

Back to back victories for AIM Autosport

Frisselle and Wilkins drive the No. 61 Ford Riley to a convincing win

Woodbridge, Ontario - August 12, 2008: From victory lane in Montreal to victory lane at Watkins Glen. Back to back wins in races that stand in stark contrast of each other. After combining to lead all of fifty yards at the Montreal 200 the week before, Brian Frisselle and Mark Wilkins would go on to dominate the Crown Royal 200 at Watkins Glen leading all of four laps. Both sprint races came down to strategy - and dogged determination by every member of the team. That determination shows up every day at the track and every day in between.

Following the win - and subsequent Friday night celebrations at Montreal, the AIM Autosport crew was back at the track Saturday morning to prep the car and get it on the hauler for The Glen. By mid day Wednesday, the entire crew was in Watkins Glen ready to get to work so the Exchange Traded Gold No. 61 Ford Riley would be set to go for practice and qualifying. From the start, Brian and Mark would work with the engineers to find the right setup for the conditions. The team had tested on the Watkins Glen short track earlier this season but under quite different conditions as the temperatures were some twenty degrees higher. Cooler temperatures and threatening storms meant looking at all the possibilities for setup. The crew would also practice - again and again, driver-change pit stops. With the racing being so close, time lost in the pits means positions lost on the track.

The preparation paid off starting with qualifying. Brian had thrown down a lap in the 1:05's and was building a gap for another run when a caution came out. At that point the No. 61 was sitting first by three-tenths but others were closing in. On the restart for the session Brian would improve each lap and on his final run, turn a 1:05.243 at 135.186 mph to record AIM Autosport's second pole of the season meanwhile shattering the Daytona Prototype qualifying record for the Watkins Glen short track by 1.7 seconds.

By race time it was becoming obvious that weather could play a factor. The AIM Autosport brain trust decided to stick to their original strategy of starting the race on slicks. The decision proved correct as Brian jumped into the lead from the drop of the green and the team never looked back. There were some hairy moments when rain hit sections of the track during Brian's stint yet he set a comfortable pace that allowed the No. 61 Ford Riley to pull out a six second lead over the defending champion 99 car. Brian held pace and worked through traffic to bring the car to pit lane from first place on lap thirty-one. This is where those practice pit stops by the crew paid off as the 99 car chose to pit on the same lap. The AIM crew changed drivers, tires and fueled the car increasing the gap by another second. Mark exited the pits in second place however as the 16 car which was running third took over the lead as they were on a different strategy. When the new leader pitted two laps later, Mark resumed the lead and went on to build a 23 second gap to second place.

On lap fifty six a second caution flew eliminating the large lead built up by Mark and the 99 car in second place looked ready to race. After a third caution on the restart and with fourteen laps to go, Mark continued to "focus forward" and began to pull out a two second gap. He would come to the checkers to record AIM Autosport's second win of the season by 1.986 seconds. Back to back wins and only the second team to score multiple wins in 2008.

Officially, the No. 61 Ford Riley led all but three laps of the race. The win has moved the team to sixth in the series championship, just eighteen points out of third with three races to go. Brian and Mark are tied for tenth in the drivers' championship. AIM Autosport is now third in laps lead this season for teams. In driver laps lead Mark is now fifth and Brian is ninth.

The drivers and team principals had this to say after the race:

Mark Wilkins: "It was awesome. I have to thank all of the AIM Autosport crew, Ford, and Roush-Yates for a great engine. We just got this car dialed in during practice and Brian did a spectacular job in the first half of this race and in qualifying. He just was fantastic. When it got a little wet, he kept pushing; he kept it on the track and made no mistakes. You can't make mistakes in this series. We had a great gap, we had a great lead. We gave it up and we had to fight at the end. I had to bring this car home for the guys. It was fantastic."

Brian Frisselle: "This one is for the entire AIM Autosport crew. They do a fantastic job week after week to get us here and put a great car out there for Mark and I. After the win at Montreal the energy changed on the team. You could feel it. Everyone was lighter and we were just purely focused on winning ... The last win we had a little bit of luck, but this was pure pace. And we showed them what we got."

Ian Willis: "What a great way to come back after having to miss our first win in Montreal. Although Montreal is in our home country Watkins Glen is the closest race to our Toronto base making it a 'home' race as well. The Montreal win was definitely good fortune but this win was definitely due to performance. I am so proud of this Team and the last two races are just reward for the hard work and effort that everyone has been putting in since the start of the season."

Andrew Bordin: "I am truly amazed to see how passionate our guys are. Everyone has really put 100% into making this happen and the hard work is showing itself. These guys are the first to arrive at the track and among the last to leave. That dedication is being noticed around the paddock and it is paying off for the team on the track. As for our drivers I am very pleased to see the winning attitude and confidence they bring to the track everyday that essentially drives the entire team in this positive and progressive environment."

The Rolex Sports Car Series presented by Crown Royal Cask No. 16 is on track for the Armed Forces 250 at Infineon Raceway, Sonoma, California Thursday, August 21 starting at 4:45 p.m. PT (7:45 p.m. ET). The race is scheduled at 3:00 p.m. PT (6:00 p.m. ET) Saturday August 23 and will be broadcast on SPEED TV, Sunday, August 24 at 12:00 p.m. ET (tape delay).

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 fields the Exchange Traded Gold #61 Ford-Riley Daytona Prototype in the Rolex Grand Am series with drivers Mark Wilkins and Brian Frisselle. The team also competes in the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear with John Edwards at the wheel of the #7 Formula Mazda.

Photo credit: Ed Moody

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