

RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME LEADS TO NEW OPPORTUNITY FOR RAYHALL IN 3GT RACING LEXUS

How often do you hear about opportunities presenting themselves to people who happen to be in the right place at the right time?

It's a commonly used phrase, for sure, but for Sean Rayhall, who recently joined 3GT Racing to drive in upcoming Tequila Patrón North American Endurance Cup rounds, he's convinced that's how the opportunity came for him to drive the No. 15 Lexus RC F in the GT Daytona (GTD) class alongside full-time IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship competitors Jack Hawksworth and David Heinemeier-Hansson.

Rayhall points to January's Rolex 24 At Daytona, in which he co-drove the No. 69 HART Acura NSX GT3 with Ryan Eversley, Chad Gilsinger and John Falb to a 16th-place class result. Three weeks earlier, during the Roar Before the Rolex 24 At Daytona, a qualifying session was held to determine garage and pit assignments for race week.

Eversley posted the fifth-quickest time in the GTD class, one spot ahead of Hawksworth in the No. 15 Lexus, placing the two team transporters next to one another in the Daytona garage. And as it turned out, 3GT Racing team owner Paul Gentilozzi was in need of a driver to replace the legendary Scott Pruett, who brought his 50-year driving career to a close at the Rolex 24.

"It came about, sure enough, our trailer was parked next to Gentilozzi's trailer and he came up to me after the race," Rayhall explains. "We got to chatting and he said, 'Are you signed for the rest of the NAEC?' I said, 'No. I think HART wants me, but I'm not really sure what the deal is.' He said, 'Don't sign anything.' I was like, 'All right. Why?' He said, 'I'll give you a call this week.'

"He gave me a call on Wednesday, had a small talk, and Monday we did a deal. It's pretty funny how it was just kind of right place, right time. I don't even know if our trailers weren't parked together if that would have happened. It's kind of out of sight, out of mind, but being back in the IMSA paddock has been good to me so far, obviously, I'm just really fortunate to be back here."

Rayhall is one of the most successful racers to come through the IMSA Prototype Challenge Presented by Mazda, parlaying a 2013 title into a full-season ride WeatherTech Championship ride in the Prototype Challenge (PC) class in 2014. Since then, Rayhall has driven the DeltaWing in the WeatherTech Championship Prototype class, and won the 2017 LMP3 championship in the European Le Mans Series (ELMS).

Rayhall thinks his performance in the 2014 season – two wins, two pole positions and podium results in half of that year's races – also played a role. Among the drivers he competed against that season was Hawksworth, who was driving for Gentilozzi's team.

"We raced hard," Rayhall said. "Like, even Jack, I think, wanted me, because me and Jack had a bunch of battles back in the day in LMPC when LMPC was at its prime in 2014. So, I think Jack was a fan of it.

"David races in Europe as well, so him knowing last year's LMP3 championship and a couple other things about me, I think, as a full circle, it was a good fit.

"Big shoes to fill. The hero, the legend, the greatest of



all time in sports cars, Scott Pruett, is stepping out and it's big shoes to fill. I'm just here to kind of keep it clean and make sure we can fight in the last two hours."

Rayhall is embracing the opportunity to sharpen his skills and is eager to prove he can get the job done in GT cars. He's already driven everything from stock cars to Indy Lights cars to a variety of different sports cars – and even sprint cars.

"I think the versatility is huge," Rayhall said. "I've gotten turned down a lot from some GT opportunities just because I haven't raced a car. It's pretty funny, because it's like, a car is a car, and if you give me enough time in it, I think any of us are going to figure it out.

"In a prototype, you have a lot to learn how to trust the downforce and how to use it, and how you want to do your brake release and stuff like that. A GT car, there's like two ways to drive it, and that's it. You figure it out. You look at data and you take small baby steps to get there."

Rayhall has a busy year ahead, but he wouldn't have it any other way. In addition to Patrón Endurance Cup races with 3GT Racing, he is competing in most IMSA Prototype Challenge Presented by Mazda races in the No. 51 K2R Motorsports Ligier LMP3 car alongside co-driver Rob Hodes.

He and Falb, his ELMS co-driver, will return to defend their LMP3 title also. But Rayhall thinks there still might be room for a little bit more.

"I don't know," Rayhall said. "I got a call the other week about doing something, and I might try to add one or two here and there. On my off weekends, I'm actually talking about going and racing a sprint car by Road America up in Wisconsin.

"I've got a deal to possibly run like three nights a weekend on my off weekends. I'm just a racer, man. If I'm not coaching or if I'm not in a race car, I don't want to be sitting at home on the off weekend. I just want to be at the racetrack."

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