

IMAGOLIVE

Da: "listserve" <listserve@sromg.com>
A: <undisclosed-recipients@groom.ch>
Data invio: domenica 25 marzo 2007 20.52
Allega: FIAGTRace Result 2.pdf; 2007 FIA GT after R1.pdf
Oggetto: FIA GT CHAMPIONSHIP - ROUND 1 - ZHUHAI - RACE REPORT



The 2007 season of the FIA GT Championship got off to an exciting start at the Zhuhai International Circuit today, where the All-Inkl.com Racing Lamborghini Murciélago took a closely fought victory, giving Lamborghini its first international motorsport win. In front of the packed grandstand, with 22,000 spectators watching, the newly-adopted two-hour format gave a fantastically close race in both categories. Pit-stop strategy, always a factor, became vitally important when the safety car came out in the second hour. The final dash to the finish line saw the top three finish within four seconds. The Lamborghini was chased across the line followed by two Corvettes. In GT2, AF Corse Motorola inherited a fine one-two after the first car across the line, the BMS Scuderia Italia Porsche 997 GT3 RSR, was excluded following a ride-height problem.

VICTORY FOR LAMBORGHINI, ALL-INKL, BOUCHUT AND MÜCKE

Christophe Bouchut and Stefan Mücke started the season in the best possible way, giving All-Inkl.com Racing and the Lamborghini Murciélago their first FIA GT win. With the new two-hour format, where strategy is incredibly important, the timing of the second pit stops along with a safety-car period saw the nr 7 car take the lead in the closing stages of the race. At the re-start, a storming Bouchut kept the advantage ahead of Philipp Peter, sharing the nr 19 PSI Experience Corvette C6 with FIA GT newcomer Luke Hines, and the PK Carsport Corvette C5 of Bert Longin and Anthony Kumpen. With fastest laps being set one after the other, a frantic finish finally saw Lamborghini claim its first win. "This victory is important for Hans Reiter, for our sponsor All Inkl and for Lamborghini," Bouchut said afterwards. "I have worked a lot to develop this car, and I really wanted to give to Lamborghini this first win. Winning was one of our goal this season, we did it here in Zhuhai, for the first race. It is great for the team and for all the people who have worked hard." As for Stefan Mücke, a win on his FIA GT debut was an excellent result for the young German.



Such a result seemed very unlikely in the early part of the race, which was dominated by the battle between Thomas Biagi in the nr 1 Vitaphone Maserati, and the Corvettes of Carsport Holland and PK Carsport. Hezemans, in the nr 5 C6, led for the first 22 laps, when Biagi overtook, leading until his first pit stop, despite having lost part of the roof of the Maserati. After all the cars had stopped, the PK Carsport Corvette C5 was in the lead. But when the safety car was sent out, due to some circuit damage, the cars which had made the earliest stops were able to come straight back in to the pits, their obligatory minimum 35-minute stint having been completed; this gave them a decided advantage. The nr 7 Lamborghini was therefore in the lead for the restart, and Bouchut managed to keep that advantage until the chequered flag, despite pressure from the nr 19 PSI Corvette, which had also stopped early, and the nr 4 PK Carsport C5.

It was also an excellent result for PSI Experience, the team having taken a late decision to race in China. "We have shown we can make the car go, finishing second, as we did at the Paul Ricard HTTT last year" team boss Philippe Tillie explained. "Now there's only one more step to make - but that's not the easiest." As for PK Carsport, Longin and Kumpen proved that their choice of going back to the Corvette C5 they took to victory in Belgium made sense. "We were fastest in the first free practice, we were quick in qualifying, fastest in warm-up, and we could have won today - we're there!" Longin commented.

Fourth place went to the Aston Martin Racing DBR9 of Babini and Davies, ahead of early leader Carsport Holland, with the Corvette C6 in the hands of Deletraz and Piccini. Thomas Biagi was sixth in the Vitaphone Maserati MC12, his team-mate Bartels failing to score due to narrowly missing the mandatory 35 minutes driving time. The second Vitaphone car was seventh, with Barwell Motorsport picking up the final point for

eighth on their GT1 debut, with the Aston Martin DBR9 shared by Jonny Kane and Jonathan Cocker. Newcomers Scuderia Playteam Sarafree saw both Maserati cars stop due to fuel miscalculations. Furthermore, the nr 11 car of Bertolini and Piccini has a 30-second penalty for the next race, due to stopping before a penalty for not respecting a yellow flag. This will be added to their race time in Silverstone. Jetalliance Racing also had an unlucky weekend, being forced to shuffle their pit crew after illness and suffering from tyre problems. Both cars finished, but outside of the points. The JMB Maserati MC 12 of Macari and Aucott finished 16th overall after a steady performance.

AF CORSE MOTOROLA STARTS 2007 WITH ONE-TWO IN CHINA



The GT2 race was equally exciting, as the first lap congestion saw the leading cars fall back, before gradually climbing back up the grid. First across the line was the BMS Scuderia Italia Porsche 997 GT3 RSR; however, the car later failed scrutineering due to the ground clearance. Its exclusion meant that AF Corse Motorola Ferrari cars inherited first and second, giving Dirk Müller and Toni Vilander their first FIA GT victory. St éphane Ortelli and Gianmaria Bruni, whose car had been delayed due to a puncture, were second, with Scuderia Ecosse's Mullen and Enge third.

"The start was crazy. Cars on the grass and spinning," Müller said. "I started first and was second last after the first corner. After that everything went well and I managed to climb up to second. It's a really good start to the season. Pole position yesterday, fastest in my stint and the victory – it couldn't really be better. I knew that it was going to be tight, and it was. But I feel sorry for BMS, as the racing was great."

Fourth place went to the Ebimotors Porsche of Emanuele Busnelli and Marcello Zani, finishing ahead of early race leaders Kirkaldy and Niarchos in the nr 63 Scuderia Ecosse Ferrari. 2006 FIA GT3 European Champions Tech9 Motorsport finished sixth and last in GT2, after leading the category at the mid-race point thanks to a long stint from Sean Edwards, although unfortunately a wheel problem dropped them back.

ALL-INKL AND AF CORSE LEAD TEAMS TITLES

All-Inkl.com Racing now has a two-point lead over PSI Experience in the GT1 Teams classification, while AF Corse has already taken a strong lead in the GT2 classification, being eight points ahead of Scuderia Ecosse. In the Manufacturers Cup, Corvette leads GT1 for the first time, having placed three cars in the top five. They are followed by Lamborghini, Aston Martin and Maserati. In the GT2 Manufacturers Cup, Ferrari is leading Porsche.

NEXT RACE

The next round of the FIA GT Championship will take place at Silverstone on May 6th. The teams will then be racing for the prestigious Royal Automobile Club Tourist Trophy – won by Aston Martin Racing in 2005 and Vitaphone Racing Team in 2006. The meeting will also see the first round of the 2007 FIA GT3 European Championship, as well as the GT4 European Cup and the GT90's Revival Series.

More information on the event, including quotes, results, race facts, photos etc, can be found on www.fiagt.com