

GT 3 / Silverstone - race 1

IAN KHAN AND THOMAS MUTSCH CLAIM VICTORY AT SILVERSTONE! The duo of Ian Khan and Thomas Mutsch, in the No.20 Matech GT Racing Ford GT, overcame first lap dramas to storm through the field and take a fine victory in an action-packed first round of the 2008 FIA GT3 Championship at Silverstone. They took the lead with only four laps remaining, and took the chequered flag ahead of the No.36 Prospeed Racing Porsche 997 GT3 Cup S of Mikael Forsten and David Loix, and the No.17 Brixia Racing Aston Martin DBRS9 of Gianluca Giraudi and Marcello Zani. **SHOWERS CAUSE HAVOC IN OPENING LAPS** With light rain falling, the stewards declared a wet race some 15 minutes before the start, leaving tyre choice up to the teams. With the track no more than damp, everyone opted for slicks, but the cold conditions made it difficult to get heat into the tyres. That meant that Forsten, from pole, was beaten away from the start by the No.33 APEX Motorsport Jaguar XKR of Phil Quaife – but behind them, many cars were caught out, with multiple cars spinning or going across the gravel at Copse and Becketts. The carnage continued, with no fewer than nine cars retiring by the end of lap 8. At the head of the field, Quaife was leading comfortably until he hit some oil dropped by a slower car. He ran wide, which allowed his pursuers to close in – and, taking a cautious approach to the Jaguar’s first race on ‘home’ soil, Quaife allowed the No.5 Kessel Racing Ferrari F430 GT into the lead, and then dropped back to third, behind the No.36 Prospeed Porsche. Further back Ian Khan, in the Mo.20 Matech Ford GT, had to stop at the first corner to avoid a spinning car, dropping him back to around 24th. He set off in hot pursuit and soon made it into the top 10, but could progress no further. **PIT STOPS SHUFFLE THE ORDER** Quaife was the first of the front runners to pit, coming in on lap 15 to hand over to Stuart Hall. Two laps later three of the leading four pitted, with the No.36 Porsche coming in a lap later from the lead. At this point, with more than half the race completed, the No.36 Porsche retained the lead ahead of the No.5 Kessel Ferrai, with the No.33 APEX Jaguar back up to third – but Thomas Mutsch, in the No.20 Matec Ford GT, was on a charge. On lap 19 he was up to fourth, which became third just two laps later when he got past the No.33 APEX Jaguar. On lap 23 Mutsch was up into second as the No.5 Kessel Ferrari started to slide back down the order, not helped by a wild spin across the grass at Becketts. With only five minutes left, Mutsch hit the front, taking the No.20 Matech Ford past the No.36 Prospeed Porsche. Behind them was the No.29 AutoGT Racing Morgan Aero 8 – but just a lap later, the Morgan pulled over at Stowe and into retirement. So when the chequered flag fell, after sixty hectic minutes, it was the No.20 Matech Ford GT which claimed the victory, less than three seconds ahead of the No.36 Prospeed Porsche of Forsten and David Loix. The No.17 Brixia Racing Aston Martin DBRS9 of Gianluca Giraudi and Marcello Zani profited from the demise of the AutoGT Morgan to claim the final podium spot; the No.5 Kessel Ferrari of Cadei and Balbiani came home fourth, just 1.5s ahead of the No.33 APEX Jaguar of Quaife and Hall. The variety continued down the field – the first nine cars to finish were from nine different manufacturers! “The team did a great job over the winter to improve the car – it handled very well,” said Mutsch after the race. “I had no real problems with traffic, and when I was trying to overtake, people were very fair.” The duo will start race 2 from pole position, but Khan was being cautious. “Tomorrow is another day, we’ll just have to wait and see what happens. We’re trying not to be too confident.”

GT 3 / Silverstone - race 2

MUTSCH AND KHAN TAKE BACK-TO-BACK WINS AT SILVERSTONE IN FORD GT Thomas Mutsch and Ian Khan made the perfect start to the season by winning both races at Silverstone in the No.20 Matech GT Racing Ford GT. Even a minor delay during the mandatory pit-stop of the second race couldn’t prevent the pair from taking maximum points. James Ruffier and Arnaud Peyroles, in the No.1 Martini Callaway Racing Corvette Z.06 GT3 took second, while a remarkable charge through the field carried the No.36 Prospeed Competition Porsche 97 GT3 Cup

S of David Loix and Mikael Forsten from nineteenth on the grid to third. **DRAMATIC START FOLLOWED BY CONSTANT SHUFFLING**As the pack came onto the main straight the No.25 Team Berlanga Ascari KZ1R GT3 spun in the middle of the pack, with cars scattering left and right. Two cars, the No.30 AutoGT Racing Morgan Aero 8 and No.8 Hexis Racing Aston Martin DBR9, hit the wall and were out on the spot, while the No.7 Trackspeed Porsche limped round to the pits to retire. The safety car was sent out while the stricken cars were removed. Thomas Mutsch had made a clean start from pole in the No.20 Matech GT Ford, but behind him the order had been thoroughly shuffled. Biggest winner was the No.29 AutoGT Morgan, which leapt from fifth on the grid to second; by contrast, the No.10 Hexis Aston Martin fell from second to fifth. Once the safety car pulled in at the end of lap 3 Mutsch steadily pulled away, establishing a lead of three seconds by the end of lap 8. Behind him there were five cars covered by another three seconds battling for second place – every lap saw move and counter-move being made. The No.6 Trackspeed Porsche was the car on the move, going from sixth on lap 5 to second place on 15. At one time there were three cars swapping positions at almost every corner, for virtually an entire lap. **TOP THREE DECIDED IN FINAL FOUR LAPS**At the end of lap 15 the entire top five headed for the pits leaving their compulsory stop as late as they dared. Unfortunately for Ian Khan, when he took over the No.20 Matech GT Ford, it refused to restart until he had switched the car off, then back on. It only cost him ten seconds – but that was enough to drop him to third. After the stops, the No.6 Trackspeed Porsche led – but their stop had been 2s too quick, and the car was called in for a stop-and-go penalty. That handed the lead to the No.29 Morgan, with the No.1 Martini Callaway Corvette in second – but they were being hunted down by Khan. On lap 19 Peyroles, in the Corvette, got past the Morgan to take the lead, but it was only delaying the inevitable. On lap 24, Khan went right around the outside of the Corvette at Stowe corner and swept into the lead; when the chequered flag fell three laps later, he was just under 2s clear. Behind them, Mikael Forsten, in the No.36 Prospeed Porsche, was on a charge; fastest car on the circuit by several seconds, he passed car after car. He dived past the No.29 AutoGT Morgan going into Maggotts on lap 26 to go third – but there were too few laps remaining for him to close on the Corvette. “This is the perfect start to the season – two races, two wins,” said Khan after the race. “Last year Gilles Vannelet and Henri Moser won the opening two races, then went on to win the championship, so I’m hoping this is a good omen. Thomas did a good job during his stint, and we were first before the pit-stop – I’m glad we were able to recover from the minor problem.”