

MAZDA PROTOTYPE TEAM BRINGS HOME TEXAS-STYLE FOURTH-PLACE FINISH

EXTREME TEMPERATURES FOR THE LONE STAR LE MANS AT CIRCUIT OF THE AMERICAS

AUSTIN, Texas (September 17, 2016) – The No. 70 Mazda Prototype team with drivers Joel Miller and Tom Long matched their season-best finish with a fourth-place result today at the Lone Star Le Mans race at the Circuit of the Americas (COTA) in Austin, Texas. On a scaldingly hot and muggy day, they started the race third and ran among the top-five for the entire race. The second Mazda Prototype, the No. 55, also had a strong weekend, qualifying on the front row. The car, piloted by Tristan Nunez and Jonathan Bomarito, ran much of the first segment of the race in second place, but rolled to a stop on-course at the halfway point of the two-hour, 40-minute race with fuel pump issues. The Mazda Prototypes have one race remaining this season for the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship at Road Atlanta for the 10-hour Petit Le Mans, October 1.

Joel Miller, Driver, No. 70 Castrol Edge/ModSpace Prototype

For the first time this year, you qualified and started the race. Then, you came back in the final stages to finish the race. How different were those stints? “Definitely two different mentalities between the first and second. The first stint wasn’t the one that was going to win the race so I needed to hand it over with all four corners on it and with the leaders in view. I was able to do that, and then Tom ran a fantastic stint and gave the same thing back over to me.

“The final stint was different because from the word ‘go,’ it was fuel strategy. So, it was hitting a fuel [mileage] number while also maintaining third place with the No. 5 car right on my back bumper. That’s all part of the game and I really enjoyed doing it. I just wanted to push all-out because we worked all weekend on the end of the race, where we knew we’d have tire degradation. The car handled really well, but I couldn’t push on it because I had to save fuel.”

You had a quick spin when you were cut-off by a GT car. “I’m really bummed about traffic. We’re not here to move out of the way anymore. And that’s not what we’re going to do. I passed five other cars in that same corner, but... it’s definitely frustrating. The Soul Red cars are here to race and the Soul Red cars are here to win.”

Tom Long, Driver, No. 70 Castrol Edge/ModSpace Mazda Prototype

“It was a really strong performance for our Castrol Mazda today. We unloaded for the first practice and struggled a little bit. But, the crew stayed late every night and we were able to be quickest in practice three, then third in qualifying and a really strong performance in the race. Of course, we would have enjoyed being on that podium, but dealing with the incredible heat in Texas, we survived for a top-five.”

The heat was intense. How did you deal with it? “The heat is certainly different for every driver, depending upon how much training that you do. I know all of our guys on the Mazda Motorsports squad do a ton of heat training for this race specifically to get adapted to it. The conditions in the car were beyond 130, almost 140 degrees so it’s really difficult staying focused with only a little ventilation and a little water in the car. But, every little bit helps.

Tristan Nunez, Driver, No 55 Mazda Prototype

You spent your entire stint of the race in second place, consistently on pace with the leader. Were you pushing hard? “It was early in the race, so you don’t want to take any unnecessary chances, but you also don’t want to lose ground to the leader. It was a challenge, it was really hot out there and the temps in the car got up to around 140 degrees. So, it was about managing the temperature, managing your body and strength. I’m gutted for the team to drop out early. It’s character building.”

The team was telling you to take care of the tires, take care of the car. How do you balance aggression versus

conservation? “That’s what makes a racing driver a racing driver! That’s why Mazda hires us. You’ve got to find that happy medium. The track is hot, and it eats up your tires. Play it safe: save the car, save yourself. Then fight toward the end.”

Jonathan Bomarito, Driver No. 55 Mazda Prototype

“We were running fourth, and the car was running great. Tristan did a good opening stint and then it was a good pit stop. Everything was going well, and then down through Turn 10, the engine just shut off. No warning, it didn’t make any loud bang, no noises. It just turned off. I couldn’t get it re-fired. We had a good race going, surviving the heat and we were looking good until then.”

Mazda Motorsports

Mazda Motorsports boasts the most comprehensive auto racing development ladder system of any auto manufacturer in the world. The Mazda Road to 24 (#MRT24) program offers a number of scholarships to advance drivers up the sports car racing ladder, beginning with the Global MX-5 Cup series and culminating with the Mazda Prototype team. The Mazda Road to Indy (#MRTI) is a similar program that includes Mazda-powered categories of USF2000, Pro Mazda and Indy Lights. In grassroots road racing, more Mazdas race on any given weekend in North America than any other manufacturer. Mazda is also the title sponsor of the renowned Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca in Monterey, Calif. Follow all of the latest news at MazdaMotorsports.com, @MazdaRacing on Twitter, and MazdaMotorsports on Instagram and Facebook.

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