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SRT Motorsports Post-Race Release - Trans Am Series at the Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course

August 16, 2014, Lexington, Ohio - SRT (Street and Racing Technology) Motorsports and its Dodge Challengers debuted in the SCCA Trans Am Series with a top-10 result in The 3-Dimensional Services Next Dimension 100 at the Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course on Saturday, Aug. 16.

Cameron Lawrence, the Trans Am Series' TA2 points leader, finished 10th in his first race in a Challenger, while his teammate, Tommy Kendall, took home 19th after running as high as fourth before an issue ended his race.

The 2013 TA2 champion finished 10th after working his way from the back of a nearly 60-car field on the 2.258-mile circuit in Ohio. With his new Challenger arriving after Friday's qualifying session, Lawrence was forced to start from the rear of the TA2 class field – and then was relegated to the back of the race pack following an early-event speeding penalty on pit road.

Lawrence pitted early due to high temperatures when he was issued the penalty. However, the young driver was able to overcome the consequence to tally a 10th-place result to retain the series TA2 points championship lead. Lawrence holds a 19-point advantage over second-place in the provisional point standings.

The 21-year-old driver also tallied the third-fastest lap among the TA2 entrants, a 1:29.196.

His teammate, Kendall, started 10th and quickly climbed five positions in the race's opening 20 minutes to move into fifth prior to the first caution. The Trans Am legend raced to as high as fourth in the event, but his race ended early when a part broke in the rear end of his race car.

The appearance marked Kendall's first start in the Trans Am Series since 2004. Kendall won four Trans Am championships in the 1990s (1990, 1995-1997) and ranks second in series history for podium finishes with 58.

The SRT Motorsports Dodge Challengers fielded by Miller Racing next compete at Minnesota's Brainerd International Raceway on Sunday, Aug. 31, for the eighth-of-11 Trans Am races on the 2014 schedule. Lawrence won the 2013 event at the track, his fifth-of-eight wins in 2013 en route to the TA2 class title.

SRT Driver and Team Quotes for Mid-Ohio

Cameron Lawrence, driver, No. 1 Dodge Challenger, Miller Racing

What was it like on the track today?

"It was good. We had some overheating issues at the beginning, but that was just probably a little mistake by us in learning the new car and having had no track time. Overall, it was great. The motor ran great. The car is getting there. For the first time on track, it was really impressive. We've got a good team, so I'm sure we'll be ready for the next race."

How did the Dodge Challenger feel in its first race?

"I was really able to put the Challenger almost exactly where I wanted it. The handling is really close and we just need to work on things here or there. Coming through the field was more like survival, but the car ran really well. We had a good pace. I was able to pass guys and really make some good moves in the car. It stayed under me. After the first time on the track, my first impressions of the car are really good. I'm sure with a little bit of work and with the engineering we have behind us, we'll get out in front pretty quickly."

How does it feel to retain the championship points lead?

"I was just kind of trying to make it hurt the least. Finishing 10th really is impressive with a new car and it hurts a little bit, but at least we got the car here. All the guys worked incredibly hard and deserved every bit of that, if not more."

I'm glad we could put it where we did and now we'll get back to work to minimize mistakes and try to get better from here on out."

Tommy Kendall, driver, No. 11 Dodge Challenger, Miller Racing

How was your race today?

"That was a day's worth of action for sure. I was told to just be patient and stuff starts happening. So I did and one at a time things started to happen. The car was similar to qualifying and we made quite a few changes, but we still had some issues. It was the first time we've run a full tank of fuel, so the rear weight was really not turning well at all. Right before the rear end started to break, it was finally becoming decent and I was starting to pull Ty Dillon in a little and I was like, 'Okay, here we go.' They told me these cars tend to be better late in the race and it was working out that way. We're going to have to dial that window in and better understand how much the cars change."

When could you tell you had an issue in the rear end?

"I started hearing this kind of grinding noise and it started to get loose in left handers suddenly. Under the caution, I started to shake the car and the rear end would shift. They couldn't see it in the pits, but I could definitely feel it. I said, 'Well, it seems to be stabilized,' and I wasn't crazy about going back to green that way. I said, 'You know what? Let's just see how it goes,' and I was able to maintain. I lost two spots, but then ended up getting back to fourth. I was able maintain that and I think the guys behind me were having some trouble too. The yellow came out and I said, 'Hallelujah, we're going to limp this thing home,' but then something broke and I couldn't even go pace car speed."

How did it feel to race in the top-five?

"We've got plenty of room for improvement. To get the No. 1 Challenger home after having no laps of practice or qualifying is impressive and important for Cameron to get some points. These were broad strokes, but to be in the hunt the first time out – we know we're only going to get better from here. That's exciting. It's a fun class. In the old days and Trans Am cars, I knew exactly how I wanted my car to feel. I don't know what I'm shooting for yet, so that's part of learning. We can hold our heads high because it was just an epic thrash to get here. It was the least I could do to reward the guys for literally like 72 hours of work with about four hours of sleep. On one hand, to be that close to a top-five finish your first time out, it's a little bittersweet. But given the thrash, it's probably the appropriate finish."

Gary Johnson, racing manager, SRT Motorsports

How was today's race?

"I think for our first time out, the cars and drivers did really well. The Challenger showed a lot of potential with good speed down the straightaway and really good handling. I'm very happy with Cameron and TK (Tommy Kendall) – they did a great job. We had a little bit of an issue with the No. 11 car right at the end of the race. We don't know what that is yet, but we're obviously going to investigate and get that figured out. Overall, it was a good day for the first time out."

How impressive was Cameron Lawrence working through the field?

"It just shows why he's a champion. I know he had a little bit of an overheating problem that was really due to a lack of knowledge of the car I think. We had put in some shrouds to keep the engine warm and I think we went overkill on that, but in the end his driving through the field was really great and we couldn't be happier for him."

Russ Ruedisueli, head of SRT and motorsports engineering, SRT Motorsports

What did you think about today's race?

"I'm incredibly proud of the team for getting here to the Mid-Ohio track for our first Trans Am race. The team worked incredibly hard to get here when you're coming to the race with a new car and motors. It was pretty brave. I think we're all a little disappointed in the finish, although Cameron did an awesome job getting us up to 10th. Tommy ran a strong race too, even though he was unable to finish just a few laps from the end. All in all, it was a pretty good weekend. We'll take a look and regroup for the next race."

How difficult is it for a race team to make a change like this mid-season?

"Switching in the middle of the season is a big deal and we're really proud of the Miller guys because they were willing to take this on with us and be a part of this. I can't compliment them enough. Working with them has been a real treat and I see lots of good things coming for us in the future."

Mike Miller, team owner, Miller Racing

How was today's race?

"It was a learning experience. We gathered a lot of information. I feel badly that we didn't give Chrysler a better finish. Tommy was running right up there and something in the chassis broke and I don't know what it is yet. The engine ran superbly. I'm just really pleased the way things are going with Tommy. With Cameron, we got into a little problem. We had an overheating problem and he had to come in the pits to take some stuff off and unfortunately he got penalized for going too fast, so we had to move back. We're still in the lead in the points. We're still in the hunt and I think we showed that Dodge is back and we're going to be a force to be reckoned with. Tommy was up there and I know Cameron would have been up there too if we didn't have the overheating issue. Cameron and Tommy performed superbly – they're every bit as talented as we thought they were. Unfortunately, we just didn't give them the car they needed to run up front, but we learned a lot and we're going to get a lot better."

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