



KONICA MINOLTA



# **Konica Minolta Cadillac DPi-V.R Team Looks Back on Long-Awaited Rolex 24 Win**

## ***Angelelli Retires on Top, All-New Cadillac Prototype Victorious in its Debut, Jeff Gordon Heaps Ultimate Praises on Co-Drivers Ricky & Jordan Taylor***

The No. 10 Konica Minolta Cadillac DPi-V.R team of brothers Ricky and Jordan Taylor, veteran Italian Max “The Ax” Angelelli, four-time NASCAR Cup Series champion Jeff Gordon and team owner Wayne Taylor has had a week to let its thrilling victory in the iconic Rolex 24 At Daytona sink in.

With the celebratory hugs and tears of joy in the rearview mirror, the significance of finally winning one of the crown jewels in worldwide sportscar racing – and the manner in which it was achieved – is in much clearer focus than it was during the raw emotion shared by the team and its family and partners a week ago in one of racing’s most famous victory lanes at Daytona (Fla.) International Speedway.

While it was the team’s fifth consecutive trouble-free Rolex 24 and its fifth consecutive trip to Daytona’s victory lane, it was the first as race winner during that stretch after an amazing but disappointing string of finishing second, second, third and second from 2013 to 2016.

It also put the ultimate exclamation point on the illustrious career of two-time sportscar champion Angelelli, who retired from full-time racing after his second career Rolex 24 win and co-driving to the first Rolex 24 win for his pair of talented, young protégés Ricky and Jordan Taylor, all during the maiden voyage of the Cadillac DPi-V.R he played such an important role in developing over the last two years as program manager.

And, for the most celebrated driver in the entire field, it was yet another huge milestone victory for Gordon, whose only other career sportscar event was the 2007 Rolex 24 with this very team during which he and Angelelli, Wayne Taylor and Jan Magnussen brought home a solid third-place finish.

Gordon, who retired from full-time Cup Series driving in 2015, returns to the FOX broadcast booth for the second consecutive year as the racing world now turns its attention to the next iconic event on the calendar – the 59<sup>th</sup> Daytona 500 three weeks hence. But he certainly left some treasured parting words for the team and drivers who welcomed him with open arms for the second time in his career and helped him achieve one of the most satisfying and thrilling race wins of his career, punctuated by Ricky Taylor’s final pass for the race lead with just over six minutes to go.

“Hearing Wayne talk about this experience and what this means to him, I don’t limit that to just here in this moment,” Gordon said after becoming the fourth driver in history to win both the Rolex 24 and Daytona 500, joining A.J. Foyt, Mario Andretti and Jamie McMurray. “I think about starting that out in 2007 when we spoke, and I was able to be a part of the team then. I saw it then, and I followed it very closely ever since. I’ve become a big fan of this team by being a part of it, a big fan of the series, this race especially, and I was so thankful when I got that call from Wayne in 2016 and he asked me if I wanted to be a part of this, and then of course told me about the Cadillac program that they were working on. I just couldn’t believe it. It was like a dream come true for me because I’ve always dreamt about driving a car, a beautiful, amazing car that could handle like this, that had the technology like this and could compete in a race like this.”

As he returns to NASCAR to resume his broadcasting career, Gordon admitted he would love to bring the Taylor brothers with him after feeling thoroughly impressed with their world-class driving talent during the Rolex 24 race weekend, as well as during an intensive three months of testing and preparation.

“All I was thinking about the whole time I was together with these guys is how do I get them in some ovals in a bigger, heavier car?” he said. “But I mean, to me, the way you recognize talent is to know what equipment they’re in so, when you’re a teammate to them and you’re in the same equipment and you go out there in conditions that are very, very challenging and you know your own capabilities, and then you see them excel the way that they did, I’ve got to say, to me one of the highlights was a crucial moment for this race when Jordan was on slicks and it started raining, and they stayed out. And when he was out there on slicks and it started getting really wet, just the fact to get that car back to pit road without wrecking to get the wets, I thought, was an amazing moment. And then watching these guys just do what they did throughout the night in crazy conditions. I had the experience of being in the wet and I couldn’t see anything. It was very hard to feel the car, let alone push it, and they were in much more difficult conditions than I was in and they were overtaking, building gaps. It’s impressive. So there’s no doubt that that transfers over to other series, other cars. I’ve built enough of a bond with this group that I would love to see them get whatever opportunities were available to them out there. I mean, they’ve got the personality as well as the talent, and that’s what you’re always looking for.”

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Among the many defining moments that led to the team's Rolex 24 win, including Ricky Taylor's closing fight for the race win, Gordon went into great detail to describe a sequence of events just prior to his second driving stint during which Jordan Taylor talked Gordon through a lap around the track while behind the wheel ... in increasingly wet conditions ... at race pace ... all while Gordon was watching in real-time on a pitside television monitor.

"This was one of the classic moments of this 24-hour race – this is unbelievable," Gordon said. "So Jordan is in the rain, and I'm talking to Brian Pillar, lead engineer, and he says, 'Hey, plug into the radio. Jordan is going to describe to you what the conditions are like out there.' So I plug in, and I'm like, 'That sounds great.' He pushed the talk button the entire lap and walked me through every braking zone, every turn-in, the acceleration. He was like, 'OK, right here, the back is going to break loose. Right here, the visibility is a little challenging. Right here, I'm braking at this point.' It was unbelievable. And I don't think I heard a single thing he said because I was so amazed that he was doing this in these kinds of conditions that all I said afterward was, 'Well, that was impressive.'

"And, hold on, there was one more thing about it – I love this part about this. He's on the lap and he comes up on some GT traffic. I don't know if it was in the Bus Stop or whatever. He goes, 'Hang on one second, whoa, whoa, whoa.' I was like, 'You can stop talking to me right now.' I really don't want to be blamed for him describing what the conditions are like and him crashing and saying, 'Well, yeah, he was talking to Jeff on the radio to get ready for the driver change. But, in all honesty, it was impressive, and it was also very, very helpful. And that's the kind of relationship – I mean, these two as brothers have an incredible relationship with one another, but that's the kind of relationship this team has in how badly they want to win and how open they are with information to help the other teammate excel, and it helped me a lot."

Finally, team owner three-time champion Wayne Taylor, who as a driver scored Rolex 24 wins in 1996 and 2005, was asked during this year's post-race press conference if he, too, would consider taking his team to NASCAR.

"Truthfully, probably not," said Taylor, who later this week will announce Angelelli's replacement as third driver at the season's other endurance events at Sebring, Watkins Glen and Road Atlanta. "I can only do things that I know -- and I don't know much (laughs). I've driven sportscars my whole life, and it's about all I know how to do, and to find money and keep these guys racing. NASCAR is just a whole different world and I'm too old to be dealing with that. I don't know, to be honest, what I'd like, I think I'd like to have this kind of relationship, to continue with Jeff and Max and the boys and somehow keep it together. Sometimes I question myself. I'm like, 'Is this a bad thing that I keep running my kids, because maybe nobody else wants to approach them because, quite honestly, I'd like them to be awarded for their success and for their talent rather than because Dad is doing it. The answer to that question, however, is no – I will not go into NASCAR (laughs again)."

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