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Early Spin Makes for a Long Day at Barber

SunTrust Team Goes Three Laps Down on Lap-Three Incident, Has To Settle for 14th-Place Finish, Falls to Third in Rolex Series Championship

(Birmingham, AL) 19 July 2009 - Two weeks and a day removed from their first Grand-Am Rolex Sports Car Series victory of the season that came in dramatic fashion at Daytona (Fla.) International Speedway on the Fourth of July, co-drivers Max Angelelli and Brian Frisselle and their No. 10 SunTrust Ford Dallara of Wayne Taylor Racing teammates found themselves on the opposite end of the emotional spectrum a mere three laps into Sunday's Porsche 250 at Barber Motorsports Park in Birmingham, Ala.

Having started a solid third on the grid after Frisselle's qualifying effort Saturday, the young driver this afternoon found himself stuck in a turn-seven gravel trap on lap three after spinning off course. He lost three laps before safety workers could drag him and the SunTrust Racing machine back on track. And on a 2.3-mile, 16-turn racetrack known to be notoriously difficult when it comes to passing cars, and in a race that had just two caution periods, there was going to be no way to make up the deficit despite having one of the fastest cars in the field.

The brief but significant turn of events left the SunTrust team with a 14th-place finish. And, coupled with a 1-2 finish by the No. 99 Gainsco/Bob Stallings Racing Pontiac Riley of Alex Gurney and Jon Fogarty and the No. 01 Chip Ganassi Racing with Felix Sabates Lexus Riley of Scott Pruett and Memo Rojas, the SunTrust team fell one spot to third place in the Rolex Series championship chase, 16 points behind the Nos. 99 and 01 teams, which are now tied at the top of the standings with four races remaining.

"I just made a mistake," said a dejected Frisselle afterward. "I went in a little too fast in that corner, lost the rear end, and that was it. I'm extremely disappointed because it cost us our race. Unfortunately, now, we're going to need some help if we're going to win the championship. We're going to have to be perfect from here on out and they're going to have some bad luck. It's not a good position to be in, but one where we still have a chance. This is a good enough team to do it."

Frisselle experienced a few rough moments on the opening lap of today's 2-hour, 45-minute race, as well. He stayed nose-to-tail with polesitter Jon Fogarty in the No. 99 Pontiac heading into the fast, left-hand turn one, but then got pushed wide by Rojas in the No. 01 car transitioning to the right-hand turn two. While trying to gather the car back up, Frisselle was pushed off again by Memo Gidley in the No. 77

Doran Racing Ford Dallara, which allowed both Gidley and Alex Garcia in the No. 09 Spirit of Daytona Porsche Coyote to get by and dropped Frisselle back to fifth. Frisselle held firm to that top-five spot until the incident in turn seven two laps later.

"I got pushed out by Rojas, and then Gidley didn't give me any room at the exit of turn five, pushed me off, and that allowed Garcia to get by," Frisselle said. "It was just a bad series of events at the start and it was really unfortunate."

Frisselle turned consistently fast laps the rest of his 62-lap stint but could not put a dent in the three-lap deficit before turning the SunTrust car over to Angelelli.

"It's disappointing, obviously, because there was nothing the team could have done to avoid what happened today," said Angelelli, who turned what wound up as the second-fastest lap of the race just nine laps after taking over the SunTrust car. "The team provided us with a super-fast car, so there's not much else we could've done. It's pretty painful at this stage of the championship. It's going to be tough over the next four races. When you have a fast car — a winning car — you need to get at least a top-three finish. We'll need to go to the next one, keep working hard, and learn from our mistakes."

The Gainsco team's victory was its third of the season, tops in the series, while the Ganassi team's runner-up finish was its fifth top-two in the first eight events of 2009. The SunTrust team, which started the day just one point behind the championship-leading Ganassi team, also saw its streak of races in which it has led laps end at 10, dating back to its victory last August at Infineon Raceway in Sonoma, Calif., in the third-to-last race of the 2008 season.

"I really don't know what to say because we work hard on giving the drivers the best car, and there was no doubt this weekend we gave them the best car in the race," team owner Wayne Taylor said. "We could see that by Max setting some of the fastest race laps every lap during his stint. Otherwise, it's very hard to be upset about this when we really just threw it away. For us, that's just not acceptable. But, you know what? The team, as they always do, will just get back up, they'll gather it all up, they'll test (at Barber Motorsports Park) tomorrow. And we'll go to the next race, we'll have a good team again, and that's it. Now, somewhat, the pressure's off. That's when good things tend to happen to good people."

Round nine of the 2009 Rolex Series campaign is the Crown Royal 200 at Watkins Glen (N.Y.) International on Friday night, Aug. 7. Frisselle is the defending race-winner of the annual kick-off to the NASCAR Nationwide Series and Sprint Cup Series road racing weekend at The Glen. Race time is set for 6:30 p.m. EDT with SPEED-TV's tape-delayed broadcast beginning at 8 p.m.

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