

# THILENIUS GROUP

Press Release: SCCA 13 Hour Enduro Race Report

Hey! On October 23 - 24, 2015, I joined the **Garrett Racing Driver Development and Diabetes Awareness Program** team and co-drivers Jon Miller and Paul Holton to



compete in the SCCA 13 Hour Enduro at Virginia International Raceway. We overcame a myriad of issues in testing and the race to finish first in the STL class with the **Garrett Racing Honda Civic**.

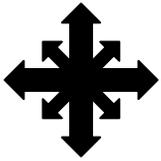
Following my most recent trip to the Nurburgring, I was looking forward to a little time off before starting 2016 preparations. A phone call from Jon changed my plans when he offered me an opportunity to join him for the 13 hour race at VIR. VIR is a terrific track to drive and I could not pass up the chance to drive with Jon, **Garrett Racing** and IMSA Continental Tire Challenge race winner, Paul Holton.

Paul and I arrived early at the track on Friday morning. When the car was ready, I drove the first test session and was immediately impressed with the handling. Unfortunately, rising coolant temperatures cut my run short. We spent the rest of the day fighting the cooling issue. How hard we drove the car affected the coolant temperature, so Jon came up with a strategy to lower our shifting point. I was not thrilled with the idea of

racing for 13 hours that way, but found it only slowed me a bit while definitely reducing wear and tear on the car and improving our fuel economy. I worked on the new driving style in my last session, made a damping change to reduce understeer in the slow right hand corners and then unexpectedly ran into a fuel starvation problem with a significant amount of fuel still in the car. Jon jumped in the car for qualifying and put us 19<sup>th</sup> on the grid and third in the STL class. After qualifying, there was a night practice, but an issue with the lighting prevented us from getting any laps.



At this point, I am fairly sure team manager Jonathan Donner and the rest of the **Garrett Racing** crew were glad to see the drivers leave and stop breaking and complaining about the car. Working late into the night and early morning, the team fixed the coolant issue with a new thermostat, repaired the lighting and diagnosed the fuel starvation all while preparing the car for the start of the 13 hour race on Saturday morning. Jonathan, Kimi, Scott and Luke did a great job all weekend and never lost their sense of humor!



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Saturday morning dawned overcast and cool, perfect weather for an endurance race. I started the **Garrett Racing Honda Civic** with a plan to run a double stint. At the drop of the green flag, I moved up a few positions and took the lead in the STL class. My lead only lasted until Turn 6 where I was rear ended by the STL pole winning car when I had to slow for an accident. I was none too thrilled with being hit on the first lap of a 13 hour race! Fortunately, the damage was minimal and after I confirmed the coolant temperature issue had been resolved, I settled into a good pace. Just over an hour into the race, the car bobbed on fuel and I headed to the pits. A quick stop by the **Garrett**



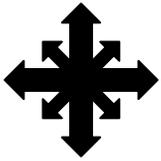
**Racing** crew got me back out, but revealed we were only picking up about half the fuel in the tank. We would struggle with having to pit frequently for fuel the rest of the race. The highlights of the second half of my double stint were setting my personal best lap of 2:15.4 (over 3 seconds quicker than I had been in testing) and getting hit in the right front wheel by an over optimistic pass attempt at the apex of Oak Tree Corner. Again, the damage was minimal, but the damaged wheel would affect our tire strategy for the rest of the race.

After about three hours in the car, I pitted again for fuel, front tires and turned the driving duties over to Paul. Paul immediately had a good pace, but struggled with too much oversteer. A spin in the high speed Esses damaged the front fascia and brake cooling ducts, but a quick repair on the pit lane got Paul back out to finish his double stint. Unfortunately, at the end of his stint, Paul hit fuel starvation in Turn 1 and was not able to nurse the car back to the pits.

The SCCA safety crew eventually got the **Garrett Racing Honda Civic** back to the paddock. The team refueled the car, installed a new set of tires, changed the front brake pads and we put Jon in for his first stint. An issue with leaking front brake caliper meant Jon had to return to the paddock before he even got on track. A quick bleed of the brake system corrected the leak.

Running out of fuel and having to address the brake fluid issue cost us about 40 minutes, dropped us to last place in STL and meant there was no way we were going to win the race on speed alone. To extend our mileage and reduce wear on brakes and tires, we adopted the conservation strategy Jon had developed on the test day. We hoped





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running a more conservative pace would reduce the number of pit stops and, if our competitors had problems, would get us back on the podium. Jon ran a flawless double stint and we started climbing back up the leader board. After eight hours, the leader in our class retired putting us back on the podium.

I jumped back into the **Garrett Racing Honda** for my second double stint as the sun began to set over southern Virginia. For the first half of my second stint, the team installed a set of **Pirelli** tires. Up to this point, we had been running the more conservative **Continental** tires. The grip of the **Pirelli** tires was great and even though I was short shifting and coasting into the brake zones, I had a good pace. However, my pace slowed noticeably when darkness fell. Most of our competitors ran auxiliary driving lights while we made do with the production headlights. Our production headlights were horribly inadequate. If I was following another car or running alone, the visibility was okay. When I had a car behind me all I could see was a shadow of my car on the road in front of me! In spite of it all, part way through my stint in the dark, the crew informed me we had taken the lead in the STL class.

I was happy to turn the car over to Paul to bring it to the finish. Our competitors had had some significant issues giving us a lead of more than 10 laps as the race wound down. Paul put in some extremely quick laps in his final stint. At times, Jon and I thought his pace was a bit too quick, but Paul saw the big picture and brought the car home.

I could not be any happier about the result. The **Garrett Racing** crew went above and beyond the call of duty to address the issues with the car and kept us on track to the finish. It is possible they were so delirious from sleep deprivation they did not realize what they were doing. Paul and Jon drove fantastic stints in the car and I am thrilled with my pace. What a great way to finish the 2015 racing season!



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