



Michael Shank Racing's Run Up Front at NJMP Ends Short of Victory Lane

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MILLVILLE, NJ, 18 July-- Michael Shank Racing had a promising but ultimately disappointing Rolex Sports Car Series race outing at New Jersey Motorsports Park as both team DP entries led the race, only to suffer from some bad racing luck and finish the race in seventh and eighth. The team had been hoping to return to NJMP's victory lane, having won at the south Jersey track in 2008.

"I'm happy on one hand, but disappointed on the other," said team owner Mike Shank. "Both cars were good and led the race, but we didn't end the race with the points to show for it today. Brian just drove his heart out today, running that long without a cool suit wand on those tires, another great run up front for him. Same thing with Ozz--another long stint for him in this heat, but he's a Brazilian of course and just soaks it up! We'll take the momentum from having such good speed today and just look to close the deal at the Glen."

In sweltering conditions, Brian Frisselle put in an outstanding drive as started the race from fifth on the grid, passing the car that went on to win the race for second place on lap 32, and then taking the point less than ten laps later. The lead was a convincing one in the Rocky Fork Company-liveried Dallara, as he ran in front for nearly 25 laps before turning the machine over to Valiante with an hour twenty left to go in the 2.75-hour race.

Frisselle's pace was all the more impressive given the conditions, as he shrugged off the intense heat despite a malfunctioning cool suit while racing in front of the pack with tires that had done nearly twice the distance of the competitors.

"I have to hand it to Michael Shank Racing because we made a key change this morning and the car came alive, for the second race in a row," said Frisselle, who also led the most recent Rolex Sports Car Series race at Daytona in the Dallara-Ford. "It was hard work in the car, and without the cool suit working it was only harder. With the strategy we had, the tires were pretty shot by the end of my stint so I was working very hard to stay in front. It is disappointing to have that kind of pace, but not get this car up on the podium because the guys have worked so hard and it was coming together today. But we'll just have to look ahead to the Glen and try to make up for it there."

The sister No. 60 Crown Royal XR Ford-Riley of John Pew and Ozz Negri were also looking strong as Pew ran up to second in the order before running the full opening stint before turning the car over to Negri.

"The restart (lap 15) was tough--everyone had brand new tires, and so I was a bit of a sitting duck out there but I wanted to run as long as I could for Ozz to be as strong as possible at the end of the race. I was trying to be careful to save the tires as much as I could. But with those cars behind me, it was tough to be conservative! There was some good, aggressive but clean racing going on. I probably burned the rears off more than I should have, but I was still very happy with the car today even if we didn't come home with the points we wanted to."

Negri took over from a lap down to the leader, but fought back to take the lead on lap 69. As a pair of yellow flags late in the race set the stage for a final run to the finish, the racing intensified and unfortunately ended up costing the Crown Royal car a chance to return to victory lane when Negri was sent off course late in the day.

"I am not sure what happened with Pruett--he just hit me. There was some oil down there so maybe he got into that and couldn't slow down. But I don't know, I just felt a bang. We were all racing very tough, but not hitting each other. It was good tough Rolex racing. Unfortunately, before that, we got held up by a GT car and Ryan got into me--I know he didn't do it on purpose, it was just fighting out there. But it spun me off, and then I couldn't get the car to refire so we lost a lot of time."

Restarts also proved problematic later in the race, as Valiante looked to find a way onto the podium as he ran in fourth place with less than half an hour remaining in the race.

"Everyone blocked going into turn one so I didn't have anywhere to go so I got hung out on the outside and lost several spots," said Valiante.

The race result suffered further when side to side contact with the number 59 sent the Canadian spinning off track in the closing moments of the race.

"He was trying to outbrake me on the outside, and I was already on the inside and he turned in," said Valiante. "I was already all the way on the curb so he hit me and we went off. I don't know what else I could have done. It's disappointing because this was a podium car today, no question."

Michael Shank Racing will return to Rolex action in three weeks' time at Watkins Glen as part of the NASCAR Sprint Cup race weekend on the "short course" at the classic upstate New York track.

Source: www.michaelshankracing.com
www.sundaymanagement.com



About Michael Shank Racing:

Based in Columbus, Ohio, Michael Shank Racing was formed in 1989 when Mike Shank first began driving racing cars professionally. Shank retired from the cockpit in 1997 to focus his efforts on running the team, which quickly found success in the Champ Car Toyota Atlantic Championship. With several race wins under his belt, Shank was named as Team Owner of the Year twice in four years. Michael Shank Racing joined the Rolex Sports Car Series in 2004 as the team proved as quick in endurance racing as in the sprint formula car format. Michael Shank Racing scored a debut Rolex Series win in 2006 at Miller Motorsports Park, and fans selected the victory as the 2007 Rolex "Moment of the Year." After opening the 2008 season with a front-row sweep of the Rolex 24 At Daytona, the team closed out the year taking wins in the final two races of the year.



About Crown Royal Canadian Whisky:

Crown Royal Canadian whisky is the number one selling Canadian whisky brand in the US by value and has a tradition as long and distinctive as its taste. Specially blended to commemorate a grand tour of Canada made by King George VI and Queen Elizabeth of Great Britain in 1939, Crown Royal Canadian whisky's smooth, elegant style reflects its aristocratic origins and is considered the epitome of Canadian whisky.

For more information visit www.crownroyal.com.

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