

Wilkins and Frisselle bring the AIM Autosport #61 home P8

Nine Full Course Cautions and late-race contact play havoc with team's strategy.

Homestead, Florida (March 30, 2008) - Starting from the second row for the Gainsco Grand Prix of Miami, the AIM Autosport Exchange Traded Gold #61 Ford Riley would come to the checkers in eighth place. A caution-filled race and an unscheduled pit stop hampered the team's efforts to stay near the front and battle for a podium result.

Mark Wilkins, who had qualified the car P4, would take the start at the Homestead Miami Speedway on a day that saw temperatures approaching 90F. The heat had caused the track to become greasy up on the oval sections in practice and this would come into play as the AIM Autosport crew fought to find the right balance of front and rear grip.

"We had good balance through the infield" commented Wilkins, "and it was not so bad through the oval. However the transition from infield to oval was tricky and we needed to make sure we had enough front grip to set the car and enough rear to keep it from running up the banking."

Mark would be sitting sixth when the first in a series of full course cautions came out on lap eleven. He would pit along with the leaders and take on fuel. Another caution on lap twenty-two and Mark would stay out as the team tried to cycle into their initial pit window. Mark reported that the tires were making the car a bit twitchy under braking but would go on to turn his best lap before coming in for fuel and tires. The crew also made adjustments for front end grip.

Mark would next pit on lap forty-five for fuel and tires during another full course caution. Under yellow, the GT cars are not always separated from the DP cars on the restart and many of them did not pit. The #61 re-entered the track behind a number of GT cars and timing sheets showed them dropping from P5 to P16 overall. Mark would work his way back up to P9 before handing the controls over to Brian Frisselle on lap sixty-four who was scheduled to run to the finish without another stop.

"The cautions did not fit well with our initial pit strategy" said AIM Autosport principal Ian Willis. "It was a bit of a gamble every time the pits opened under yellow to see what the leaders would do. At one point the Exchange Traded Gold #61 Ford Riley sat second, staying out while the lead group came in to pit under yellow. It might have been fine from there and we'd have been in the hunt but we had to pit under the green when a back-marker ran us off course and we picked up a lot of debris." Willis continued, "We had to get Brian in under the green to clean out the radiator screen. The crew did a great job and we got the car back out without losing a lap but now we had a lot of cars to get around."

At lap eighty-nine, following another full course caution, Brian was lined up behind nine of the GT cars. He would clear all nine within one lap of going green and then once again, the track went full course caution when the DP car just ahead of Brian

went off on the front straight. Sitting eighth with just eleven minutes to go in what was now a timed race, on the restart another DP some ten laps down, decided to try and get a lap back and ran into the back of the #61. Brian reported getting a bit sideways after the hit and there was now bodywork rubbing against the rear tire on right turns. Fortunately with only two right turns on the infield section, this might not prove to be an issue with less than five laps to go. Brian then reported that the tire rub went away and there were "No worries."

The checkers flew on lap ninety-nine and Brian would slot the car in P8.

"We are a bit disappointed with the final result" noted Frisselle. "We definitely had the car to run up front but between the unscheduled stop late in the race, then being caught behind some lapped cars that were in their own fight, we could just not get close enough to the lead pack to mount a charge."

Willis commented after the race. "After losing track position with the unscheduled stop, we did not get the chance to race for another position. Without the contact we should have been P7 or possibly P6 had we had the chance to race with the 99 car."

AIM Autosport picked up some important points in this race having been shut out in the Rolex 24 last month. The next race is the Mexico City 250 at the Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez, April 17-19.

AIM Autosport Facts:

Established in 1995, AIM Autosport has a mandate to identify, train and manage emerging motorsport talent. AIM has provided many young drivers with a solid foundation on which to build a career in professional racing. The success of the AIM driver development programs has been achieved through the dedication of our employees and the ongoing support of our commercial and technical partners. Away from the track, AIM Autosport serves the needs of the racing community with a purpose-built preparation shop situated in the Toronto suburb of Woodbridge, Ontario. AIM currently fields the #61 Exchange Traded Gold Ford-Riley Daytona Prototype in the Rolex Grand Am series with drivers Mark Wilkins and Brian Frisselle. The team continues to support the Star Mazda series and is developing a team for the 2009 season.

associated web sites:

www.aimautosport.com

www.grand-am.com/rolex/

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