

The 25 Hours of Thunderhill Can't Tame the Toughest Turbocharged Scion tC on the Planet

A barrel roll late Thursday in practice couldn't stop the Turbonetics turbocharged scrappy Scion tC from finishing the world's longest endurance race held at Thunderhill Raceway.

Hayward, CA ([PRWEB](#)) January 5, 2009 -- They went into the race weekend hoping for a solid finish and came out of it with a tale to tell for the rest of their lives. It should have been the end of the weekend for the Team MPME/Scion/GST Motorsports Scion tC. Late Thursday - at 4:30 pm, the sole entry from Marshall Pruett Motorsports Engineering had the wildest and most frightening ride of its short life. (Watch Here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3H48cXV35gw>)

After a spin placed the team's Scion tC sliding backwards and sideways off the fastest turn on the 3.0 mile long Thunderhill track, the diminutive tC and its driver Andrew Wojteczko would find themselves hurtling into the Northern California hillside at more than 107 mph.

After two full rotations that destroyed the majority of the Scion's body panels and suspension, an unfazed Wojteczko came to rest with the tC sitting on its wheels. But for a slight bend in one of the Scion's roll cage tubes, the safety structure, built by TC Design of Milpitas, CA, protected its driver perfectly.

Despite the integrity of the roll cage being intact, many other parts of the tC had seen their final lap around a race track. "I'm amazed at how the car stood up to one of the more violent crashes I've seen," said team owner Marshall Pruett. "I'm not sure many other coupes would have survived." Pruett's partners at GST Motorsports were equally amazed by the Scion's resilience.

"The car came back dangling from the wrecker and she looked finished," GST Principal Mike Warfield offered. "We put the car up in the air and assessed the damage, and it wasn't confidence inspiring."

The laundry list of repairs was extensive. "We got the car under the tent and started stripping away the broken bits," continued Warfield. "The windshield was smashed, the right side door was all but missing, the rear wing was broken in half and its mounts bent, the composite roof was beaten up, the top rails of the car were smashed flat, both sides behind the doors were caved in, the right front fender was crumpled, both left side wheels were broken, most of the rear suspension was junk along with the left front suspension, the windshield wipers and windshield wiper motor...the radio antenna...I can't recall how many other things were killed in the crash. To top it off, the car was knee deep in dirt, glass and grass! By all accounts, we should have put her in the trailer and gone home."

But that's exactly the point where the tradition of sportscar racing made its presence known. "A friend with crash repair experience came over and had an action plan in place within minutes," said Pruett. "He'd measured all of the vital areas of the car, the roll cage, and inspected the car meticulously. In his opinion, the car was a basket case, but not one without hope. If we could replace all of the destroyed parts, he said the car would be safe to race, and on that recommendation, we got to work on a rather extensive Scion makeover! Sportscar racing is about camaraderie and resolve - and it took great measures of both to move forward."

Using the bulk of MPME's spare parts and many body panels and accessory components secured by the Wojteczko family in nearby Sacramento, the GST Motorsports crew of Warfield, chief mechanic Tommy Wu,



mechanic Mert Solis, Greg Simpson, Paul Stott, and Earl Lenaming leapt into action.

"I'm so proud of my guys," said Warfield. "Paul and Earl are customers of ours that worked tirelessly to aid our full-time guys and believe it or not, they had the Scion ready to go for qualifying exactly 24 hours and 15 minutes after the car had barrel rolled. I think the 70 other competitors figured we were finished, but when they saw the car driving down pit lane to qualify, they gave the tC a standing ovation as she went by. That was a special moment we won't soon forget.

Driver Gary Sheehan wheeled the Scion to 22nd place overall to start the race on Saturday. "The GST crew just worked a miracle to get the car ready in time. It went out with a purple trunk, a silver door...just as we got them from the wrecking yard! We didn't have time to mount the new rear wing or to do a full alignment at the back of the car, so despite a solid qualifying time, the car was capable of going much faster."

With more time to ready the tC after qualifying, the team was able to fit the replacement wing and to implement a full alignment to give all five drivers the best shot possible for success. "The Scion went out for qualifying with a silver door and a purple trunk," said Pruett. "We had to spray paint them white to match the rest of the car after qualifying, but honestly, the mismatched colors fit perfectly on such a hammered little car."

The 25 Hours race takes place from 11 am on Saturday through 12 pm on Sunday, and Sheehan was tapped to move the tC forward in his opening stint. After a few exploratory laps to feel out the improved car, Sheehan rocketed forward in his tattered mount. By the time he handed over to driver Jeff Courtney just before the two-hour mark, Sheehan had placed the Scion in 8th place overall, 5th in class. The potential of the Turbonetics-turbocharged tC was apparent for all to see.

"I needed a few laps to get a feel for the car, but once everything felt normal, it was time to press on," said Sheehan. "We started picking off cars and the Scion was up for chasing down some of the bigger dogs in the race. My BFGoodrich R1's were more than up to the task -- I leaned on them pretty hard and they never complained." Unfortunately, Sheehan's progress would be curbed shortly after Courtney got behind the wheel.

"I was braking for turn 14 and got speared in the right rear of the car long after I'd turned in," said Courtney. "I don't know if the other car simply forgot to brake, but they broke our wheel, blew out our tire, and crushed the side skirt on the car." Courtney's trip to pit lane for repairs would put the Scion down three laps early in the race.

He'd also begin to experience the lingering effects of Thursday's crash when the transmission broke its 4th gear and proved problematic when shifting into 5th gear. Team driver Dave McEntee had noticed the notchy gearbox after the crash. "I drove the car just before Andrew's accident, and then again on Friday before Gary qualified the car, and something was amiss but we didn't have time to do anything about it." Driving in 5th gear at the time of the crash, the jarring nature of the crash is believed to have weakened the 4th/5th gear cluster.

With 4th gear missing, Courtney did his best to maintain the team's desired race pace, but was hampered by the ailing transmission. Handing over to Wojteczko after two hours of driving, the Canadian pilot dealt admirably with the recalcitrant gearbox. Two hours later he'd hand the Scion over to fellow Canadian Dave Pratte, only for the Modified Magazine editor to experience the departure of 5th gear from his arsenal of cogs.

"It was getting dark by that time, and with only three usable ratios, Marshall decided it was too risky for me to try and keep racing at such a reduced speed. We pulled the car into our paddock and let her cool down before



deciding what to do." Just 30 minutes later, NASA officials would halt the race as a thick fog enveloped the track. The pause in action was just what the Scion team needed.

"Frankly, we weren't 100% sure what our next move was going to be. I'd had a spare tranny sent up just before the race, but they mistakenly shipped me an automatic! We needed to find a replacement manual transmission, and Scion tC gearboxes aren't easy to find late on a Saturday night," offered Pruett. It was then that the best idea of the event came to GST owner Mike Warfield. "We had a very poor wireless internet connection, but I said I'd take a look on Craigslist to see if anyone had a used tC tranny for sale. After calling around, we found a guy that had one in Sacramento, but he wanted way too much for it.

"Andrew (Wojteczko) got on the phone with the guy and sweet talked him down to \$600 from the original \$1100 he wanted. We all pooled our cash and the Canadian Brigade made the three hour round trip to collect the unit. It was one of the most surreal things I've ever been a part of in motorsports! Thank you Craigslist!"

GST's Tommy Wu and Mert Solis received the new gearbox just after midnight and had the Scion fitted with the stock unit within hours. Working just inches off the ground, the two master technicians dealt with icy weather and cramped conditions to make the swap. After implementing a variety of other fixes to other minor hits and assaults to the tC during the race, Wu had the Scion ready to return to battle by 6 am; just one hour after the race had restarted.

Dave McEntee took the helm of the tC in challenging conditions. "The fog was still pretty bad and with complete darkness added in, my stint was one long, wild ride. It would have taken too long to install the limited-slip differential in the new gearbox, so we raced with a bone stock 5-speed with an open-diff. We had wheelspin galore as a result. It certainly added another challenge, but the team kept the car running in top shape for me."

As if the body damage from the wreck wasn't enough, the Scion took more hits after the tC got back on track Sunday morning. "I got punted by the #19 MX-5 and lost a few laps, but with the time we lost to change the transmission, we weren't in contention for a win. That didn't mean we stopped pushing, but our focus changed from going for the win to just making it to the finish."

Showing the scars of Thursday's flip and multiple hits during the race, McEntee handed off to Gary Sheehan as the World Challenge veteran set a string of stunning laps with the stock transmission- just 0.9 seconds off his best at the beginning of the race. Sheehan turned the car over to Courtney at 10am Sunday morning as the team worked through its driving rotation, and promptly joined the GST crew for a bit of a surprise for team owner Marshall Pruett.

With his 38th birthday falling on Sunday the 7th, Warfield and the rest of the GST crew surprised Pruett on pit lane with a birthday cake to celebrate the special day. The cake was made even more special when it was revealed to be a little bit different than the usual birthday cake.

"After the roll on Thursday, we had to do something to commemorate it," said Warfield. "So we asked the baker to flip the cake upside down and do the inscription of 'Congratulations on rolling into 38' on the bottom! It just seemed fitting..."

The remainder of the race was run with little fanfare or drama - a nice change for the weary team, with Andrew Wojteczko placed in the car for the final hour of the event. "Andrew's 25 Hour weekend got off about as bad as



one could imagine, so I wanted him to end it on a high note," noted Pruett.

"So we put him in to bring the car across the finish line. It was pretty emotional for all of us to see Andrew and the Scion take the checkered flag. This was my 5th 25 Hour race, and was by far the most memorable of the lot for me. Finishing 9th in class and 42nd overall might not sound like something to be proud of, but thanks to everyone at GST, the drivers, Scion, TRD, and BFGoodrich, we pulled off a major miracle!"

While the race had concluded, the weekend wasn't yet over for the team. An announcement over the PA system called the class winners to the award ceremony and also requested the presence of the MPME/Scion/GST team. Once inside, Jim Dunford, team manager for the Cytosport/Muscle Milk team, presented the crew with the inaugural "Muscle to the Finish" award, given to the team that perseveres the most through adverse conditions to get to the finish of the 25 hour race. The trophy and \$1000 check left a few team members misty-eyed.

"I'm so incredibly proud of everyone that played a role in getting us back on track and to the finish line," said Pruett. "Mike Warfield, Tommy Wu, and the entire GST family never complained, never quit, and never doubted what we could accomplish. Muscle Milk understands what the spirit of endurance racing is all about, and their award is something we'll cherish until we're old and grey. Our drivers were flawless in the race and showed what our little car can do. It's a good thing GST has expanded their racing services beyond the Subaru world - what they accomplished here with a Scion is just amazing. We'll be back in 2009 for another go with the Scion...and let's just hope we DON'T win the 'Muscle to the Finish' award next year!"

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Contact Information

Tyler Tanaka

Turbonetics

<http://www.TurboneticsInc.com>

805-581-0333

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