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Oggetto: FIA GT CHAMPIONSHIP - R8 NOGARO - PREVIEW



FIA GT CHAMPIONSHIP
ROUND 8 - NOGARO
PREVIEW NEWSLETTER
 September 26th 2008

For the second time, the FIA GT Championship will be heading to the circuit of Nogaro, in the South of France. This track was extensively renovated in 2006, with new state-of-the-art facilities in an impressive pit building, and hosted an excellent round of the Championship in 2007, when the penultimate round was held there.



With three rounds remaining, the fight is still very much alive in the [FIA GT Championship](#). In the GT1 category, Vitaphone Racing Team continues to lead both Teams and Drivers classifications, with Bartels and Bertolini on track to repeat their 2006 title-winning feat. However, Phoenix Carsport Racing's duo of Hezemans and Gollin are just 11 points adrift, while Hezemans won the Nogaro round last year, in the Carsport Corvette he then shared with Jean-Denis Deletraz. The eight Vitaphone and Phoenix drivers occupy the top four positions in the Drivers classifications, and the

two teams also head the Teams classification. They will face plenty of opposition in France, first and foremost from local hero Christophe Bouchut, who is determined to see the SRT Corvette return to the top of the podium for his home round. And the Brno winners, Wendlinger and Sharp, are on a high after a fine weekend in the Czech Republic. This round will also see a newcomer in the form of DKR Engineering, a race-winner in the FFSA French GT Championship, which will join the grid with its Corvette C6R, while Larbre Competition will make its long-awaited return with the nr 7 Saleen S7, damaged after a warm-up crash in Spa.

In GT2, AF Corse's Vilander and Bruni returned to the top step in Brno, strengthening their points lead and giving themselves 75 kg handicap weight for this anti-penultimate round. Their nearest rivals, BMS Scuderia Italia's Malucelli and Ruberti, are 21.5 points behind, with only 30 points remaining. This means that should the nr 50 car finish ahead of the nr 77 in France, AF Corse would secure the 2008 title. The team also has a 43-point lead over BMS in the Teams classification. There are a number of changes in GT2 for this round, including the return of Andrea Piccini to CR Scuderia, with the team hoping to challenge for the second place in the Teams classification. Alex Davison, from Australia, replaces Emmanuel Collard in the nr 61 Prospeed Competition Porsche, while José Manuel Balbiani of Argentina will join Joël Camathias in the nr 78 BMS Ferrari.



The [FIA GT3 European Championship](#) will be racing at Nogaro for the first time, holding their penultimate round of the 2008 season in France. However, many of the teams have some knowledge of the circuit, as the performance-balancing tests for the 2008 season were held there in April. Brno saw a change of leaders, with Thomas Mutsch and Ian Khan regaining the upper hand for Matech GT Racing, after the Ford GT took its

sixth win of the season. Former points leaders James Ruffier and Arnaud Peyroles, with their Martini Callaway Corvette Z06, will be on home ground in Nogaro, and are only two points adrift. With plenty of other French drivers and teams on the grid, the two races should provide plenty of excitement.

Nogaro will be the season finale of the [2008 GT4 European Cup](#), with the titles yet to be determined in the final three races of the year. Reigning Champion Eric de Doncker has a strong option on the 2008 crown, with a 28-point lead and a maximum of 30 points remaining. But his aim is also to win the Teams title, so his Motorsport98 Mustang FR500C has a busy weekend ahead. Last year, Alex Buncombe won both the Nogaro rounds; the young British driver is currently fourth after joining the series in Oschersleben. As for the Sports Light category, KTM are certain of the title. All three of their drivers, Christopher Haase, Dennis Retera and Catarina Felser, are all still in contention for the inaugural crown. They will face opposition from the two Donkervoort D8GT cars, including that of French driver Stephane Wintenberger.



The three SRO-promoted series will be joined at Nogaro by the [Peugeot THP Spider Cup](#), with around 20 prototypes driving at Nogaro for the first time. These small prototypes, built according to the ACO's LMP1 and LMP2 regulations, weigh 765 kg, with a 1.6 litre engine producing 220 bhp. The Championship is currently extremely close, which should guarantee close action, with all the drivers aiming for the ultimate prize : a test day behind the wheel of the Peugeot 908 HDi FAP. Grégory Guilvert

leads on 174 points, just four ahead of British driver Simon Moulton.

Last but not least, the [Bioracing Series](#) will also join the programme in Nogaro. This eco-friendly series uses an 800 kg prototype, driven by a 4-litre V6 engine, producing 350 bhp, and running on the most ecological of the bioethanol strains. The three races should see runaway leader Geoffrey Dellus claim the title, as the driver has a 100-point lead over his nearest rival Bastien Brière – and moreover, Nogaro is the Toulouse-based driver's favourite circuit.



But Nogaro will not just be about the series fighting it out on track. With a gigantic autograph session throughout the paddock, a supercar park, a race between a KTM X-Bow and a KTM bike on the track, parachutists landing on the starting grid and a Corvette parade, the weekend will be action-packed in all ways.

The [newsletter](#) is now on line, including previews for all series taking part in the Nogaro event, provisional entry lists, [news and quotes](#) from the teams and drivers in the FIA GT Championship, and a special article on leading French driver in the FIA GT, [Christophe Bouchut](#), who is celebrating 20 years in Motorsport.

For more information, see www.fiagt.com and the [newsletter](#). The official FIA entry lists will be issued on Monday and updated.

Jacque Groom
Media Delegate, FIA GT Championship

tel : +41 21 784 2623

fax : +41 21 784 2561

email : jacquie@sro.co.uk

mobile phone : +41 79 206 4661 (race weekends and out-of office times only !)