

IMAGOLIVE

Da: "listserve" <listserve@sromg.com>
A: <undisclosed-recipients@groom.ch>
Data invio: domenica 5 ottobre 2008 20.59
Allega: image006.jpg; image005.jpg; image004.jpg; image003.jpg; image002.jpg; image001.jpg; FIAGT FINALOverall.pdf; FIA GT Championship Classification R8.pdf
Oggetto: FIA GT CHAMPIONSHIP - ROUND 8 NOGARO- RACE REPORT

Consistency paid off in Nogaro today, where tyre wear proved to be a determining factor in the eighth round of the FIA GT Championship. The 3.636 km circuit, with its great variety of corners, saw the nr 2 Vitaphone Maserati MC 12 of Alexandre Negrão and Miguel Ramos claim victory, finishing five seconds ahead of the two Phoenix Carsport Corvette C6R cars. In GT2, victory went to the Prospeed Competition Porsche 997 GT3 RSR of Westbrook and Davison, but Gianmaria Bruni and Toni Vilander, who inherited third, scored enough points to secure the title – the third Drivers title for AF Corse in three years – as well as the GT2 Teams title.

VICTORY TO NEGRÃO AND RAMOS



Eight seems to be the magic number for Miguel Ramos; the Portuguese driver claimed his first FIA GT win in the eighth round last year, in Brno. This year, round eight fell in Nogaro; Ramos and his team-mate Negrão put in an extremely consistent performance around the twisting and technical circuit, where overtaking is difficult and tyre wear considerable to take their first win of the season.

The start of the race saw a close battle between three cars: the nr 5 Corvette, Fässler at the wheel, the nr 7 Saleen, driven by Franchi, and the nr 3 Corvette driven by Bouchut. But the Saleen had a wheel problem during their pit-stop, while the SRT car had a drive-through for pit-lane speeding, and the cars finished seventh and eighth respectively. By the end stages of the two-hour race, the fight was between the two Vitaphone Maserati cars and the two Phoenix Carsport Corvettes. It had looked as if pole-setter Marcel Fässler would be able to convert the pole to another win, but the tyres got the better of his Corvette C6R, and he had to drop back. Fässler and Deletraz eventually finished third behind their sister car, the nr 6 Corvette, which had in turn overtaken the nr 1 Maserati, forced to make a pit stop for a puncture, finishing sixth.

Fourth across the line was the nr 10 Gigawave Motorsport Aston Martin DBR9, which had run strongly today. However, a long pit stop when the car refused to re-fire took away the British team's hopes of a podium finish. They had a close battle, however, with the nr 33 Jetalliance Aston Martin of Wendlinger and Sharp, who had a difficult race, never having got their tyres to work with their set-up.

Negrão and Ramos were delighted with their win: "It's been a fantastic day," Negrão said. "We struggled during the qualifying because of the cold. It was difficult for us. We knew we could have a good pace. We just had to push and be strategic: we overtook a few during the pitstop and we were very good on tyres. I'm very happy for this first victory this year. I'm happy with the points we've got for the championship, but it will be very difficult to catch up in the championship."

GT1 CHAMPIONSHIP CLOSES UP

With two rounds remaining, Nogaro's result has had the effect of closing up the title fight in GT1. Bertolini and Bartels, who finished sixth after a puncture in the final stages of the race, now have a six-point lead over the Phoenix Carsport duo of Gollin and Hezemans. Nogaro victors Negrão and Ramos move up to third, just half a point further behind. Fässler and Deletraz are fourth, still in with a mathematical chance of victory, as are fifth-placed Wendlinger and Sharp. Everything is still to play for in Zolder and San Luis!

In the GT1 Teams points, Phoenix Carsport continue to chase runaway leaders Vitaphone Racing Team. However, with both teams placing both cars in the points, the difference remains 21.5, with only 36 points remaining in play.

SECOND WIN FOR PROSPEED COMPETITION

It was a repeat of Monza today, with Prospeed Competition converting pole position into victory for the second time this season. Richard Westbrook and his new team-mate, Alex Davison, took the chequered flag first in a desperate dash for the line in one of the closest GT2 finishes



for some time – with the top three cars within 0.7 of a second. Despite a strong start from the Porsche, it had looked as if the nr 50 AF Corse Ferrari would take the win. However, but in the closing stages, and suffering from tyre problems partly due to the total of 110 kg penalty weight, Bruni took the decision to favour his title campaign over the win. He finished fourth, but inherited third after the nr 51 AF Corse Ferrari was awarded a drive-through penalty, transformed into a 30-second time penalty, after an incident in the final stages with the nr 56 CR Scuderia Ferrari.

Prospeed therefore gave Porsche its second win of the season. "Although the same thing happened in Monza, getting pole and winning, it was a bit more complicated this time," Westbrook commented. "As far as the race went, we could pull away, but our car was eating tyres more than the Ferrari does, so towards the end of the stint, Tim and Gimmi were catching up to me. At the pit stop, we thought we'd done enough to stay ahead, but Gimmi popped out ahead of me. But then the 50 had a problem at the end, so I came out on top, and, a win's a win, so that's great." Second today went to Mullen and Piccini in the nr 55 CR Scuderia Ferrari 430 GT2, with Mullen delighted to claim his first podium of the season.

Kessel Racing claimed their best result of the year with fourth for Moser and his new team-mate Fabrizio Mediani, having left their final pit stop until three laps before the end, and thereby leading the category for much of the second hour. Montanari and Biagi were finally classified fourth, ahead of the nr 62 Scuderia Ecosse Ferrari. Malucelli and Ruberti, in the nr 77 BMS Scuderia Italia Ferrari, who had been the only drivers who could rival Bruni and Vilander for the title before this race, finished seventh. They are still lying second in the Championship, but Westbrook is now just 3.5 points behind. The final point went to CR Scuderia's Ferrari nr 56 of Bell and Westbrook, who had been running strongly among the lead group of Ferrari cars, until the incident which earned the nr 51 its drive-through.

BRUNI AND VILANDER SECURE THE TITLE FOR AF CORSE



All the crew of the nr 50 AF Corse Ferrari 430 GT2 car needed to do today was to finish ahead of the nr 77 car in order to place the 2008 GT2 Drivers title firmly in their grasp. This they proceeded to do, with a fourth-place finish at the line, moving up to third. The duo were delighted with the result, and can now enjoy the final two rounds without any pressure. "It's been a brilliant year so far. It's been great racing with Toni," Bruni said. "Last year I missed the title by a few points. So this year, with Toni, he helped me to get back the points I lost. We've had some fantastic racing. I

don't have the words. It's been a special year for me. I have to thank the guys who work with me, with AF Corse, with Ferrari, the mechanics...I've learnt so much from everybody."

AF Corse cannot be beaten in the Teams points, and therefore claimed their third successive title after another fantastic year.

The next race takes place in two weeks time, in Zolder. And straight after that, the cars will be loaded into containers to be shipped to Argentina, for the season finale.

The results remain provisional pending the anti-doping tests.

Jacque Groom
Media Delegate, FIA GT Championship

tel : +41 21 784 2623
fax : +41 21 784 2561

email : jacquie@sro.co.uk

mobile phone : +41 79 206 4661 (race weekends and out-of office times only !)