

IMAGOLIVE

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Data invio: domenica 1 ottobre 2006 22.54
Allega: FIA GT R8 Result.pdf; FIA GT Championship Classification R8 .pdf
Oggetto: FIA GT CHAMPIONSHIP - ROUND 8 - BUDAPEST - RACE REPORT

FIA GT CHAMPIONSHIP – ROUND 8 BUDAPEST – RACE REPORT



As well as enjoying the late summer sunshine, the 12,000 spectators around the Hungaroring, near Budapest, were treated to a close and exciting round of the FIA GT Championship. The Zakspeed Saleen put in a fine performance to claim its second win of the season, crossing the line ahead of the GLPK Carsport Corvette C6, with the leading Aston Martin Racing BMS DBR9 third : three different cars on the podium, separated by 26 seconds. In GT2, Kinch and Kirkaldy put their recent bad luck behind them to claim a hard-fought win from AF Corse's Bobbi and Melo, and their Scuderia Ecosse team-mates Mullen and Niarchos. However, it was AF Corse, second and fifth today, which seized the GT2 Teams title, the other teams now being mathematically unable to catch the Italian squad. A similar story in GT1 saw Vitaphone Racing Team, with fifth and seventh today, put themselves out of reach of nearest rivals Aston Martin Racing BMS, to retain the Teams Championship they already won in 2005.

ZAKSPEED VICTORIOUS; PODIUMS FOR GLPK CARSPORT AND ASTON MARTIN RACING BMS

The nr 9 Zakspeed Saleen claimed its second victory of the season at the Hungaroring today, crossing the line ten seconds ahead of the nr 4 GLPK Carsport Corvette C6, with the nr 23 BMS Aston Martin DBR9 third. The trio of Jarek Janis, Sascha Bert and Andrea Montermini put the bad luck from the previous rounds behind them to put in a dominant performance, pulling away from pole and despite pressure from the nr 23 Aston Martin BMS DBR9, keeping the lead except for brief periods during the pit stops. For the final stint, Montermini was chased first by Fabio Babini in the nr 23 BMS DBR9, and then by the rapid Anthony Kumpen in the nr 4 Corvette, who overtook Babini with nine laps remaining. Kumpen crossed the line in second position to give GLPK its third podium finish of the season.



"We are really happy of course," Janis said. "At the beginning it was quite close with the BMS Aston Martin, Fabio Babini was pushing really hard. I had some understeer because the car was really heavy with all the fuel. Then I increased the pace as I had less and less understeer. I was trying to be safe on the pace, and to stay constant, and finally I could see that the gap was getting bigger and bigger, which was good. Then Sascha Bert did a good stint and Andrea Montermini finished the race in the right way. This first place is important because we need points, as we were quite unlucky and we have lost so many points already. I have to thank my team, they did a good job, and we are looking forward to the next race."

The nr 23 Aston Martin finished third, equaling its best results of 2006 in Brno and Silverstone. With Babini setting the fastest lap of the race, and Malucelli claiming a podium finish for his first race with Babini as a team-mate, the pair were delighted. "It's been a really good week end for us," Babini said. "The set up of the car was great and we made a good decision with Pirelli. It is a good result to be back on the podium."

Fourth went to the nr 5 Phoenix Racing Aston Martin of Jean-Denis Deletraz and Andrea Piccini, reducing the gap in the Drivers Championship to nine points with two races remaining, and keeping firmly in the title chase.

The two Maserati MC 12 cars, weighed down with success ballast, were fifth and seventh, sandwiching the nr 24 BMS Aston Martin DBR9 of Gollin and Ramos. The All-Inkl.com Lamborghini was eighth, although the position did not do justice to the much improved performance of the car, having dropped back after a wheel problem in the final pit stop.

Barbosa and Balfe finished ninth in the nr 11 Saleen. The only non-finisher in the class was the Race Alliance Aston Martin, which won in Mugello. A broken gear lever and electronics problems took the car out of contention today.

2006 TEAMS CHAMPIONSHIP FOR VITAPHONE RACING TEAM



Although German team Vitaphone only claimed six points today, its two Maserati MC 12 cars weighed down with a total of 85 and 105 kg respectively, this proved enough to secure the 2006 GT1 Teams Championship. Already victorious in 2005, the team has consistently scored points at every round. Today, points for fifth and seventh positions brought their score up to 99, which puts them out of reach of their nearest rivals, Aston Martin Racing BMS. Vitaphone Sporting Director Rafael Calafell was naturally delighted with the result. "We are

really happy to win the FIA GT Team Championship, it was a really hard season. We have to thank everybody, all the team crew, the cars, the drivers... and to congratulate them for their great job. Now we are concentrating on the Drivers' title, but it is going to be difficult. We are very glad to have claimed this title, and now we will keep going for the next target."

MAGNIFICENT PERFORMANCE FROM THE LAMBORGHINI MURCIELAGO

In Hungary today there were truly five different makes fighting in GT1, as the nr 38 All-Inkl Racing Lamborghini Murciélago, entered by Waiblinger Motorsportclub, put in an impressive performance in the hands of Christophe Bouchut and Peter Kox. Running in the top six for most of the first two hours, the car was as high as second once the cars started to pit. Peter Kox put in a spirited performance, resisting the combined pressure of the two Vitaphone Maserati cars and an Aston Martin DBR9 to maintain his fifth place until the end of his stint. Unfortunately, a problem with a wheel followed by a drive-through for pit lane speed infringements saw the car finish down in eighth, to take the final point. "It was fantastic," Peter Kox said. "I had poor grip and not such a good balance, and when I saw that Michael Bartels was behind me I thought that he was going to pass me right away. But I kept the pace. Michael drove in a sporting way, like I did. Hans Reiter did a great job to improve this car, it is going better and better, we proved it today. Unfortunately we had a problem with a wheel during the second pitstop. Anyway we are happy with the performance, and I know that there is still improvement and I hope we will find the solution to do it."



GT2 VICTORY FOR KINCH AND KIRKALDY



"It has been such a frustrating year for us because either we finished first, or we did not finish... but it is a great result today," Nathan Kinch commented after today's victory for the nr 62 Scuderia Ecosse Ferrari 430 GT2. This was the third win of the season for Kinch and record-holding pole sitter Andrew Kirkaldy, and although they did claim a third-place at Spa and were classified 6th at Dijon, they have also had three non-finishes. But today, despite dropping back at the start, the nr 62 put in a fine performance, fighting the team's second car

during the first stint and taking the win once JMB GruppeM's Ferrari, which made a very late first stop, had to stop late in the third hour for a final refueling. after today's victory for the nr 62 Scuderia Ecosse Ferrari 430 GT2. This was the third win of the season for Kinch and record-holding pole sitter Andrew Kirkaldy, and although they did claim a third-place at Spa and were classified 6th at Dijon, they have also had three non-finishes. But today, despite dropping back at the start, the nr 62 put in a fine performance, fighting the team's second car during the first stint and taking the win once JMB GruppeM's Ferrari, which made a very late first stop, had to stop late in the third hour for a final refueling.

Once again, there was an all-Ferrari podium, as the nr 62 crossed the line a lap ahead of the AF Corse Ferrari 430 GT2 of Bobbi and Melo, who increased their points lead over their nearest rivals and team-mates Salo and Aguas. With 12 points separating them and two races remaining, 2003 Champion Bobbi remarked that he had already bought a new evening suit in case he needs to go to Monaco...

Third place went to the second Scuderia Ecosse car of Tim Mullen and Chris Niarchos in the nr 63 car. This is a busy season for the pair, who are in the lead in the Avon Tyres British GT Championship, but they have nevertheless claimed four podium finishes in the FIA GT. However, Chris will not score any points from this round, as he was just under the minimum driving time per driver.

Fourth went to JMB GruppeM, whose nr 55 car of Sugden and Alexander led the final hour thanks to a different pit-stop strategy. However, a late final fuel stop dropped them to fourth, ahead of the second AF Corse Ferrari. The nr 59 car of Salo and Aguas lost time in the pits when the hydraulic jacks failed, and the team could only change the tyres on one side at a time.

After their wet victory in Mugello, the Porsche cars could not repeat their fine performance in the Hungarian sunshine, and the leading 996 GT3 RSR was the Felbermayr-Proton car of Christian Ried and Horst Felbermayr Jr, ahead of the two Ebimotors cars, Riccitelli and Alzen seventh, despite finishing the race in the gravel, and Moccia/Busnelli claiming the final point for eighth.

GT2 TEAMS CHAMPIONSHIP FOR AF CORSE



It is now clear who will follow GruppeM in the honour roll of the FIA GT2 Championship. AF Corse has been amazingly consistent this season, scoring points with both cars at every race. With 122 points accumulated so far, their nearest rivals, Scuderia Ecosse, could not catch them even if they finished first and second in Adria and Dubai. The team has claimed three wins, including the Proximus 24 Hours of Spa. The team is also assured that the title will go to its drivers, as the battle is now down to Bobbi and Melo versus Aguas and Salo. "It

is definitely a good day for the team, as we have won the FIA GT2 Team Championship with this result," Bobbi explained. "AF Corse really deserves this Championship title as they worked so well all year. I just have to say thank you to AF

Corse and to Pirelli, I'm really glad to be here, and to be part of this kind of team. It is also a pleasure to drive with Jaime."

G3 VICTORY FOR GROPPi AND SEILER



Hungary proved to be a good weekend for Italian team BMS. Not only did their GT1 cars have one of their best races of the season, the nr 23 Aston Martin DBR9 setting the fastest race lap and finishing on the podium, but the two Aston Martin DBRS9 cars entered in the G3 class finished the race successfully. Victory, with a 19th position overall, went to the nr 133 car of Franco Groppi and Toni Seiler. However, things were not as easy as they might have seemed : "In the first pit stop we lost one minute and half, then we had a fuel pump problem, then a cooling problem when we stayed behind other cars," Franco Groppi explained. "To get the first position in G3 is great because it was not easy for us to go to the end of this race. Pirelli did a special hard compound at the front, so the car was quite efficient, and all the BMS team did a great job."

For more information, race facts and quotes from the qualifying press conference, please go to www.fiagt.com