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Oggetto: FIA GT CHAMPIONSHIP - R6 - BUCHAREST CITY CHALLENGE : CHAMPIONSHIP RACE

FIA GT CHAMPIONSHIP – BUCHAREST CITY CHALLENGE CHAMPIONSHIP RACE

The second running of the Bucharest City Challenge took the FIA GT Championship for an exciting ride around the imposing Romanian Parliamentary buildings. With closely-fought and exciting races on the fast and challenging street circuit, the one-hour race format proved to be a real bonus, not only for the delighted crowds who lined the streets, but for the drivers, who had to cope with the sweltering summer temperatures. GT1 victory went to Phoenix Carsport's Swiss duo of Fässler and Deletraz, in their Corvette C6R, while CR Scuderia claimed the GT2 victory with Kirkaldy and Bell, in the Ferrari 430 GT2.



FIRST WIN FOR DELETRAZ AND FÄSSLER



With 44,000 visitors over the weekend, 25,000 filled the grandstands on Sunday to see Marcel Fässler and Jean-Denis Deletraz triumph in their Phoenix Carsport Corvette C6R. The Swiss duo have dominated the whole weekend, with Fässler taking pole position, and leading their car to victory in Saturday's qualifying race. This gave them the pole advantage for the Championship race, which they used to full effect. Chased throughout by Hezemans and Gollin in their sister Phoenix Carsport Corvette, their victory was only assured when the nr 6 touched the wall and ended

its progress. This left second and third places to the Vitaphone Racing Team Maserati MC 12 cars, which had seemed particularly at ease on the short, tight circuit despite their success ballast from Spa.

"The car was really working fantastically. We had a good balance over the whole weekend," Fässler commented. "We never made a mistake and the car was always in good shape. The limit between winning and losing is very tight on this circuit. We managed to last two days without making any mistakes and I think that's why we won!"

After a difficult race, which Miguel Ramos described as the most difficult of his career, the nr 2 Vitaphone Maserati finished second, despite 60 kg penalty weight and the fact that the car was suffering from a gearbox problem and overheating oil. Bartels and Bertolini crossed the line 13 seconds behind the winners in third, meaning that their Maserati MC 12 will have even more weight for Brno. However, Michael Bartels spoke for everyone when he thanked the city and the event organisers for their hard work : "I would like to use this opportunity, on the behalf of the drivers, to thank the Bucharest Ring people here and the people at SRO," he said. "To organise a race like this; to manage to close a city with three million inhabitants for a race, it means a lot. I think the race went without big problems. From the driver's side, we were happy to find the conditions here. There are still some improvements to be made, but I hope we can keep this race on the calendar. Thank you to everyone at the Bucharest Ring."

Anthony Kumpen and Bert Longin put in a fine performance to finish just off the podium, in fourth position, in

their PK Carsport Saleen S7R. Challenging the nr 1 Maserati for much of the hour race, the car claimed its best finish of the season in the Romanian heat. Fifth went to the nr 10 Gigawave Motorsport Aston Martin DBR9, ahead of the nr 3 SRT Corvette of Bouchut and Maassen, and the nr 8 IPB Spartak Lamborghini Murciélago. These three cars raced nose to tail through the city streets for much of the race, despite the heat and the traffic. The top six finished within 38 seconds after 46 laps of racing, showing how close the race was. The nr 6 Phoenix Carsport Corvette was classified eighth, after stopping ten laps back further to contact with the wall when it was challenging for the lead.

VITAPHONE IN THE LEAD

After Bucharest, and with four rounds remaining, Vitaphone Racing Team has maintained its supremacy in both the Team and Drivers classifications. Bertolini and Bartels now have 50 points, 12.5 ahead of their team-mates Negrão and Ramos, who finished a fine second today. Hezemans and Gollin are lying third after scoring 4.5 points this weekend, while Fässler and Deletraz are up to fourth. In the Teams classification, Vitaphone has 87.5 points, while Phoenix Carsport are on 57. With four races remaining and 18 potential points for a two-car team, the fight is still on.



FIRST FIA GT CHAMPIONSHIP WIN FOR CR SCUDERIA



After second in qualifying and a fine win in the qualifying race, CR Scuderia put in a strong performance around the Bucharest streets to claim their first FIA GT win in Romania today. The nr 56 Ferrari 430 GT2 of Andrew Kirkaldy and Rob Bell started from pole but lost out at the start, dropping back behind the AF Corse Ferrari. A race-long battle ensued, won by the British car when the nr 50 dropped back after reporting brake problems. Bruni crossed the line 0.3 seconds behind Kirkaldy, to claim their second second-place of the weekend and maintain their Championship lead. Third went to

Prospeed Competition and the duo of Westbrook and Collard, who had a difficult weekend with their Porsche over the bumpy street circuit.

"It's fantastic. A lot has gone in to getting the team here today," Andrew Kirkaldy commented. "We started working last October, and there's been so much to do to get us here. All we've done to get not only this team, but two others running, so that's nine cars in all, is a lot of work. It's great for the guys to be here. It's all looking fantastic for CRS at the moment!"

Fourth today went to Scuderia Ecosse, whose Ferrari 430 GT2 ran strongly all weekend, with Spa winners BMS Scuderia Italia fifth. The nr 95 Advanced Engineering Pecom Ferrari of Russo and Perez-Companc was sixth, recovering well after their fire extinguisher accident yesterday, with Kessel Racing taking the final point in seventh.

The GT2 results remain provisional pending the investigation of the data from the Magneti Marelli data recorder in the nr 50 AF Corse car, after their official data logger did not record any data.

VILANDER AND BRUNI RETAIN THE LEAD

Second in both the Qualifying and Championship race, Vilander and Bruni claimed 8 points over the Bucharest weekend and now have 59 points, 21.5 ahead of their nearest rivals Ruberti and Malucelli in the BMS Ferrari. Collard and Westbrook are third, having overtaken Rigon/Camathias, who went out today with a cooling liquid leak. Bell and Kirkaldy are now up to fifth, ahead of Biagi and Montanari, whose nr 51 car was involved in a racing incident with the nr 69 Felbermayr Porsche, which took both cars out of contention. In the Teams points, AF Corse have a commanding lead of 34 points ahead of BMS Scuderia Italia. CR

Scuderia are now on 47 points, just 8 behind BMS.

FINE FINISH FOR BELGIAN RACING

The sole G2 competitor in action this weekend, Belgian Racing put in a good performance on the tight city circuit to finish 15th overall today, having also finished the Qualifying race on Saturday. "We had a reasonable race," Leinders said. "Trying to control the engine was tricky, because it got a bit too hot and went into security mode, and after the third lap I lost some power. It stayed this way until the end of the race so we might have been able to do a few places better. The few previous races we haven't finished, and now we finished two in a row, so that's quite a good result. I had a nice fight at the beginning with Felbermayr, which was my first fight of the year! You've got to be optimistic."



The next race takes place in three weeks time, at the popular Czech circuit of Brno.

Points, quotes, full race facts and photos are available on www.fiagt.com