daytona Prototype knocked him off the podium.

The drama began even before the start, as pole-sitter Eric Lux had a problem with a tire going down on his #86 Porsche GT3 Cup during the warm up laps. He pitted as the race went green and rejoined the field in last place. His teammate Leh Keen was also starting in the rear in the #87 after a post qualifying ride height penalty negated his pole-winning qualifying effort. So, both drivers were at the back of the field with a lot of ground to make up. They wasted no time in slicing through the field. During an early caution, both drivers pitted to get the mandatory stop out of the way. By lap ten, Keen was already up to fourth and was the fastest car in the class. Lux was up to ninth and climbing. Unfortunately, both cars were assessed drive-thru penalties for pit lane violations during their first stops. They rejoined the race near the back again.

This time though their march to the front would not be interrupted. At the one-hour mark, Leh was up to the second spot while Eric was in fourth. A caution came out and both cars pitted for driver changes. Dirk Werner took over for Leh while Dominik Farnbacher who was filling in for Lux's regular co-driver Wolf Henzler, took over the #86. After the restart, Werner was P2 while Farnbacher was P3. They held those spots until the next caution. With one hour left in the race, all the competitors pitted. The stops went flawlessly and Dirk took over the lead while Dominik was right behind in the second spot. And they ran that way until the closing minutes of the race.

As the clock wound down and five minutes to go, the second place DP car made contact with Dominik's Porsche and damaged the left front. With his tire going down, Dominik was quickly passed by the third place car and fought to get his slowing Porsche to the checkered flag. At the end, he crossed the line in seventh. Keen and Werner now hold a 16 point lead in the championship while Lux is 27 points back.

Leh Keen was all smiles at the finish. "This is really as good as it gets, going from last to first. It was disappointing getting the pole taken away, but we made up for it. I had to work really hard today coming from the back and then with the drive-through penalty having to do it again. I have to thank the whole team.

Everyone did a great job. The car and the pit stops were perfect. And I would like to thank my sponsor Shock Doctor, too. It's just too bad the 86 wasn't on the podium with us."

Dirk Werner celebrated as well. "Leh gave me the car in great position so I really didn't have to work too hard. The Porsche was great and the crew did a fantastic job with it. The car is just awesome right now. The qualifying position wasn't really that important. It was another perfect day for us."

Greg: "Eric and Leh did a fantastic job in their stints. They maintained their composure and brought both cars up from the back of the pack. We couldn't be prouder of their efforts. And I really have to commend the crew. The cars were perfect, the pit-stops flawless. They entire team deserves this. Getting the win here and extending the points lead was very important as we look toward the championship. But we really should have had both cars on the podium. There was absolutely no reason for the contact at the end of the race that took the 86 out of contention. Certainly there is no place for people to be out there with a win-or-crash mentality. It is very frustrating. We hope the series seriously addresses the reckless driving."

TRG Racing Report

Source: Kyle Chura

TRG's Justin Marks and Andy Lally finished the Grand-Am Rolex Series EMCO Gears Classic at Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course in eighth. John Potter and Craig Stanton finished ninth, Josemanuel Gutierrez and Scott Schroeder were 12th, with Duncan Ende and Spencer Pumpelly ending the day in 14th. This caps a very trying day for TRG.

What started out as a tough day at Infineon Raceway with the TRG Motorsports Adobe Road Winery NASCAR Sprint Cup Chevy Impala SS of David Gilliland being wrecked in morning practice spilled over into the team's Grand-Am Race at Mid-Ohio. Each of the four TRG GT entries had issues on the day.

Justin Marks No. 67 Construct Corps/Kartel Motorsports/No Fear Energy Drinks/Voodoo Ride/K1 Speed/Gemstone Winery/TRG Porsche GT3 had a competitive car for three-quarters of the race, with teammate Andy Lally running in third when a flat tire forced them to pit out of sequence costing the duo valuable track position.

"It was a little bit disappointing," Marks said. "It was another race in this string of bad luck for us. The first stint was kind of screwy because we stopped during that first caution to get the mandatory pit stop out of the way early. Half the field did it and half the field didn't so there was a lot of mismatched strategy out there. Once things settled down I tried to force a better time out of the car but couldn't do it so I just rode around and kept us in position for Andy. The good news is that we are going back to Daytona, where we won earlier this year, so hopefully we can have a good run there July 4th."

"We had a great car today," Lally said. "This was probably the best balance we have had so I have to say thanks to my crew and Jeff (Braun) our engineer and all of the guys for hustling. We were going to have a really good battle there but unfortunately we had an overanxious DP and he hit me in the rear going into turn nine. It took a couple of laps but we wore through our sidewall which gave us a flat and we had to pit for that and lost some time. It was one of those things that at the end of the day it was a tough deal and not the result we wanted, but I'm a lucky guy because I get to be a race car driver for a living and work with these guys."

John Potter started the No. 65 Magnus Racing/TRG Porsche GT3 and had it solidly in the top five. Craig Stanton took over and had an unfortunate incident with the No. 40 Mazda late in the race on a restart, relegating the team to a ninth place finish.

"I thought it went really well," Potter said. "We had a little late race problem with some over aggressive Mazdas out there but my TRG Porsche ran really great. It was our first drive in the No. 65 for Craig and me after taking a 66 hiatus, but we are all back together, one big happy family. The good thing was that the crash was pretty late into the race so we got to see what we can do as a team and we were there for what would have easily been our best finish in the No. 65 TRG Porsche."

"When we started the race John had just gotten out of the TRG GS KONI Challenge Porsche and he was all calibrated in and he ran a really good stint," Stanton said. "We were in the top five while he was running - the car was good and we were looking good. I took over and with the car running so well and with strategy we ran it to the top five or six and actually moving forward. I think we had a top five car for sure but we got tangled up with the 40 Mazda. It was one of those turn one deals on a restart. As Dorsey Schroder from the SPEED Channel says 'Yellows breed yellows'. It was four of five wide going in there and I made it out but we got tagged in the right rear so we had a bunch of toe-in which made the steering center up at about nine or 10 o'clock. We had a little damage to the wheel but all in all with the 65 crew we are banging on all six cylinders and we are really looking forward to the next race at Daytona. We put some new things in place to move along for the rest of the year. "

Duncan Ende started the No. 66 AXA/Wealth Management Strategies/TRG Porsche GT3 and on lap 25 limped the car back to the pits with a broken axle taking him and teammate Spencer Pumpelly out of contention early in the race.

"I had a really good car under me and I was doing decent times," Ende said. "I had a problem with a tire rubbing early on and it was really severe. There was so much smoke in the cockpit I thought I was going to cut a tire down. That eventually cleared up and I was getting a pretty good move on but an axle broke in turn one. It wasn't actually as hairy as I would have expected. It was too bad because we had a really good car and Spencer needed the points so I am sorry it went down this way."

"The toughest part is that we were very competitive in the championship and now I feel that we have taken a huge step backwards and we are going to need a lot of luck to get back in it," Pumpelly said. "With the season half over we have limited options as far as luck helping us out. That is tough to swallow because I know the guys have worked really, really hard and they cover every little nut and bolt and the consistency that they have put in is why we were in second place in the championship. I hate it for everyone on the team who worked so hard to get us where we are. Duncan was having a great run in the beginning of the race. This is his first run with me in the 66 Porsche and he had a phenomenal weekend. He has really stepped up. KONI or GT he has really one of the guys to watch out for in the future."

Josemanuel Gutierrez started the No. 68 Cohen Financial/Intercity Lines/TRG Porsche and had a trying first stint. Handing over to teammate Scott Schroeder, the 21 year old celebrating his birthday today, unfortunately ingested some fuel that had spilled on the hood and made its way into the car. This forced him to hand the car back over to Gutierrez late in the running.

"This is my 21st birthday so even though the race didn't go as planned and you want to have a good race on your birthday it was still a good day," Schroeder said. "Josemanuel had an alright stint, he was running very strong early on and I think he should be proud about that. I got in and we were doing pretty well but we were a couple of laps down and running our own race. Unfortunately a freak thing happened and some fuel got on the windshield and when I turned on the windshield wipers it came right into the cockpit and into my mouth. That last 45 minutes was a rough one. I actually had to get out and had the car back over to Josemanuel again who brought it home to the checker. It was a hard weekend but I think the 68 crew worked really hard to keep us fighting back from those laps we lost."

Team owner Kevin Buckler, who is on a whirl-wind weekend, commuting back and forth from Mid-Ohio to the NASCAR Sprint Cup weekend at Infineon Raceway in Sonoma, California has had a trying weekend.

"Just when you think that nothing else can wrong it gets tougher," Buckler said. "We had our primary NASCAR Sprint Cup car wrecked in this morning's practice and then we had a lot of little issues with all of our Rolex GT cars today. Justin and Andy had a great car and then they had the flat. Duncan and Spencer broke a half-shaft. John and Craig had contact on a restart which affected the handling for the rest of the race. Josemanuel and Scott had their fuel in the car issue. I have one more race this weekend at our home track at Infineon to try and make the weekend right - we will persevere. This team always does!"

The team will return to where the season started at Daytona International Speedway for a practice, qualify and race all in one day on July 4th prior to the NASCAR Sprint Cup Race.



Drinkin' Mate Pontiac Race Report

Source: Jim Bourn

Paul Edwards survived a wild finish in Saturday's EMCO Gears Classic presented by KeyBank at Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course to finish the #07 Drinkin' Mate Pontiac GXP.R in the 3rd position in Round 6 of the Grand-Am Rolex Sports Car Series presented by Crown Royal Cask No. 16.

"We'll take it," said Kelly Collins as he watched his co-driver Paul Edwards fend off a late charge from the pole sitting #30 Mazda. "Third place is garnering points which we need to defend our title. Paul did a great job and the Leighton Reese Performance Group team did a great job in the pits. Our new sponsor Drinkin Mate just came on board and it was great to be able to get them onto the podium in their first Grand-Am race.

"It was a good first run for the Drinkin' Mate Pontiac GXP.R despite missing the setup a bit," said team owner Leighton Reese. "Paul and Kelly did a great job keeping our Pontiac up front and for the most part out of trouble and our crew did a fantastic job picking up positions on every pit stop."

"A third place finish was good because I was just out there holding on," said Paul Edwards. "Once again the crew did a great job on the pit stops and our Drinkin Mate Pontiac was reliable so we picked up positions on the stops when we couldn't move to the front on the track and we finished strong. As usual Kelly handed off the Drinkin Mate Pontiac to me in great position and in good condition."

The 3rd place finish moved Collins and Edwards up to 3rd in the driver's championship with 170 points with the race winning duo of Dirk Werner and Leh Keen, who have won three straight GT races, tied for 1st with 186. Pontiac still trails Porsche for the Manufacturers' title by 13 points (198 to 185).

Kelly Collins, of Newport Beach California, started the Drinkin Mate Pontiac in 4th position as even the pace lap proved to be an adventure for the Grand-Am GT competitors as the pole sitting Porsche followed the pace car into the pits just prior to the start.

"I don't know what happened but the #86 just followed the pace car into the pits," said Kelly Collins. "I don't know if it was strategy, he had a problem or just got caught out. It was a very weird start because nobody knew where to line up. We all just took the start in a bunch. At the start we got a ton of tire pickup even on cold new tires getting warmed up for the start. There must be a bunch of stuff all over the track and

everybody was sliding all over the place. It went yellow right away and that was a good thing. A lot of the cars pitted under that yellow so when we got the restart everybody was out of sequence.”

When the course went green again Collins kept the Drinkin Mate Pontiac in 2nd place for his entire stint.

“The Drinkin’ Mate Pontiac was working really well but I couldn’t hold on to the 30 car but the car was fantastic,” said Collins. “It started to get a little loose at the end of the stint so I tightened up on the rear [sway] bar two turns and fought for second place with Andrew Davis in the #57 Pontiac right up until we pitted.”

Paul Edwards, of Nipomo California, and immediately struggled with the setup but was able to run well into the top 5 or 6 while keeping the leaders in sight.

“Early on I was just holding on, we just had to follow the pack,” said Edwards. “We didn’t have much time with the car for setup this weekend, nor did anyone else, but we tried some things this weekend relating to what we were feeling at Watkins Glen. For whatever reason we had the worst of both worlds, we had a ton of push and the evil thing about too much push is that you wind up with too much over steer coming out of the turn because you have too much lock turned into the car going in.”

“It was a tough deal today,” said Leighton Reese. “I am not sure if we got the air pressures just right for Paul [Edwards] because his car was under steering his whole stint. We pitted as early as we could so that we could still make the end of the race without another stop to make an adjustment.”

After the final stop for the Drinkin’ Mate Pontiac GXP.R Edwards was able to maintain a better pace but was still unable to challenge the leaders.

“I couldn’t do anything to get the Drinkin’ Mate Pontiac up to the front where it belongs but our finish was good for the championship,” said Edwards. “Once again we got a nice consistent finish but I didn’t have anything for them today. The Porsches were just gone and the Mazdas were just pulling us like crazy down the straight.”

When a late full course caution occurred with about a half hour remaining in the race the twin Porsches of Werner and Farnbacher looked to have the race fully in hand. Edwards had the Drinkin Mate Pontiac in 5th following Robin Liddell in the #57 Pontiac and Jeff Segal in the #69 Mazda.

When the race went green again the GT race took a dramatic turn.

Werner seemed to regain control of first but Farnbacher led Liddell, Segal and Edwards in a tight scrap for the podium. Farnbacher would get hit by a prototype which flattened a tire dropping the #86 Porsche back several positions allowing Liddell to grab the second position while Edwards and Segal tangled resulting in Paul getting past for 3rd. Segal would finish 5th.

“I think that the battling that was going on slowed the 57 car which was handling a bit better than we were so I was able to keep up,” said Edwards. “The 69 Mazda started making a lot of mistakes and he was going wide and starting to slide the car around and I was just trying to put pressure on him from behind.

“I wasn’t trying to hit him but unfortunately he had gone wide there the lap before and I thought he was going to go wide again and I was taking my normal line and we were going to go side by side up to the next corner. But he found some grip and he came over and I had nowhere to go and I made contact with him. With the situation the team is in right now I didn’t want to do any damage to the car and I certainly didn’t want to hit him. It was an unfortunate deal.”

“There were five cars nose to tail and it was just a dog fight,” Leighton Reese said of the incident. “Paul was battling hard with the #70 Mazda and it entered a turn wide a few times wiggling the rear end all over and Paul tried to go past on the inside of him and suddenly the Mazda came across his bow and they came together. Unfortunately the Mazda got the worst of it. When you have five cars running that close at the front there is going to be some fisticuffs and we came out on the better end of that deal. I know those guys are upset but it wasn’t Paul’s intention to get into him.”



Grand-Am Race Report

Source: Grand-Am Communications

Scott Pruett and Memo Rojas needed five races into the 2009 Grand-Am Rolex Sports Car Series presented by Crown Royal Cask No. 16 to win their first race of the season. They didn't have to wait long to post victory number two, driving to victory in Saturday's EMCO Gears Classic presented by KeyBank at the Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course.

The defending Daytona Prototype champions dominated the latter half of Round 6, leading the final 35 laps in the No. 01 TELMEX Lexus Riley before Pruett held off Ricardo Zonta in a fight to the finish to win by .491 seconds.

Meanwhile, the Farnbacher Loles Racing team came back from a post-qualifying penalty in the Rolex Series GT class to see Leh Keen and Dirk Warner give the team its second consecutive victory, second straight triumph at Mid-Ohio and third win of 2009.

"My hat's off to Ricardo Zonta," Pruett said after scoring his 22nd Rolex Series victory, following up the team's triumph in the Sahlen's Six Hours of The Glen. "We were both driving like it was qualifying. It was an unbelievable event. It was crazy, because we were trying to race as fast as we can, carving our way through traffic and trying not to hit anyone. It's a good thing we had a fast car that ran well all day long. But it was a real nail-biter at the end."

The winners had to come from a lap down. Rojas was penalized for improper fueling following a pit stop on the first lap, and then had to pit after contact with another car.

"We had a really quick car," Rojas said after his ninth career victory. "Fortunately, some good calls by the crew and some luck with cautions put us back on the lead lap, and Scott did a great job turning fast laps in traffic to get the win."

A turning point came when Pruett anticipated a full course caution when he saw the No. 2 Childress Howard Motorsports Pontiac Crawford stranded near pit entrance, and quickly pitted before the third of four full course cautions. Pruett then inherited the lead when leaders Max Angelelli and Burt Frisselle pitted, and held it the rest of the way.

Zonta took second in the No. 76 Krohn Aviation Ford Lola started by Nic Jönsson, giving the team its second podium finish of the season. The team won last month's race at New Jersey Motorsports Park.

Alex Gurney and Jon Fogarty, seeking their third consecutive Mid-Ohio victory in the No. 99 GAINSCO/Bob Stallings Racing Pontiac Riley, placed third. Pruett and Rojas took sole possession of the Daytona Prototype point lead, 11 points ahead of Gurney and Fogarty (175-164). No. 10 SunTrust Ford Dallara drivers Max Angelelli and Brian Frisselle entered the event with a share of the lead, but are now third, 12 points behind.

Timo Bernhard and Romain Dumas placed fourth in the Penske Racing No. 12 Verizon Wireless Porsche Riley, and are now fourth in the points, 13 points behind.

Joao Barbosa finished fifth in the No. 59 Brumos Porsche Riley started by JC France, followed by John Pew and Michael Valiante in the No. 6 Michael Shank Racing Ford Riley. Seventh-place finisher Mark Wilkins led 24 laps in the No. 61 AIM Autosport Ford Riley, while Angelelli led 27 circuits en route to seventh place. Also leading the race was Darren Law, who paced 13 laps in the 10th-place No. 58 Brumos Porsche Riley co-driven by David Donohue.

While the race was accident-free, it was slowed four times for 17 laps under caution.

Keen, Werner Last to First to Win Third GT Race, Extend Lead

Starting last in the Acxiom GT class after a post-qualifying inspection nullified Leh Keen's apparent pole-winning run, Keen and co-driver Dirk Werner came back to lead 45 laps to capture their third victory of the season in the No. 87 Farnbacher Loles Racing Porsche GT3.

Keen led two laps at the end of his run before turning the car over to Werner, the 2007 GT champion. Werner then paced the final 43 circuits. It was the fifth victory for Keen and fourth for Werner. Keen won the 2008 race at Mid-Ohio for Farnbacher Loles with Eric Lux. It was also the second consecutive victory for Keen and Werner, and third in the last four races.

Werner won by 2.839 seconds over Robin Liddell, who drove the No. 57 BryanMark Financial/Stevenson Automotive Pontiac GXP.R started by Andrew Davis, who led 11 laps early in the event. A similar Pontiac also finished third, with defending series champions Paul Edwards and Kelly Collins debuting Drinkin' Mate sponsorship on the No. 07 Pontiac.

"The end of the race was pretty easy for me, because Lehman did a real good job taking the car up to the front," Werner said. "That helped me in my stint. The only thing I had to do was take care of traffic. The car was so good, it wasn't too hard for me to stay up front, because the guys behind me were fighting so hard."

Tom Sutherland and Dane Cameron finished fourth in the No. 30 3Dimensional.com Mazda RX-8, with the drivers combining to lead a race-high 47 circuits. Jeff Segal and Emil Assentato took fifth in SpeedSource's No. 69 FXDD Mazda RX-8, while Patrick Dempsey placed a career-high sixth in the Dempsey Racing No. 40 El Grado Tequila Mazda RX-8 he shared with Joe Foster.

Dominik Farnbacher fell from second to seventh in the closing laps after cutting a tire after contact with a Daytona Prototype in the No. 86 Farnbacher Loles Racing Porsche GT3 started from the pole by Lux.

Nick Ham led three circuits in the No. 70 SpeedSource/Castrol Syntec Mazda RX-8 co-driven by Sylvain Tremblay, but mechanical problems dropped the team to an 11th-place finish.

The next action for the Grand-Am Rolex Sports Car Series will be the July 4 Brumos Porsche 250 at Daytona International Speedway, Round 7 of the 12-race season.

Grand-Am Race Results

Pos	No.	Class	Pic	Drivers	Team/Car	Laps
1	01	DP	1	Pruett / Rojas	Chip Ganassi Racing with Felix Sabates / Lexus Riley	111
2	76	DP	2	Jonsson / Zonta	Krohn Racing / Ford Lola	111
3	99	DP	3	Fogarty / Gurney	GAINSCO/ Bob Stallings Racing / Pontiac Riley	111
4	12	DP	4	Bernhard / Dumas	Penske Racing / Porsche Riley	111
5	59	DP	5	Barbosa / France	Brumos Racing / Porsche Riley	111
6	6	DP	6	Pew / Valiante	Michael Shank Racing / Ford Riley	111
7	61	DP	7	Frisselle / Wilkins	AIM Autosport / Ford Riley	111
8	10	DP	8	Angelelli / Frisselle	SunTrust Racing / Ford Dallara	111
9	55	DP	9	Bouchut / Tucker	Supercar Life Racing / BMW Riley	111
10	58	DP	10	Donohue / Law	Brumos Racing / Porsche Riley	111
11	09	DP	11	Cosmo / Russell	Spirit of Daytona Racing / Porsche Coyote	110
12	13	DP	12	Forest / Taylor	Beyer Racing / Pontiac Riley	109
13	87	GT	1	Keen / Werner	Farnbacher Loles Racing / Porsche GT3	106
14	57	GT	2	Davis / Liddell	Stevenson Motorsports / Pontiac GXP.R	106
15	07	GT	3	Collins / Edwards	Banner Racing / Pontiac GXP.R	106
16	30	GT	4	Cameron / Sutherland	Racers Edge Motorsports / Mazda RX-8	106
17	69	GT	5	Assentato / Segal	SpeedSource / Mazda RX-8	106
18	40	GT	6	Dempsey / Espenlaub / Foster	Dempsey Racing / Mazda RX-8	105
19	86	GT	7	Farnbacher / Lux	Farnbacher Loles Racing / Porsche GT3	105
20	67	GT	8	Lally / Marks	TRG / Porsche GT3	105
21	65	GT	9	Potter / Stanton	TRG/ Riegel/ Stanton / Porsche GT3	105
22	43	GT	10	Nonnamaker / Nonnamaker	Team Sahlen / Corvette	104
23	70	GT	11	Ham / Tremblay	SpeedSource / Mazda RX-8	104
24	68	GT	12	Gutierrez / Schroeder	TRG / Porsche GT3	98
25	42	GT	13	Nonnamaker / Sahlen	Team Sahlen / Corvette	95
26	66	GT	14	Ende / Pumpelly	TRG / Porsche GT3	92
27	2	DP	13	Finlay / Wallace	Childress-Howard Motorsports / Pontiac Crawford	91
28	5	DP	14	Beyer / Taylor	Beyer Racing / Honda Riley	90
29	77	DP	15	Gidley / Jaeger	Doran Racing / Ford Dallara	87
30	60	DP	16	Negri / Patterson	Michael Shank Racing / Ford Riley	85
31	71	GT	15	Grant / Grant / Grant	Synergy Racing / Porsche GT3	84