



A New Dawn At Daytona 2014

**52nd Rolex 24 At Daytona - the first race of the new TUDOR United SportsCar Championship
Team Seattle Returns to once again run for the children
MAZDA Debuts New SKYACTIVE Prototypes**

It seems so long ago now, but it was at the first race of the 2013 American Le Mans Series – the 12 Hours of Sebring - that ALMS and GRAND-Am officials officially announced the new United SportsCar Championship Series. Born of the combining of the two premier road racing series, NASCAR affiliated GRAND-AM Road Racing and the IMSA affiliated American Le Mans Series, United SportsCar was selected as the new moniker by which one new professional series would attempt to take sports car racing to new heights in North America.



Veteran racing commentator Bob Varsha was the MC for the United SportsCar Racing reveal at Sebring International Raceway, March, 2013

Since that initial announcement, Tudor watch company has signed on to be the series title sponsor and now the name NASCAR/IMSA hopes to place on the lips of many more fans is the Tudor United SportsCar Championship.

When the dust settled after the Sebring announcement, the real work began and the rules makers plowed into page after page of regulations and began the arduous task of aligning the performance capabilities of the Daytona Prototypes from GRAND-AM and the LMP2 Prototypes from the ALMS. The Rolex 24 at Daytona will be the first test of just how well those knowledgeable people addressed the daunting task of achieving parity at speed.

For clarity, here are the four new classes of competition as outlined by IMSA, deemed to be the new single sanctioning body for the series:

The TUDOR United SportsCar Championship features 2 styles of cars, Prototype and GT (Grand Touring). Each style of car has two (2) classes, Pro and Pro-Am, meaning there are four (4) classes of racing on track together, each with their own battle for the lead.

Prototype (P)

The Prototype (P) class features the fastest and most technologically advanced cars in North America. They are specifically designed and engineered for the race track and look drastically different than a typical street car.

TOP SPEED: 190 mph HORSEPOWER: 450-600

Prototype Challenge (PC)

The Prototype Challenge (PC) class is a spec class featuring open-cockpit race cars and technology such as a carbon fiber chassis, carbon brakes and sequential gearbox.

TOP SPEED: 175 mph HORSEPOWER: 430

GT Le Mans (GTLM)

The GT Le Mans (GTLM) cars are the most elite and fastest GT cars on the track. They are based on production models and are engineered to extract the maximum performance possible. The class serves as a true proving ground for leading manufacturers such as BMW, Corvette, Ferrari, Porsche and SRT.

TOP SPEED: 180 HORSEPOWER: 500

GT Daytona (GTD)

The GT Daytona cars are enhanced (not defined by) technology. They are also based on production model cars but do not feature the same level of aerodynamics and power as the GTLM class cars. The GTD class consists of cars from the GRAND-AM GT and ALMS GTC classes, as well as FIA GT3-spec cars.

TOP SPEED: 180 HORSEPOWER: 450

This week all the race teams are either on their way to Daytona International Speedway, or are already there, setting up their paddock compounds and beginning the process of race preparations. There is an air of optimism and reserved caution amongst the teams, as so much is yet unknown. Among the variables is the practice of 'sandbagging' – where a team runs at less than full speed early, and then opens up near the end of the race thus having lulled the competition into a false sense of security - and a few days ago, this issue was addressed by IMSA in a press release.

Veteran journalist, photographer and Editor, John Dagys, covered this issue on the sportscar365 website:

(Source: <http://sportscar365.com/imsa/tusc/imsas-new-anti-sandbagging-rule-explained>)

IMSA has put into place a new rule that effectively penalizes a team or manufacturer that is found to be sandbagging, with a minimum stop-and-hold plus five-minute in-race penalty for anyone displaying a level of performance beyond the expected result.

What's more, the penalty must be served within the final 30 minutes of the race, which raises the stakes even more, according to IMSA VP of Competition and Technical Regulations, Scot Elkins.

"Truthfully, if we apply a penalty in the last half-hour of the race, that's probably where it's going to hurt you the most," Elkins told Sportscar365. "That's the intention. Everything we're doing in this, we're just trying to convey very, very clearly that we're incredibly serious about teams performing at a level that's expected and not trying to play the game."

Potential for unwelcome variant behavior aside, the teams are all reporting that they are looking to get up to speed this weekend and really find out how well the teams and cars mesh as a single entity.

For Corvette racing, Daytona will introduce the new C7R Corvette for the first time. "This is a great start for a new era of Corvette Racing," said Mark Kent, Director of Racing for Chevrolet. "The Corvette C7.R represents new levels of technology in a number of areas that improve on the championship-winning legacy of the C6.R. It has been fascinating watching the development of the car over the last few months and we all are excited to finally see it in competition."

The Corvette will compete in the new GT Le Mans (GTLM) class, essentially the old GT class in the ALMS. IMSA describes the class this way: "The GT Le Mans (GTLM) cars are the most elite and fastest GT cars on the track. They are based on production models and are engineered to extract the maximum performance possible. The class serves as a true proving ground for leading manufacturers such as BMW, Corvette, Ferrari, Porsche and SRT."

Vipers, BMW and Porsche race cars will be doing their utmost to make the new Corvette struggle this season.



Photo courtesy of IMSA.com

Ryan Hunter-Reay will be one of the drivers of the No. 91 SRT Viper GTS-R and after the 'Roar Before The 24' practice sessions he made his anticipation for a great race weekend known when he said, "I enjoy this event - everything about it. It's the right way to kick off the year. I'm just so glad that both series are here together now. It's really cool to see the ALMS (American Le Mans Series) GT category and the DPs (Daytona Prototypes) out there and the ALMS prototypes out there together - this is how it should have been many years ago."

Porsche too awaits the green flag for 2014 with much anticipation of good things to come. "The new TUDOR United SportsCar Championship provides Porsche an opportunity that has not been available to us in the North American market for some time", said Detlev von Platen, president and CEO of Porsche Cars North America. "We now have an ideal platform to introduce our new U.S. based two-car 911 RSR factory effort that will compete in the GT Le Mans class, while the GT Daytona category is a natural fit for our established customer teams competing with the new 911 GT America."

In the PC category, the successful BAR1 Motorsports team will bring a single car to the opening round of the Tudor Series and team owner, Brian Alder, feels confident he and his team are going to be ready to roll on Saturday. "After a three month break, we are ready to get back to racing. The team has made some significant gains this off-season, both with our drivers and our crew members. Focusing on one car for Daytona is what we felt was best for our team as we go for our 4th PC win in a row because it allows us to keep all of our key team members focused on a single effort."

The BAR 1 driver line-up includes 18 year old Sean Rayhall – winner of the 2013 Cooper Tires Prototype Lites Championship. "I am really excited for the Rolex 24 at Daytona," said Rayhall. "I feel like we made gains at the test that are going to pay off late in the race. All the guys on the team have been working really hard at the shop so I am confident the car will be good to go for the entire race. I am hoping for a successful race and to be standing up on the podium at the end of the 24 hours."

Many racers and fans alike are excited to usher in the new dawn of North American sports car racing this weekend. Below we have captured a number of quotes from various sources and it isn't hard to see that, racers being racers, these folks can't wait to get back into action.

Henrique Cisneros, No. 30 MOMO NGT Motorsport driver/partner

"Our lineup is perfect for this race. Christina Nielsen is extremely competitive and consistent with a lot of endurance experience, which will be key during the first 20 hours of the race. I will provide a similar role as Christina by keeping the car intact, out of trouble, and on the lead lap. Finally, the last 4-6 hours belong to Kuba (Giermaziak) and Nicki Thiim. Both drivers are Porsche Supercup veterans, and can turn into wild animals when they hear "push, push, push" on the radio, so it will be exciting to see our strategy fall into place."



Photo courtesy IMSA.com

Rob Huff, 8Star Motorsports

"I'm excited to be making my 24 Hours of Daytona debut," said Huff. "The limited running I gained during the "Roar" test was certainly enough to whet my appetite and I cannot wait to get behind the wheel of 8Star Motorsport's ORECA prototype. Having had a recent run of success in endurance racing, I'm hoping to carry a bit of momentum to Daytona. Having said that, I know it's going to be a challenging race and that the competition is of a high standard, so I take nothing for granted."



Photo courtesy IMSA.com

Cooper MacNeil, No. 22 WeatherTech Racing GTD Class Porsche 911 GT America

"The 2014 Rolex 24 at Daytona will be interesting," MacNeil said. "With everything being new, a new class structure, new cars, new rules, a new series, it's going to be very interesting to see how all the different cars do against one another. Hopefully IMSA did their homework when they wrote the rule book. All of the testing is done, but this weekend we will see what each car can actually do. It will be interesting. We had a very good test. We were at the top, or very close to the top, each practice session. Porsche is always a good car at Daytona. I am looking forward to having a strong a weekend and good result come Sunday afternoon."



Photo courtesy IMSA.com

Ryan Dalziel, Extreme Speed Motorsports Patron Tequila HPD ARX-03b Honda

"I love Daytona. It was an amazing feeling to win in 2010 and I have come close to a second victory on a couple of occasions. It is a great way to start the season and you can feel the atmosphere building all through the week. It doesn't matter to me whether this is the first race, the 50th anniversary or the 100th — to win Daytona is always going to be something very special.

"Everybody wants to see a DP (Daytona Prototype) and a P2 car go head to head. That is what the new series is all about. And I think IMSA have done an incredible job in getting us close enough to make this happen.

"I found it interesting to see the difference between the November test and the Roar. Then it was still an American Le Mans Series team coming to do United Sports Car racing, and a Grand-Am team coming to the championship. Now, the paddock is one big family. It was a good atmosphere between everyone and the teams, and the teams turned out like it was the first day at school.

"It is going to be a great 2014 but I can only see this championship getting bigger."



Photo courtesy IMSA.com

Performance Tech No. 38 Dash Neighborhoods/Phillips 66 ORECA FLM-09 (PC)

Team Principal, Brent O'Neill: "You have to be ready to race when you unload at Daytona," O'Neill said. "We will be ready for the fight, and with our driver lineup we are pretty excited about the race. We know the key is to just make sure each driver keeps the car on track and out of the pits."

Driver Rafael Matos: "The first 22 hours are about saving the car and staying on pace," Matos said. The last two, if we have a car to compete, are a fight. I feel that I have the most experience in this race of the

drivers. Taking that experience and building confidence and getting that into the other drivers' heads will build the dynamics of the team.

"Performance Tech as a team has a lot of experience. They ran an entire season last year and won a race, so everyone has more experience coming into 2014. I think overall that makes us a much better package and I'm honored to be driving with them again."



Photo courtesy IMSA.com

Jon Bennett, Driver: No. 54 ORECA FLM09 (PC)

"Competing in the Rolex 24 is something I've thought about for a long time. In some ways I'm looking forward to doing the Rolex 24 for the first time... the second time. We were able to do it with a DP team last year and it was fantastic. It was a new race, a new team and new car for me, so it was a little hard to get in the saddle. Now I'm in a car that I'm comfortable with, a co-driver that I'm comfortable with and a team that I'm certainly comfortable with.

"Last year taught me a lesson about taking chances, but pacing yourself for 24 hours and being there at the end. While it's important to go fast, it's also important to keep going.

"It's going to be exciting to see our new Series have its debut race, but in many ways it's just our next event. It's a little longer than what we've done in the past, but in terms of execution, so much is the same. Our team is one unit, excited to be back to work and back to racing after our winter break."



Team Owner, Troy Flis, Spirit of Daytona Racing No. 90 VisitFlorida.com Corvette DP

"My expectations of 2014 and the TUDOR Championship is that there is going to be a lot of learning going on. Between the teams, the sanctioning bodies, the rules combining and all of the logistics and everything I think it is definitely going to be a learning year for everybody. But I am excited! I think the commercial side of it is going to grow tremendously which is going to help all of the teams. We have a great opportunity and if we can get it in front of the right people I think it is going to be a huge advantage."

MAZDA SKYACTIV-D Prototypes To Debut This Weekend



Photo courtesy IMSA.com

John Doonan, Director of Motorsports for Mazda N.A. Operations, on the Mazda SKYACTIV Prototypes Built by SpeedSource Race Engineering and Multimatic Engineering

“Mazda is thrilled to once again be coming to a new series in our own unique manner. Our SKYACTIV Technology is a perfect match for racing as the mindset is the same – every single component and system can be optimized for increased performance and efficiency for both the street and the track. By using a production Mazda SKYACTIV-D Clean Diesel engine we are charting our own course. The work is compounded by the fact that our team is having to invent new ways of doing things as there are no racing components on the shelf that fit our engine. All of this just means the rewards will be that much sweeter for all of us and the many partners who have helped us get here when we achieve success.”

Sylvain Tremblay, Owner, SpeedSource Engineering

“As a racer, you always want to be in the fastest class. The development of the Mazda SKYACTIV-D was a great deal of work by Mazda and SpeedSource and it will be quite the task to take this to the front of the prototype class in only our second year of competition.”



Photo courtesy IMSA.com

The No. 70 Mazda SKYACTIV Prototype will be driven by Sylvain Tremblay, Tom Long and James Hinchcliffe while the No. 07 will be shared by Joel Miller, Tristan Nunez, and Tristan Vautier.

Team Seattle-The Heart of Racing: Racing For The Children Once Again



Photo courtesy IMSA.com

Team Seattle is once again racing for the benefit of the Seattle Children's Hospital and everyone is encouraged to contribute to the cause. Like the endurance test that is the Rolex 24 at Daytona, this team comes back time and again and never seems to run out of gas when it comes to supporting the kids.

Founded in 1996 by Don and Donna Kitch, Team Seattle is a non-profit charitable organization dedicated to raising funds for Seattle Children's Hospital.

"We are entering our 18th year of combining racing with our passion of raising money to help the Seattle Children's Hospital and pediatric cardiac health care nationally," Don Kitch, Team Seattle-The Heart of Racing team manager said. "Through our racing efforts we have raised over \$5.5 million dollars to help children with pediatric health issues. This year, with the help of Gabe Newell, I think we are going to have our most successful Rolex 24 At Daytona on the track and with pledges to help support our great cause. We are accepting donations and pledges at www.theheartofracing.org or www.teamseattle.com."

Team Seattle Driver Ian James:

"This year's Daytona GTD Class is probably the most competitive in recent memory," James said. "Great teams, great drivers and the biggest class, it is without doubt the toughest class at the Rolex 24. So far the Porsche has proved it is in the mix with the other GTD manufacturers. Until the green flags drops I don't know if we will know exactly how it stacks up. What I do know is the 23 Heart of Racing entry is up for the fight. Preparation in terms of conditioning, diet and schedule is very important leading into our crown jewel race. More than anything we need to keep hydrated and fueled throughout the weekend."

Team Seattle Driver Mario Farnbacher:

"First of all I have to say it is one of the biggest and one of the most popular races in the world," Farnbacher said. "So it is always awesome to get the chance to do the race. This year it will be my second time. This year is a lot different from 2013. We now have four different classes in one race. So this means a lot more cars are on track. Also the level of competitive drivers is now on a higher level. My goal is to run consistent laps and have no mistakes in my stints. We will also try to save the car and drive fast at the same time. Between driving and when I am out of the car, especially at night I have to sleep. We need to sleep a few hours, because it is challenging for your body. It is all for recovery. I think with my co-drivers and with the Team Seattle Porsche we have a very good package to finish the race successfully. But, as always in racing, we will need a bit of luck so there will be a lot of crossing of the fingers."

Dr. Thomas Hansen, CEO Seattle Children's Hospital:

"I am deeply grateful for Team Seattle's incredible support of Seattle Children's Heart Center. Their dedication and commitment is amazing. Both our staff and patients take great pride in their efforts and eagerly await the 2014 season."



Team Seattle's Donna and Don Kitch, with Ross Bentley, at the 2002 Rolex 24



Team Seattle's 2014 Rolex 24 Contender



Please visit the team's website for more information:
<http://www.teamseattle.com/>

www.ashautomobilia.com