

# Action Ex Wins 1st USCC Rolex 24

USCC >> 2014 Rolex 24 Hours at Daytona

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Above: No. 5 Action Express Racing's Corvette DP takes the flag.



Action Express's Joao Barbosa celebrates moments after pulling into victory lane.

Daytona, FL - Jan. 26th, 2014 - The inaugural TUDOR United SportsCar Championship ran with a record crowd and a thrilling finish in the Rolex 24 At Daytona, won by Joao Barbosa, Christian Fittipaldi and Sebastien Bourdais in the No. 5 Action Express Corvette DP.

A late incident set up a 10-minute sprint to the checkered flag, with a potential 'feel good' story in the making. Two-time Rolex 24 winner Wayne Taylor – out of retirement for a final opportunity to co-drive with sons Ricky and Jordan – could only watch as Max Angelelli prepared to unleash "the Ax" in a dash to the finish.

But Barbosa was not to be denied, coming home with his second overall victory at Daytona in five years for Action Express by a 1.461-second margin of victory.

"I was surprised, Max commented he saw a lot of debris that I didn't. I was looking somewhere else. It's a part of racing and we just had to deal

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with it. I saw on the restart there was someone between me and Max, and I knew I could take advantage of it, I could build enough cushion to, well I can't say it would be easy, but enough I could maneuver to be easier at the end," explained Joao Barbosa.

The race was marred in the early going by a horrific crash when Memo Gidley – driving the pole-winning No. 99 GAINSCO Corvette DP – rear-ended the disabled No. 62 Risi Competizione Ferrari F458 Italia driven by Matteo Malucelli. Both drivers were taken to nearby Halifax Hospital, where they underwent treatment. The race was red-flagged for 55:45 minutes after the incident.

The race featured 52 lead changes, with the winning Action Express team leading 18 times for 313 laps, and the Wayne Taylor Racing team 12 times for 228 laps. The winning team completed 695 laps on the 3.56-mile circuit, covering 2,474.2 miles.



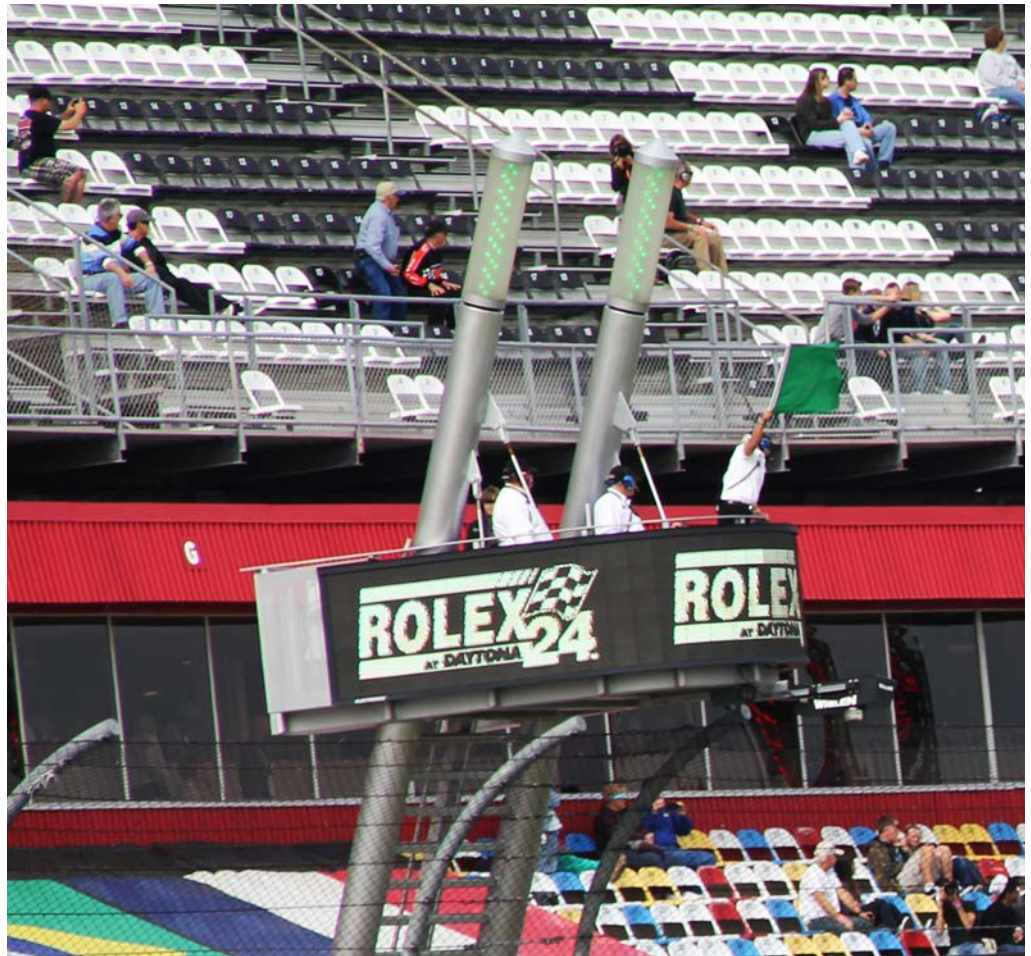
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## GT LeMans Class

Porsche North America won in GT Le Mans (GTLM) in the debut of the factory team run in conjunction with CORE auto-sport. Patrick Pilet beat BMW Team RLL's Joey Hand to the checkered flag by 2.838 seconds in the No. 911 Porsche 911 RSR, coming back after briefly falling behind Hand's No. 55 BMW Z4 GTE with two laps remaining.

SRT Motorsports started on the GTLM pole with Marc Goossens in the No. 91 SRT Viper GTS-R. Action through the bulk of the event featured the two Porsche North America entries taking on first the two Vipers, then a pair of Corvette Racing C7.RS. Attrition took its toll, as the second Porsche 911 RSR (the No. 912 of Patrick Long, Jorg Bergmeister and Michael Christensen) dropped from contention. Meanwhile, the two Team RLL BMWs worked their way back from two laps down.

"When I jumped in the car, I had a two-lap lead," Pilet said. "I thought I could cruise to the finish. But the BMW came back, and it was really close. There was a lot of traffic in front of me, and I had to take a lot of risk in the closing laps. I tried to do my best and it worked – fan-



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tastic! This is a brand-new team, a new car and a new championship. It was a lot of hard work. There was no Merry Christmas or Happy New Year for many people.”

With time running out, Hand made his move to the outside of Pilet on the super-speedway tri-oval. The two went three-wide approaching turn one as they passed a slower car. Hand briefly nosed ahead, but Pilet had the better line approaching Turn 1 and was able to regain control.

“Who would have believed, after we were down by two laps that the GTLM race would come down to the last lap?” said Hand, a regular for BMW in the DTM series. “We didn’t have a lot left in the car, but I went for it. I just tried to be better in traffic. I had a good run going, but I got pinched up high trying to get by a Ferrari, and that stopped my roll and allowed the Porsche to get away. We had a car that went all the way – and that was our plan all the way. This was a great start for the team for the championship.”

Co-driving with Hand were Bill Auberlen, Andy Priaulx and Maxime Martin. Third went to the No. 91 Viper of Goossens, Dominik Farnbacher and Ryan Hunter-Reay.

For Porsche, the most successful manufacturer in the history of the Rolex 24, it was the company’s 76th class-win to accompany the 22 overall wins at the historic event. The victory by Porsche North America in its debut as a factory program is the 40th class-win for a Porsche 911-based racecar in the 52nd running of the United State’s premier 24-hour race.

The No. 911 Porsche, driven by Nick Tandy (Great Britain), Richard Lietz (Austria) and Patrick Pilet (France), had a nearly flawless run, a tribute to the new partnership by Porsche Cars North America as owner, Porsche Motorsport and CORE autosport, the factory team’s preparation partner. The factory drivers all repeated this teamwork theme, along with the commitment they all made to keep the car out of trouble. For Lietz, it was his second 24-hour win in the car having been a part of the Le Mans winning effort. Pilet earned his first major endurance race today while it is the second consecutive North American endurance race win for Tandy. The Brit won the season ending Petit Le Mans in 2013.





“Our goals included keeping a conservative pace, preserve the brakes and make sure that drivers, crew and support members did not make any mistakes,” said Pilet who drove the final stint in the race. “We achieved those goals, and the result was a GTLM win. We all stayed away from that ‘big’ incident and avoided all contact, even though the traffic was heavy at times. After the restart for the last 15 minutes, I had to go away from our measured pace and push, but the car responded.”

“The car was still good in the last four hours and that is when we expected the race to be intense,” said Lietz. “This is the best season-start you can imagine. I have really good teammates. Nick and Patrick did an awesome job as did the crew. We are still a young team, we all worked together really well.”

Tandy provided insight into the team’s approach, “We came into this race treating it as an old-fashioned endurance race. So many of the races we do are really now sprint races and you have to go flat out for the duration of the race to have a chance but we said this weekend we have to take care of the equipment, the tires, the engine and not make any mistakes. There were times when we knew we could just cruise around and pick off laps but there were also times we had to push really at maximum. It shows we had the best team overall for the full 24 hours. It is not always like this but when it is, it’s a very happy day. I hope this gives the entire Porsche North America team the confidence to build on and go for the Championship.

## GT Daytona Class

The battle in GTD was even closer. Alessandro Pier Guidi, driving the No. 555 Level 5 Motorsports Ferrari 458 Italia, raced side-by-side with Markus Winkelhock, the No. 45 Flying Lizard Motorsports Audi R8 LMS driver. Winkelhock appeared to have been forced off the track in the infield by No. 555 as the cars streaked through the infield. Though the Ferrari was first to the checkered flag, IMSA initially imposed a stop-plus-75-second penalty on the No. 555, enough to give the victory to the No. 45 Audi. Upon further review by IMSA Supervisory Officials, the decision was reversed and Level 5 Motorsports was declared the winning team.

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"It's bittersweet not to be part of the podium, but we are pleased that IMSA took a second look at the decision," said Bill Sweedler, who joined Scott Tucker, Jeff Segal, Townsend Bell and Guidi on the winning lineup. "The fact is that IMSA took time to right a wrong and now the winning team is now declared the winner. That's what matters."

It was Ferrari's first Rolex 24 triumph since Gianpiero Moretti's MOMO Ferrari 333SP winning overall in 1998. Tucker had finished third overall in the 2010 Rolex 24, joined by Hunter-Reay and Lucas Luhr. On Friday, he scored his 100th career professional victory at Daytona in the first of two Ferrari Challenge races.

For Porsche within the GTD Class, the No. 58 Snow Racing Wright Motorsports effort driven by Madison Snow, Jan Heylen and Marco Seefried made the debut of the Porsche 911 GT America a successful one. The team finished a fraction of a second off the bumper of the winning car in third – a fine result for a car that had never raced before. **AA** - Dedicated to KRS.

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Below: The No. 5 Action Express Racing team surrounded by exploding ticker tape at the 2014 Daytona 24's Gatorade Victory Lane.

