



## **"Victory on my first attempt at the Sebring 12 Hours: it's a dream..."**

Alex Lynn – Sebring 12 Hours

*London, March 19, 2017.* Victory on my first attempt at the Sebring 12 Hours... Well, I was dreaming of a win but, in the run-up to the race, all I knew was we had a good chance, and that we could obviously do it. But this IS a dream. I'm really happy – it surpassed all my expectations.

I joined Wayne Taylor Racing for Sebring and Petit Le Mans in October. These are two of the classic endurance races, and so is the Daytona 24 Hours, which the team won in January. On that occasion, Wayne's sons Ricky and Jordan Taylor – both of whom are top endurance drivers in their own right – were driving with sportscar superstar Max Angelelli and NASCAR legend Jeff Gordon in the brand-new Cadillac DPi-V.R. This time I was sharing with Jordan and Ricky. So effectively, I was replacing Max and Jeff – no pressure then!

We had a good test at Sebring a couple of weeks ago, and then free practice was good. We topped the second session and were second in the third. But we had a car issue in qualifying, when Ricky drove, and there was a bit of a wrong decision on tyre pressures and stuff, but we still felt good for the race.

Our biggest concern was we didn't have enough straight-line speed. Daytona boiled down to a fight between our #10 Cadillac and the #5 Cadillac of Action Express Racing, so they limited the air restrictor on the Cadillacs after the race, and then did it again after the Sebring test... So at the 12 Hours the Cadillac definitely wasn't the quickest car, but it turned into a battle once again between us and the #5, purely because of reliability and strategy.

The first great bit of strategy by our team was under an early safety car. Ricky had started the race, but everyone pitted and I was told to keep Ricky's tyres and double-stint once I'd climbed aboard. This gave us an extra fresh set from our allocation to use late in the race, and proved crucial in the final stages. With the way the field shuffled out after the pit stops, I was in the middle of the pack, in third place, with a massive horde of GT cars all in front of our very fast Prototypes. It was complete carnage!

The biggest problem is there are no tyre warmers in the IMSA SportsCar Championship, which this was a round of. I'm used to that from single-seaters, but in a sportscar you struggle a bit on cold tyres – the car is really knife-edgy. I dropped from third place to fifth, because I knew I was on Ricky's tyres, the others were on brand-new, and I know that makes a good one-



second difference on lap time. There was no point fighting.

That early strategy call put me onto a triple-stint, and at my first stop I got new tyres and the pace improved dramatically. I was up to third again, but now I was behind the #85 ORECA and that had about 6-7mph straight-line speed advantage on us. It was so difficult to find a way past, especially when it wasn't that necessary. I did pass in the end, just before I pitted and Jordan jumped in.

The other tactical masterstroke came just before my remaining double-stint. We'd been getting better fuel mileage than the #5 car, and when the safety car came out the team pulled our car in, knowing that we'd have less fuel to put in and we could leapfrog the #5 in the pits. The engineer pulled me to one side and said we were doing this to gain track position. I said, 'So, you're suggesting I stay ahead at all cost?' and he said, 'Well... yeah!' So I did a double-stint balls to the wall. For most of the race we'd been about 30 seconds behind, but now this was a powerplay to get us in front. It was a great call by the team, and first I was leading Christian Fittipaldi and then, after we pitted, it was Filipe Albuquerque who'd taken over the car and was on my tail.

Filipe got past me when I caught a GT car at the wrong time – there really is no quarter given. But then the same thing happened to them later on and we were back in front.

Even the following morning, as I write this I'm emotionally drained. It was just a really good race and a great result. I'd just like to say a big thankyou to Wayne Taylor Racing – they and the Cadillac were fantastic, and Ricky and Jordan drove an amazing race. It's just... a dream!

That's especially the case because, as I said in my last blog, the Lynn family are big sportscar bobble-hats! I called my dad, who was racing at Goodwood, and he was extremely proud and so am I. He's done Sebring before in a Ferrari, so it was a special moment: I've added my name to a list of British winners of Sebring that includes Sir Stirling Moss, Mike Hawthorn and John Surtees and, more recently, Johnny Herbert and Anthony Davidson. Just before writing this, I've watched my dad finish third at Goodwood in his AC Cobra with Emanuele Pirro on the live stream, so it's been a great weekend for the family!

Now it's a quick change before heading to the Nurburgring for my first taste of the legendary 16-mile Nordschleife in next weekend's VLN race. That's a warm-up for the 24 Hours, which I'm doing with BMW. Next weekend I'm in an M235i just to get my licence to race on the circuit, but that's certainly a



daunting challenge and I'm excited to see how we get on.

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