

## **MAZDA PROTOTYPES FALL SHY OF FINISH AT ROLEX 24 AT DAYTONA**

### **DEBUT OF THE MAZDA RT24-P RACE CAR PRODUCES 1,000 RACE LAPS**

IRVINE, Calif. (January 29, 2017) – The 55th running of the Rolex 24 at Daytona featured thrilling finishes in three of the four classes of race cars competing in the race. Unfortunately, neither of the two Mazda Prototypes were running at the finish to contest for the victory.

This was opening race of the 2017 IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship season, and marked the debut race of the new Mazda RT24-P race car. The two-car team performed well, running a steady pace as planned throughout the majority of the 24-hour race, until mechanical issues took both cars out. The No. 55 Soul Red Mazda was running in fifth place at the 20-hour mark, when an issue with an oil line created a dramatic plume of smoke and flames, knocking the car from the race. The No. 70 Castrol Edge/ModSpace car, racing in Machine Gray, lost hours through the night to replace the transmission, but returned to run solidly until less than 30 minutes remained when transmission gremlins knocked them from competition.

It was an eventful race for the new Mazdas, competing under IMSA's Daytona Prototype international (DPi) rules for the first time, as they combined to complete exactly 1,000 laps of the 3.56-mile Daytona road course. The weather went from crisp and sunny to cold and very rainy through the nighttime hours. The No. 70 machine, driven by the trio of Joel Miller, Tom Long and James Hinchcliffe, found drama on lap two, when a piece of plastic became lodged over the air intake. Later in the race, a pit lane penalty, combined with being slammed from behind by the eventual race-winning car, caused another delay to repair the rear wing assembly. With 18 hours remaining, clutch and transmission issues caused the team to return to the garage, where the crew changed the transmission assembly. After returning to the race, the car ran strongly until trouble returned on the final pit stop with less than 30 minutes remaining. The 70 car was classified in 12th-place among the Prototypes, and 46th overall.

For the No. 55 Mazda, driven by Jonathan Bomarito, Tristan Nunez and Spencer Pigot, the race had gone mostly according to plan from the start. Sticking to a steady pace, the team suffered a failure with the in-car radio as Spencer Pigot, unable to hear the team, was penalized for an improper procedure during a yellow flag, which pushed them several laps behind the leaders. When the race reached the 20-hour mark, while running in fifth-place overall, and at the point where the team was prepared to begin pushing hard to race for the victory, an oil line issue caused a fiery end to their efforts. The 55 was classified 11th among the Prototype class, 40th overall.

The next race is Saturday, March 18, with the 12 Hours of Sebring at Sebring, Fla.

## **Mazda RT24-P Driver Quotes / Rolex 24 at Daytona**

### **Mazda Prototype, Number 55 (Started: 9th)**

**Jonathan Bomarito:** "The race strategy was to not go lightly on the drivers this year. With three drivers, each of us drove three times each, so we were doing quadruple fuel stints out there. That's tough, but it was good because of the changing weather conditions. It's easier to get in a rhythm and acclimate to the conditions from dry to wet, then starting to dry, then rain again. It was really tough race – the roughest 24 Hours that I've done – and that's because of the weather. The temperatures were cool, so it wasn't as hot in the car, but mentally, man, it was very taxing.

"I think we definitely learned a lot. We're all going to need to get some sleep and then revisit all of the positives and things we need to work on for the future. There were a lot more positives than things we need to improve, for sure. The guys did a good job, the car ran great. I'm already looking forward to Sebring. Once we get to the new Continental road course tires and the higher downforce package, these Mazdas are gonna be something. The car's great, it's definitely a driver's car."

**Tristan Nunez:** "It was complete madness! I don't think I raced once in a while where it wasn't a downpour. I learned a lot personally. I do love the rain, and it was a ton of fun out here. To go out and be competitive and pass so many cars in the rain was awesome. One of those pure driving moments. It's tough not to finish, but I'm

pleased with the car.”

**Spencer Pigot:** “I got to experience a little of everything. My first time in the car, it was dry. That was great. Then the second stint was entirely wet and the third time around, it was transitioning from wet to dry. It’s just what happens in a 24 hour race, especially in Florida. It was exciting, always something new and I really enjoyed the time I spent in the car. It was a good experience.”

## **Mazda Prototype, Number 70 (Started: 10th)**

**Joel Miller:** “We were doing exactly what we needed to. We had a piece of plastic that got sucked into the intake on lap two, so that was a bummer. But we recovered from it and got right back to the lead lap and then the rain came – ha! – that was fun! I told our engineer right after I got out of my final stint in the car that the car was handling very well, which pays tribute to what they did in testing. We look forward to Sebring now.”

**Tom Long:** “It was incredible. You didn’t know what to expect. Between nice, dry conditions with sunny skies to start the race and then overnight we dealt with pretty heavy rain. We experienced cold tires with zero grip. Then, by the end, our Mazda had a ton of grip as we were running the best laps we had run all weekend. The crew guys just never stopped challenging. Man, they stuck in it the whole time with all of the things we worked through. It’s a tough deal: we could taste the finish. We were right there. It leaves a taste we don’t want the next time.”

**James Hinchcliffe:** “It’s always such a grueling event. No matter how your day goes, it’s a tough one on the crew, the drivers, the engineers, and this year’s edition was no different. We hit trouble early with clutch and gearbox problems, so we did a complete gearbox change, which is a credit to the guys to get the car back out. We took a couple hours of intermission to make that happen. I got back out in the thick of the rainstorm – which sucked – but all three of us in the car had a turn lapping at night in the rain. It was a huge challenge, but we kept it off the walls. We kept it running smooth and saw the light of day, we saw the sun come out and the track drying and we were truckin’ right along to make the finish. We had a splash-n-dash for fuel with 28 minutes to go and the lingering problem got us again. I’m heartbroken for everyone on the team and everyone at Mazda. It’s tough to describe coming this far and not be running at the end. It’s something that’s a huge goal for the team. We’ll be back to try and get them next year.”

## **John Doonan, director, Mazda Motorsports of North America**

“Everyone at Mazda and Mazda Motorsports comes to the race track to tell our brand stories, and we come here to win. The goals were to survive until Sunday, and then to lead the last lap. Fortunately, both cars achieved the first, but we didn’t grab the second. We had a couple of failures that we learned a lot from. Mazda wins as a team, and we learn as a team. That’s what we need to take away from the weekend. We learned from almost 38 hours of running time with the new cars and we can take that into the next six weeks prior to the 12 Hours of Sebring, a race where Mazda has 13 class victories. We hope to hoist the Mazda banner at Sebring!”

## **Three Top-10s for Mazda in Friday’s Continental Tire SportsCar Challenge Race**

The Continental Tire series race at Daytona is usually one that’s not eagerly anticipated by Freedom Autosport, who will have a three-car team of Mazda MX-5s in action this year in the Street Tuner (ST) class of the IMSA series. The long straights and high-banked turns at Daytona are not ideally suited to the lithe MX-5, which earns its on-track advantage with superior braking, handling and tire management. But, a big Mazda congratulations is due to the team, as all three cars came home with top-10 finishes in Friday’s four-hour BMW Endurance Challenge at Daytona race. Chad McCumbee and Stevan McAleer combined to finish sixth, with teammates Liam Dwyer and Andrew Carbonell in ninth, and Britt Casey Jr. and Robby Foley (in his first Continental Tires series start) finishing tenth.

## **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](http://MazdaMotorsports.com), @MazdaRacing on Twitter, and MazdaMotorsports on Instagram and Facebook.

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Contact:

Jade Gurss, Mazda Motorsports (317) 517-4121 - [MazdaMotorsports@icloud.com](mailto:MazdaMotorsports@icloud.com)

Dean Case, Mazda Motorsports (310) 318-4582 - [Mazdaspeed@MazdaUSA.com](mailto:Mazdaspeed@MazdaUSA.com)

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