

Heartbreaker for Dempsey Racing and No. 40 Mazda RX-8 as Electrical Failure Knocks Team Out of Lead at Watkins Glen

Strong Run by Foster and Espenlaub Thwarted By Rare Mechanical DNF While Leading

WATKINS GLEN, N.Y. (August 10, 2009) – What may have been Dempsey Racing's first Grand-Am Rolex Series GT victory in the No. 40 Mazda RX-8 was literally zapped in an instant last Friday night when electrical failure knocked the team out of the race while leading with just 50 minutes to go in the Crown Royal 200 at Watkins Glen International.

After a strong opening stint by qualifying driver Joe Foster, Charles Espenlaub – who was subbing for Patrick Dempsey for the second-consecutive race – was leading and pulling away early in the second half of the two-hour sprint on the 2.45-mile Watkins Glen road course. Instead of cruising to the Dempsey team's first win, however, a sudden electrical system failure knocked the No. 40 from the lead and out of the race.

"The Dempsey Racing Mazda has been very reliable up to this point," said Foster, who was classified 16th with Espenlaub in the race. "We qualified fourth which, after it all shook out, ended up being the highest starting Mazda for the second race. We started fourth, were running in fourth and pitted in fourth and had a fantastic stop. Charles got in the car, took the lead and was pulling away and then we had the electrical failure, and that was it."

Foster did all of the team's practice and qualifying work as Espenlaub, who was also racing at Mid-Ohio this past weekend, didn't arrive at The Glen until just before Friday night's race.

"We didn't do the short-course test day here after June's six-hour race, so we were a little bit behind on the set up early in the weekend," Foster said. "We kept throwing stuff at it, and even before the race we changed some things again, and it was obviously good. It's very frustrating for the guys, obviously, because we have improved our game lately in terms of pit stops and we made some gains on the set up this weekend."

The Dempsey team's performance was even more impressive when you consider it was the group's first race on The Glen short course.

"We had never been to the short course before so it was a learning experience for us," Foster said. "We were definitely off the pace in the first couple of sessions but our Technical Director Kirt Wightman and the crew got the car fast for the race, and that's all you can do."

Despite the disappointment at The Glen, Dempsey Racing is in the midst of its top season and recorded its best race weekend ever last month in the Porsche 250 presented by Legacy Credit Union at Barber Motorsports Park. Foster qualified a Rolex Series personal and team-best second in that race and then joined Espenlaub in finishing fourth, another career high for both Dempsey Racing and its drivers.

Dempsey missed both the Barber and Glen races due to professional commitments in California but remains proud of his team.

"Well, we are podium bound for sure," Dempsey said. "It's only a matter of time. I'm proud of our team and the progress we have made in so many areas. This was our first mechanical DNF in the last two seasons with the Mazda RX-8 GT and, as always, we need to learn from this challenge. We will be back strong, for sure. While I've been busy with work, I look forward to get back on track and I am planning on doing at least two more races this season. Our partner El Grado is planning another party in Miami and we are looking forward to that!"

Three races remain on the 2009 schedule and next up is the Montreal 200 at Circuit Gilles Villeneuve in Montreal, Quebec, Canada on Saturday, August 29. The race will be run at 2:15 p.m. ET and live coverage starts on SPEED at 2 p.m. ET.

Support for Dempsey Racing comes from Mazda, El Grado Spirits and Specialized Bicycles.