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SPORTS CAR SERIES

No Doubt About This Championship Run

Velocity Worldwide Corvette Duo of Angelelli, Taylor Clinch 2013 Rolex Series Driver Title With Third Consecutive Convincing Victory, This Time in Lime Rock Season Finale

Date: Sept. 28, 2013

Event: GRAND-AM Championship Weekend (Round 12 of 12)

Series: Daytona Prototype division of the GRAND-AM Rolex Sports Car Series

Location: Lime Rock Park in Lakeville, Conn. (1.53-mile, seven-turn road course)

Start/Finish: 5th / 1st (Running, completed 173 of 173 laps)

Winner: Max Angelelli and Jordan Taylor of Wayne Taylor Racing (Corvette DP)

Co-drivers Max “The Ax” Angelelli, Jordan Taylor and the No. 10 Velocity Worldwide Corvette Dallara DP team for Wayne Taylor Racing (WTR) brought down the curtain on the 14-year history of the GRAND-AM Rolex Sports Car Series in prolific fashion with a third consecutive dominating victory at Saturday’s season and series finale at Lime Rock Park in Lakeville, Conn., that clinched for the veteran Italian and his 22-year-old first-year co-driver the final, coveted Rolex Series driver championship.

For starters, it was Angelelli’s second Rolex Series title to go with the 2005 driver and team championships he co-drove to with three-time sports car racing champion and team owner Wayne Taylor in the No. 10 SunTrust Racing entry. It was Angelelli’s 26th career Rolex Series win, which will go down as the third-most all-time behind a series-leading 41 victories by five-time Rolex Series champion Scott Pruett and 27 by Pruett’s No. 01 Chip Ganassi Racing with Felix Sabates BMW Riley teammate Memo Rojas. Pruett and Rojas’ three-year reign as driver champions came to an end today.

It was Angelelli’s fourth consecutive victory at Lime Rock, which set a Rolex Series record for most consecutive wins at a single venue, surpassing the three straight Rolex 24 At Daytona victories by the No. 01 Ganassi team. Angelelli and Jordan Taylor’s older brother Ricky Taylor co-drove the No. 10 SunTrust Racing entry for WTR to victories at Lime Rock in 2010, 2011 and 2012.

Finally, it was the third consecutive victory and fifth overall this season for Angelelli and Jordan Taylor, equaling the team high of five victories scored by Angelelli and Wayne Taylor during their 2005 championship season, which also featured a remarkable 10 podium finishes in 14 races, and the completion of all 2,056 possible race laps on the season for a Rolex Series record that will stand forever. Beginning in 2014, the Rolex Series and American Le Mans Series will operate as a combined entity to be known as the Tudor United SportsCar Championship.

“It’s special, I mean, it’s a lot because I did it with Wayne when he was a lot younger and now I’m doing it with his younger kid,” said Angelelli. “So I’m very proud of him, Jordan and Ricky. It’s been an amazing journey for me and the Taylor family, and Shelley (Wayne Taylor’s wife), obviously. There is always a great woman behind the scenes. It’s been great to finally clinch the championship. Wayne and I are going to be relaxed, I hope, for the next 24 hours and then will be looking forward to a new challenge and more races to win.”

For the third consecutive race, Angelelli played the role of qualifying driver and race starter before handing the No. 10 Velocity Worldwide Corvette to his young co-driver for the final sprint to the finish. And, as was the case in their dominating victories at Kansas Speedway in Kansas City last month, and at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca earlier this month, the duo proved worthy of the championship it clinched today thanks to the kind of solid strategy calls and exemplary work by the crew on pit stops that it benefitted from all season.

Angelelli qualified fifth and played it relatively safe during his opening, almost hour-long stint during today’s two-hour, 45-minute race, gradually creeping toward the front and finally taking the lead six laps before pitting under green to hand the No. 10 Corvette DP over to Taylor on lap 62, 59 minutes into the race.

Taylor resumed in the top-five and, like Angelelli, bided his time while gradually making his way back toward the front. He inherited the lead for the first time when Gustavo Yacamán in the No. 6 Michael Shank Racing Ford Riley pitted from first place on lap 105, one hour and 39 minutes into the race. Taylor never relinquished the lead from that point on, including through a round of pit stops under caution on lap 118 with 56 minutes left in the race.

“Before I got in the car, Max was saying how good the car was,” said Taylor, who led the final 69 laps to the checkered flag and was never threatened. “We knew we had a decent car, but we didn’t know how good it was because it’s obviously hard to pass here. Max didn’t take any risks, which was for the good of the championship. When I got in, we just had a clear track and we were saving fuel for the whole middle stint.

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“When it went to that restart (on lap 122 with 47 minutes remaining), that was the only time we really had an idea of how competitive we would be compared to everyone else. I really didn’t know how fast we were going to be, but when we went green and we could gap them pretty easily, I was pretty happy to see that. I thought Gustavo (Yacaman) was going to do a good job holding off Pruett and everyone, so I was happy he was the one between us. He’s pretty hard to get by. We were able to gap them and kind of maintain it, so I was pretty happy out there.”

Taylor crossed the finish line five seconds ahead of the runner-up Yacaman while Pruett was another .2 of a second back of Yacaman in third. The victory gave Angelelli and Taylor a margin of 13 points over Pruett and Rojas in the final driver standings. The No. 99 Gainsco/Bob Stallings Racing Corvette DP of two-time Rolex Series champions Alex Gurney and Jon Fogarty wound up third in the final standings, 27 points out of the lead, after their 12th-place finish today brought on by a late-race accident.

“I’ve been coming to watch my dad all these years and GRAND-AM was really the place that I kind of grew up and started to understand racing and understand that I wanted to be in the sport,” Taylor said. “First of all, to win the final GRAND-AM season is pretty crazy just because it’s kind of where I grew up and watched Max and my dad over the years and kind of grew up as a driver and made a career out of it. It’s very special, and after the past few races, it’s obviously come down to the team. Every single time we have won a race, they have put us out in front. All Max or I had to do was keep everyone behind us and, when you have track position, it’s a lot easier. I think we have passed like two or three cars all year on track and everything else has been done in the pits. It’s definitely a team championship. It’s unfortunate that the team didn’t win the team championship, but the driver’s did, so we can’t really complain too much.”

The No. 01 Ganassi BMW claimed the team championship by a six-point margin over the No. 10 Velocity Worldwide Corvette DP. The Ganassi car scored 15th-place points in the team championship when its day was ended on the very first lap of the June street course race in downtown Detroit, which Angelelli and Taylor won for their second of five victories this year. But Pruett and Rojas scored zero points at Detroit as they did not drive the minimum 30 minutes required to score driver championship points.

“I think everyone was very hopeful in the middle of the year,” Taylor continued. “Going into Watkins Glen (in June), I think we had a lead and then the car was great during the race, but we had an unfortunate break, but we still left there within, I think, two points of the lead. We still knew there was a shot. We went to Indy and then Road America and had two consecutive bad races. I think from then on, we kind of thought we were basically out of the championship. Then, that is when we kind of made a few changes and we were going to start going for race wins. Fortunately for us, everyone else had their own issues. Starworks had a couple of bad races, Gainsco and Ganassi, too, so we were just kind of doing what we were trying to do and that’s win races and the other guys kind of lost their championships. I think everyone had their issues throughout the year. We just kind of maximized those races that we didn’t have problems.”

“If you have watched the races this year, the competitiveness is at an all-time high,” team owner Wayne Taylor said. “I don’t know any other series where there is not even a second that separates 15 cars. When you have that situation, it’s impossible to pass on the track. So, everything has to get done in the pits. We had to put our drivers in the best position. The first three wins we had here (at Lime Rock) was Max and Ricky and, obviously, we know that the car worked really well here and track position was everything, yet again, and we were able to do that.

“Well, you know I’m sure everybody knows this, but the relationship between Max and I goes back to 1998. I don’t know how many driver pairings that have existed for the length of time that Max and I have. It was great, he and I winning the 2005 championship, as well as my second Daytona win. Obviously, he’s been so supportive of both Ricky and Jordan and nurtured them and brought them up as well as we could. Both of these guys did unbelievable jobs, but there are so many people behind the scenes. The team has just been superb. Then, at the end of the day, none of this can happen if somebody doesn’t pay for it. I have to say a special thanks to Brian Stockman, Enda McShane and Paul Blakely (Velocity Worldwide owner partners). Paul and I met and instantly we thought there was a way to work together. Toshiba has been with us since 1997. And I couldn’t be happier about having General Motors, Chevrolet on board for so long. Imagine having my teammate win the championship with me and then he wins the championship with my youngest son. I couldn’t have written a script any better.”

Angelelli and Jordan Taylor will be honored Monday evening as 2013 Rolex Series driver champions at the Rolex Series Awards Banquet at Gotham Hall in New York City.

The 2014 Tudor United SportsCar Championship kicks off its inaugural season at Daytona (Fla.) International Speedway with the traditional Rolex 24 At Daytona Jan. 25-26.

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