

What a way to start the season ! The first event of the 2008 season, the Royal Automobile Club Tourist Trophy, saw an action-packed race in difficult weather conditions, culminating in a dash for the flag after a safety-car closed up the field with ten minutes remaining. After an amazing eight-way battle, Ryan Sharp took the flag in the Jetalliance Aston Martin DBR9 he shares with Karl Wendlinger. Starting off the 2008 season just as they finished that of 2007, with a victory, Sharp became the first Briton to win the right to have his name inscribed on the Trophy for 20 years, while Wendlinger is the first Austrian since 1980. This is the fifth time since 1905 that Aston Martin has been the winning manufacturer. With this victory, his 13th, Wendlinger moved to the top of the FIA GT Championship overall wins table, deposing Jamie Campbell-Walter, who had held the record since 2003. The Austrian won the 1999 FIA GT Championship with a Chrysler Viper, and has since won races with a Ferrari 575 M Maranello, a Maserati MC 12 and his current Aston Martin DBR9. He also has six pole positions to his credit, and one GT2 class win in 1998. The first race promises much for the rest of the season. Marcel Fässler, taking pole for Phoenix Racing, went on to prove his speed in the difficult weather conditions. The top five cars finished in just over eight seconds, including two Aston Martin DBR9, two Corvette C6R and one Maserati MC 12 – that of Vitaphone Racing's Bartels and Bertolini, recovering from 19th on the grid to finish second. Gigawave also started off their FIA GT career with a podium for Peter and Simonsen. With three teams each placing two cars in points, it looks as if 2008 could see a real fight in the Teams Championship ! Four different cars led the race, with the Jetalliance Aston leading at the start and the end, for a total of 13 laps. The nr 5 Phoenix Racing Corvette led for a total of 23 laps, with SRT's Corvette leading for two, and the nr 10 Gigawave Aston Martin for 21 laps. In GT2, Andrew Kirkaldy proved that he is determined to keep his crown as king of the GT2 pole positions, with his 11th fastest lap, this time for new team CR Scuderia. Reigning GT2 Champion Toni Vilander also proved his speed in the rain and fog, going on to win the class with his team-mate Gianmaria Bruni, giving AF Corse its third consecutive win at Silverstone. CR Scuderia finished second, on their first international race, while BMS Scuderia Italia claimed a podium for their first race with the Ferrari 430 GT2. There was also a historic debut for the first Argentine crews to compete in the FIA GT Championship. Both Tuero/Mazzacane in the ACA Argentina Ferrari 550 Maranello, and Perez-Companc/Russo in the Advanced Engineering Pecom Racing Team Ferrari 430 GT2, survived the difficult conditions to take the chequered flag. Despite the weather, 25,000 spectators turned out to watch the thrilling races, leaving the organisers to wonder just how many would have come if the weather had been more spring-like. The event proved a winner in other areas too, with significant increases in traffic to the FIA GT website, and plenty of new spectators thanks to new LIVE coverage on channels such as ITV4 in Great Britain, TV Sport5 in the Czech Republic, Supersport in Greece, Go TV in Malta, Showtime in the Middle East and ESPN Star in Asia, as well as Sport+ in France and DSF, who have upgraded to full live or same day delayed coverage in 2008, joining Sky Italia, Sport1 in the Netherlands, Sport TV in Portugal and the other channels which showed the Championship in 2007. The Silverstone crowds were treated to a real festival of racing, including the first two rounds of the 2008 FIA GT3 European Championship, and the magnificent sight of 43 cars taking to the track, representing 11 different models and ten different makes, all competing in the same class. Victory in both races went to the Ford GT of Ian Khan and Thomas Mutsch, who hope to follow in the footsteps of Moser and Vannelet, victorious at Silverstone in 2007, and who went on to take the title. The GT4 European Cup also provided excellent races, with victory going to the Jetalliance and Beechdean Aston Martin N24 cars, while the Ferrari Challenge Trofeo Pirelli also thrilled the crowds. The Ferrari Challenge Trofeo Pirelli completed the weekend's racing. To read more about the Silverstone races, visit the new team news section on the website, watch the news feed in or listen to the press conferences the video section, In other news this week, Alpina announced a return to racing after 20 years. They will field a factory team, running a race car based on the BMW Alpina B6 S road car, the B6 GT3, in the 2009 FIA GT3 European Championship, as well as racing in selected important endurance races. The next round for the FIA GT Championship, the FIA GT3 European Championship and the GT4

European Cup will be Monza, on May 17th – 18th. The series will be joined by the British F3 International Series, and by the Superstars series, seen last year in Adria. All members of the press requiring accreditation should apply as soon as possible using the forms on the website.