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Perfect Position for a Season's Start

Scott Tucker and his Level 5 Motorsports teammates recently began the final quarter of a racing year that has included numerous podium appearances, multiple car changes, incredible accomplishments and yet still room for improvement. Tucker, owner and driver for Level 5, has been a leader for the team despite the rookie status he maintained just months ago. His tight, balanced driving has earned him top honors in the American Le Mans Series as Rookie of the Year and Champion Driver in 2010. His races often end with stints on the podium, and his career has only just begun.

As Tucker, his co-drivers Christophe Bouchut and Luis Diaz and team manager David Stone prepare to close the calendar year with the all-important Petit Le Mans and the Ferrari International Finals, the stakes are high-the team has woven itself a reputation of excellence that is best understood by looking back at what has made 2011 a stunning year for Level 5 Motorsports.

In January, the Level 5 team began its 2011 race schedule with the GRAND-AM The Roar prior to 24 test sessions, in Daytona, Florida. Its two Microsoft Office-sponsored entries proved themselves powerful vehicles for their drivers' talents. While in the final test session the No. 055 Microsoft Office BMW Riley and the No. 95 Microsoft Office BMW Riley finished 2-3. Tucker, Bouchut, Diaz and Mark Wilkins drove the No. 55 and sped through a 127.533 mph lap, just a half-second behind Starworks Motorsports Ford Riley, No. 8. Tucker also drove the No. 95, along with Ryan Hunter-Reay, Raphael Matos and Richard Westbrook. The drivers completed a lap of 127.465 mph, a time less than one-tenth of a second off of the No. 55 BMW Riley.

The Level 5 team proved its versatility since the season opened up with rule changes and a freshly paved racetrack at Daytona International Speedway. The three-day test session for the GRAND-AM Rolex Sports Car Series was an indicator of things to come for the team. Over the practiced sessions, the team gradually built momentum by making small changes with every run, eventually building up to the point that the drivers were barely off the top speed by weekend's end.

In the fourth test session, the No. 95 rose to 5th on the speed chart with a lap of 125.898 mph. Its counterpart, the No. 55, earned its way to a second-place position by the sixth session with a lap of 126.9189 mph.

Not just did Tucker drive both cars for the Roar before the 24, he was also a participant in the Sports Car Club of America's Double National event at Sebring International Raceway in Sebring, Florida. He finished second both days of the race. "I want as much time on the track as possible," he said at the time. "Getting in tune with the car is paramount to setting up for a successful season."

The Roar before the 24 is much like preseason games in other sports; it gives drivers a chance to shake off any lingering problems from the previous year and preview the type of year that is to come. Many big motorsports names are on hand at the Roar before the 24, and many of the stars who test at the Roar are enrolled in the Rolex 24 at Daytona during subsequent weekends.

The results of the Roar before the 24 set Level 5 Motorsports in a perfect position for season's start: beating the competition, but with some room for improvement. By exhibiting talent, control and skill on the raceway, Tucker and his teammates immediately established Level 5 Motorsports as a frontrunner for the coming races. Next up: the Rolex 24.

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