

Contact: Dan Reid

Matthew Simmons

Road to Le Mans – Planning is Key to Handling Overseas Logistics

Riley Technologies' Previous Experience Helpful in Viper's Return to Competition in 24 Hours of Le Mans

May 22, 2013, Mooresville, N.C. - Destination – Le Mans, France.

For those in the world of sports car racing receiving an invitation to compete in the 24 Hours of Le Mans – the most prestigious sports car endurance race in the world – the weeks leading up to making the trip is filled with excitement and anticipation but requires extensive planning.

On February 1, SRT Motorsports accepted an invitation from the Automobile Club de l'Ouest (ACO) to field two SRT Viper GTS-Rs in the 81st running (the first race was in 1923 and has been run every year since its inception with the exception of 1936 when the race was not run due to a worker strike, and 1940 to 1948 due to World War II) of the endurance classic on June 22-23. Participation in the world's oldest and most prestigious sports car endurance race is by invitation only.

Handling the Logistics

Traveling long distances for a motorsports event isn't something new for SRT Motorsports and Riley Technologies. Twice this year, the SRT Motorsports team has made the 2,500-mile trek from Riley Technologies in North Carolina to California for competition in American Le Mans Series (ALMS) events at Long Beach and Laguna Seca.

From Mooresville to Le Mans, it's 4,075 miles. However, there's an additional obstacle not encountered in a trip across the United States – the Atlantic Ocean.

Fortunately, Bill Riley and his team have experience in moving equipment and personnel across the Atlantic. Otherwise, it could be a logistical nightmare. The planning began immediately after the invitation was received.

Mike Croake, the director of product support at Riley Technologies, is the man in charge of getting everything needed for the two cars to compete in the race transported to France. Since the invitation was received, it's been one checklist after another.

"Checklists are extremely important," Croake said. "Obviously customs has to have their lists of things that you are bringing over. We'll take that list, actually add detail to it and that will become kind of our checklist. Customs really doesn't care if the torque wrench is in bin number AF2; they just want to know that we're bringing it over and we're bringing it back. You make a list and just check things off. Hopefully, it all gets there."

Packing for the Trip

Support equipment – tools, a pit cart, nuts and bolts and general supplies – the team will use at Le Mans was sent in a 40-foot sea container that departed May 6 from the Port of Charleston in South Carolina. It takes approximately three weeks for the container to reach France. The two Viper race cars, six engines, telemetry, gearbox assemblies and other parts will leave the team's headquarters tomorrow for Orlando. On Saturday, the cars, engines, transmissions, pit equipment – 15 tons in all – along with spare parts will be loaded onto a Virgin Atlantic Cargo plane for the trip to London's Heathrow Airport. Croake estimates that air freight is approximately nine times more expensive than shipping by sea.

"We've broken it basically into two shipments, a 40-foot sea container and then obviously the air freight of everything that we don't have multiples of," Croake said. "We bought extra stuff like brooms, you buy that, throw it into the container and you don't have to worry about air freighting it. The race car will be flown over but we did have a spare chassis that we put into the container – God forbid if we need it."

As expected, great care is taken to ensure the safe travel of the SRT Viper GTS-Rs. They're shipped on a specialized air freight pallet and everything is secured.

Hit the Ground Running

Once on the ground in France, Croake said the SRT Motorsports team plans to lease a tractor-trailer for use at the track. Other teams have simply used a tent during the event while some choose to float a tractor-trailer over from the United States.

For Bill Riley, vice president and chief engineer at Riley Technologies, the trip is the highlight of his racing season, despite the logistical concerns and physical demands of the 4,075-mile trip.

"It's a huge honor and privilege to be involved in this race in any way, shape or form," Riley said. "And it's a huge honor to represent SRT Motorsports with the return of the Viper. When I went there the first time I had goose bumps when I walked in and I still get those goose bumps when I walk into that track."

Riley said the team will depart Charlotte, N.C. on June 2, arriving in Paris on the morning of June 3. Another group is scheduled for a June 14 departure with an arrival date of June 15, giving his organization approximately 50 people in Le Mans. He added that step number one on the journey is adjusting your body clock to the local time as soon as possible.

"Try to sleep on the plane," Riley told his team. "You need to get on their time schedule as fast as possible. You don't want to fall into the trap of taking a nap as soon as you get to your hotel room, getting your second wind and then staying up way too late the first night that you're there. Usually I force myself to stay up and then around 11 o'clock at night, normal time there, you're ready to go to bed."

The world famous twice-round-the-clock race is notoriously brutal on man and machine – including the pit crews. While Riley said he doesn't plan to sleep during the 24-hour race, Riley Technologies Crew Chief Frank Resciniti said he advises team personnel to "take a lot of naps." Resciniti added the event is actually much longer for team members than the advertised 24-hour period.

"Everybody thinks of it as a 24-hour race but for the crews, the day starts at like 7 o'clock in the morning because there's a 9 o'clock warm-up session," Resciniti said. "Your day starts at 7 a.m. when you get to the racetrack and it continues if you are lucky enough to keep running, which we're planning to do, all the way through the 24-hours. So, you're more or less up for 36-40 hours straight. You're in the firesuit the whole time. You're got your helmet on, your radio headset on. Every 45 minutes or so the car comes in for a pit stop. You're constantly aware of the car and what it's doing because you're hearing it in the radios. You've got TV screens all around the pit and garage area so you can watch the race.

"But during that time, you do try to take naps between pit stops. You'd be surprised how much that helps. Whatever you're doing, you still have your radio on – never take your radio off."

For those crew members making their first trip to Le Mans, Resciniti said he expects them to be impressed by the spectacle of the race.

"The start is a pretty big show but the finish is just unbelievable," Resciniti said. "The way they have the pits, there's a grandstand straight across the racetrack from the pits that will be just packed. As the race goes on and it starts working its way into the night, the number of people over there (in the grandstand) disappear. They'll be a couple of guys sitting over here, a couple of guys sitting over there. They'll be some guys sitting up in the corner wrapped in an English flag. When the sun comes up, the grandstands start to fill up again. The last two hours of the race, they'll be packed with people again."

Vive La France!

Team member Jessica Rowe will make her first trip to Le Mans. She's the Logistics Manager for Riley Technologies and didn't have a passport before the start of the season. Preparing the team for the trip has been a challenge.

"It's a little more challenging just because you're there for so much longer," said Rowe. "We're there almost four times longer than we are for any another event. The crew number is almost doubled. It's challenging just to make sure that you have everyone covered. It's not just that I need to get them plane tickets, credentials, apparel, there's

a lot involved. When you times that by 40 or 50, it gets a little overwhelming.”

One helpful tidbit passed on to Rowe is to arrive in France armed with adapters for electrical outlets. European outlets carry 220 volts of electricity which can burn up electrical equipment without the use of a converter.

“Since I haven’t been to Le Mans previously, I’m worried I’m going to get there and realize I should have brought extras,” Rowe said. “I’m told the converters for the outlets are the main thing. I’ve also heard that we’re going to need a fan where we’re staying; it’s going to be hot in the hotel.”

Due to the length of time required for team members to be in France, Rowe has been working with the group to plan ahead for the nearly four-week road trip.

“I’ve reminded the crew they need to call their cell phone providers, call their credit card companies and banks and let them know that they’re going to be overseas and make sure they’re stocked up on medications,” Rowe said. “As far as clothes go, we’ve suggested what to pack. We’ll probably have to go to the local laundry mat two or three times while we’re there. Our translator Thierry Lecourt, he’ll help us get set up and help with little things that you kind of take for granted while you’re at home.”

Enjoy the Country

The team is expected to have some free time during their stay in France and Rowe said she plans to visit the beach at Normandy.

“The biggest free-time thing on my agenda is going to Normandy,” Rowe said. “That’s the one thing I’ve always wanted to do because I have family history with World War II. I also hear there are some awesome military museums and stuff like that.”

Riley sees his team going in different directions. “There’s probably going to be three different groups going in different directions,” he said. “Some might just stay and hangout in Le Mans, do nothing. Some might want to see the military stuff, whether it’s Normandy or the U Boat pens. Some that haven’t been to Paris might want to spend time there. I would like to go back to Nurburgring (a motorsports complex). We’ll see where people want to go and try to make it happen for them.”

Perhaps the best advice for both the first-timers and seasoned veterans making the trip to France came from Riley. He says a positive attitude makes a huge difference.

“I tell people if you go over there with the attitude that you’re not going to have a good time, then you’re not going to have a good time,” Riley said. “If you go over there with the attitude you’re going to have a good time, then you’re going to have a good time.”

-###-

Additional information and news from Stellantis are available at: <https://media.stellantisnorthamerica.com>