

## IMAGOLIVE

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### FIA GT CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 3 - BUCHAREST



Bucharest city centre was transformed into a race circuit this weekend, with a 3.111 km circuit, designed by Hermann Tilke, circumnavigating the gigantic Romanian parliamentary buildings. Despite rain, 69,000 spectators turned up this weekend to watch the FIA GT Championship, the FIA GT3 European Championship, the Lloyds TSB Insurance British Formula Three International Series and the Logan Dacia Cup. Today, they were treated to a spectacular FIA GT race, which only saw one safety car

period despite heavy rain, resulting in a fine win for Scuderia Playteam Sarafree's Maserati MC 12 of Bertolini and Piccini in GT1. In GT2, AF Corse Motorola's Ferrari 430 GT2 of Müller and Vilander was victorious for the third race in a row, finishing an amazing sixth overall. Eighteen cars out of the 27 were classified on this challenging street circuit, with its unforgiving walls.

#### MISSION ACCOMPLISHED FOR BERTOLINI AND PICCINI

They came to Romania determined to make up for their poor start to the season before their home race in Monza : for Andrea Bertolini and Andrea Piccini, it was a case of Mission Accomplished today ! In wet conditions on the street circuit, the nr 11 Scuderia Playteam Sarafree Maserati MC 12 finished 39 seconds ahead of the nr 7 All-Inkl.com Lamborghini Murciélago and a minute ahead of the nr 2 Vitaphone Maserati of Montanari and Ramos. "I am really, really happy," reigning Champion Bertolini said afterwards. "We had a very bad start to the season, and this was our last possibility to come back for the Championship. As you can imagine, we pushed a lot for the title, and the points are now very close. This was race was very important for the whole team. It is a very young team, but very motivated, and we have good support from Pirelli. I think the reason we won today was because of the tyres." Andrea Piccini added : "I would like to thank the Bucharest organisation. They really did a great job. It cannot be easy to organise such an event, in the first year, and despite the difficult conditions, we only needed to get the safety car out once. They moved the cars out of the way really quickly and did a great job, and we would like to thank them all."



#### BOUCHUT AND MÜCKE REGAIN CHAMPIONSHIP LEAD



New circuits are usually lucky for Christophe Bouchut, as he proved again today, when the nr 7 Lamborghini Murciélago he shares with Stefan Mücke finished second, giving the All-Inkl.com duo the lead in the Drivers Classification. Running strongly throughout the race in the wet conditions, they took second place when the nr 33 Aston Martin made its second pit stop, and came home just under 40 seconds behind the winners. "We didn't win the race, but we are very happy to finish second. We are now leading the Championship, so it is definitely

a good situation," Bouchut said. "This car has shown a potential nobody imagined before, and it is also reliable, and now we can dream of the best race after race. It is excellent to come to Romania, to race here for the first time, to visit new countries, to meet new people. For the Championship, this is really good."

#### THIRD FOR VITAPHONE RACING

Vitaphone Racing Team finished on the podium for the second race in a row, but this time with the nr 2 Maserati MC 12 of Christian Montanari and Miguel Ramos – a first FIA GT podium for both drivers. Running strongly all weekend, the car qualified third and managed to cross the line in third position despite a drive-through penalty and an additional stop. "For me, this result was very important," Montanari said. "I think it was well deserved due to the conditions; it was not easy to race in these conditions. We had a drive-through penalty, and had some damage which meant we had to stop. We finished third, and I am very happy for me and Miguel and for Michelin, it's a very good result." Thomas Biagi and Fabrizio

Gollin, in the nr 1 car, had a strong start, and Biagi was second when he pitted. However, problems meant the car finished seventh overall, sixth in GT1. This gave Thomas an additional three points, and he is now in joint second place in the Drivers Classification. "It would have been nice to get a podium in Bucharest, but I am confident for the next race in Monza as we will have a lighter car," Thomas explained. Vitaphone has further strengthened its lead in the Teams points table, while today's result placed Maserati back in the lead in the Manufacturer's Cup.

Wendlinger and Sharp, long-time race leaders in the nr 33 Jetalliance Aston Martin DBR9, were fourth once again, their pit-stop strategy unfortunately dropping them back at the end, having lost too much time on the final stop. The team's second car, running in a strong fourth early on, was eliminated after being unable to avoid the Kessel Ferrari 575 Maranello, which had a spin.

The PK Carsport Corvette C5R of Kumpen and Longin finished fifth, maintaining the two Belgian drivers in a strong joint second position in the points table, just two points behind Bouchut and Mücke. With Gollin and Biagi sixth, Aston Martin Racing BMS's DBR9 of Davies and Babini was seventh, with SRT taking the final point – and the Citation Cup victory – in eighth.

### FANTASTIC THREE IN A ROW FOR AF CORSE MOTOROLA'S MULLER AND VILANDER



With four makes in the top five, the sixth position went to the winning GT2 car, the nr 50 AF Corse Motorola Ferrari 430 GT2 car of Dirk Müller and Toni Vilander, after a majestic performance in the rain gave them their third win of the season, and a commanding lead in the Championship.

"It feels really great," Müller said. "We had a very bad day yesterday, losing one car completely; luckily the driver is OK. Then we lost our engine, just before the second practice. But that's the way it is. I'd like to congratulate the team – the mechanics worked until midnight and did a fantastic job, giving us the possibility to turn it around today and win it. Toni did a fantastic first stint, staying out of trouble. He was the first guy to come in when the safety car came out: the team had very good communication and a very good strategy, and I think it was a strategy race today. It was up to the drivers not to make any mistakes, and up to the team to make the right strategy, and we got it all right. What else can I say – three times in a row, it's fantastic!"

They finished ahead of a trio of Porsches, as always comfortable in the rain. The nr 97 BMS Scuderia Italia Porsche was second, and might have finished higher were it not for a puncture and two penalties. "I am really happy to finish second and it's a good result considering," Collard explained. "The conditions were, as we expected, really difficult, but we did a good job with no mistakes, and I'm happy to give the car back to the team in one piece."

The nr 66 Felbermayr Proton Porsche 996 GT3 was an excellent third for Marc Lieb and Horst Felbermayr Jr - a fine result for the year-old car, which started from the back of the grid, especially for Horst, whose company has been involved in the building of the circuit. "It's a fantastic race for the whole team, for Horst and myself," Lieb said. "When we came here we were hoping for a top five finish, and now we're on the podium which we didn't expect. The car was running brilliantly, we didn't change tyres which meant it was a bit difficult at the end and very slippery. Horst also did a fantastic job. Neither car in the team had any crashes, which is unusual in a street race in the rain. We're all very happy, it's great for Felbermayr."

In a Porsche one-two-three behind the AF Corse Ferrari, the nr 74 Ebimotors Porsche of Zani and Busnelli was fourth. Scuderia Ecosse's Ferrari 430 GT2 of Mullen and Kirkaldy was fifth; the second car was out early on when Jarek Janis locked up and went straight on into the tyre barriers. The nr 53 Racing Team Edil Cris Ferrari was sixth and the nr 69 Felbermayr Proton Porsche seventh.

In the classification, Muller and Vilander have a 16-point lead over Tim Mullen, with Collard and Mallucelli just one point behind the British driver. In the Teams' classification, AF Corse Motorola leads Scuderia Ecosse.

### GREAT RACE FOR THE GILLET VERTIGO

The Belgian Racing Gillet Vertigo finished 11th, after running as high as 6th with an excellent performance in the rain from Bas Leinders and Renaud Kuppens – their second best result, after 10<sup>th</sup> in Adria last year. "Renaud took the start behind the safety car but we came in on lap one to make the mandatory driver change," Bas Leinders said. "I took over, and

pushed like hell from the start until I got out of the car. At one point I was sixth overall. It's really good to be passing GT1 cars, not only Citation Cup cars but the real GT1 cars. I really like street circuits, I've done Monaco six times, so maybe that helps a bit. It separates the men from the boys... I'd like to thank the team and especially Pirelli. It's the first time we've driven with them, and they gave us excellent tyres."

## SECOND CITATION CUP WIN FOR SRT

SRT claimed its second consecutive win in the Citation Cup, with its Corvette C5 of Cloet and Vannelet finishing eighth to take the final GT1 point. Vannelet had a busy weekend as he is also leading the FIA GT3 European Championship with his team-mate Henri Moser.

"Everything went well, it was quite tricky, the car had harder tyres, so it was not easy, but you have to make the best with what you have," Cloet explained. "It was difficult for everyone out there. It was the first time I drove in a street race and I didn't know what to expect, but I liked the experience very much and would like to repeat it." They were closely followed by the two JMB Racing Maserati MC 12 cars of Macari/Aucott and Kutemann/Waaijenberg.



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