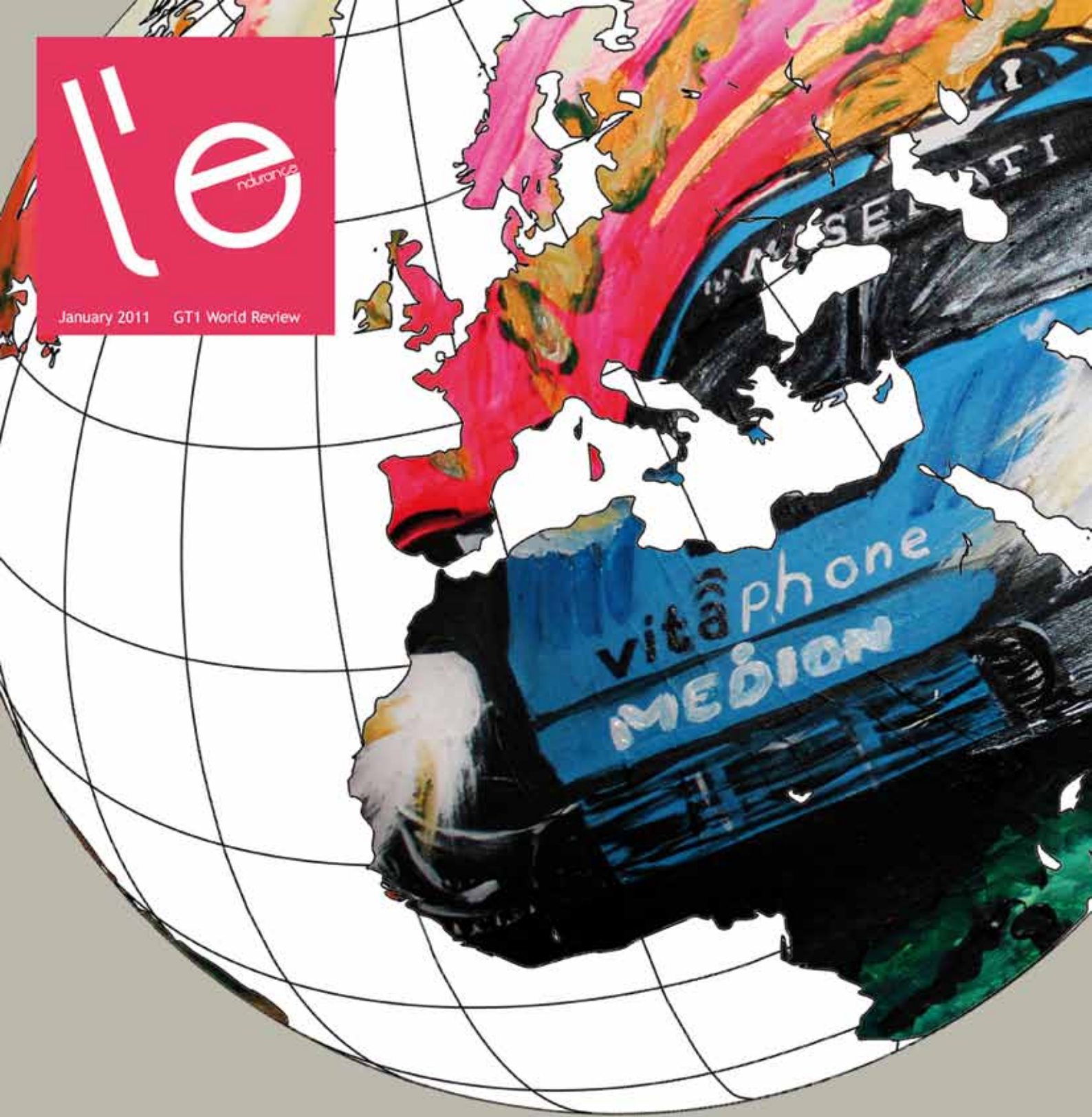




January 2011 GT1 World Review



WHEN GT1 RULED THE EARTH

The story of the FIA GT1 World Championship

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FOCUS

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EVENTS

This month's *l'endurance* magazine is focused on the inaugural GT1 World Championship.

l'endurance is:

Jake Yorath (editor)

Alex Roache (deputy editor)

Dan Bathie (sub editor)

Brecht Decancq (photographer)

Tim Yorath (copy editor)

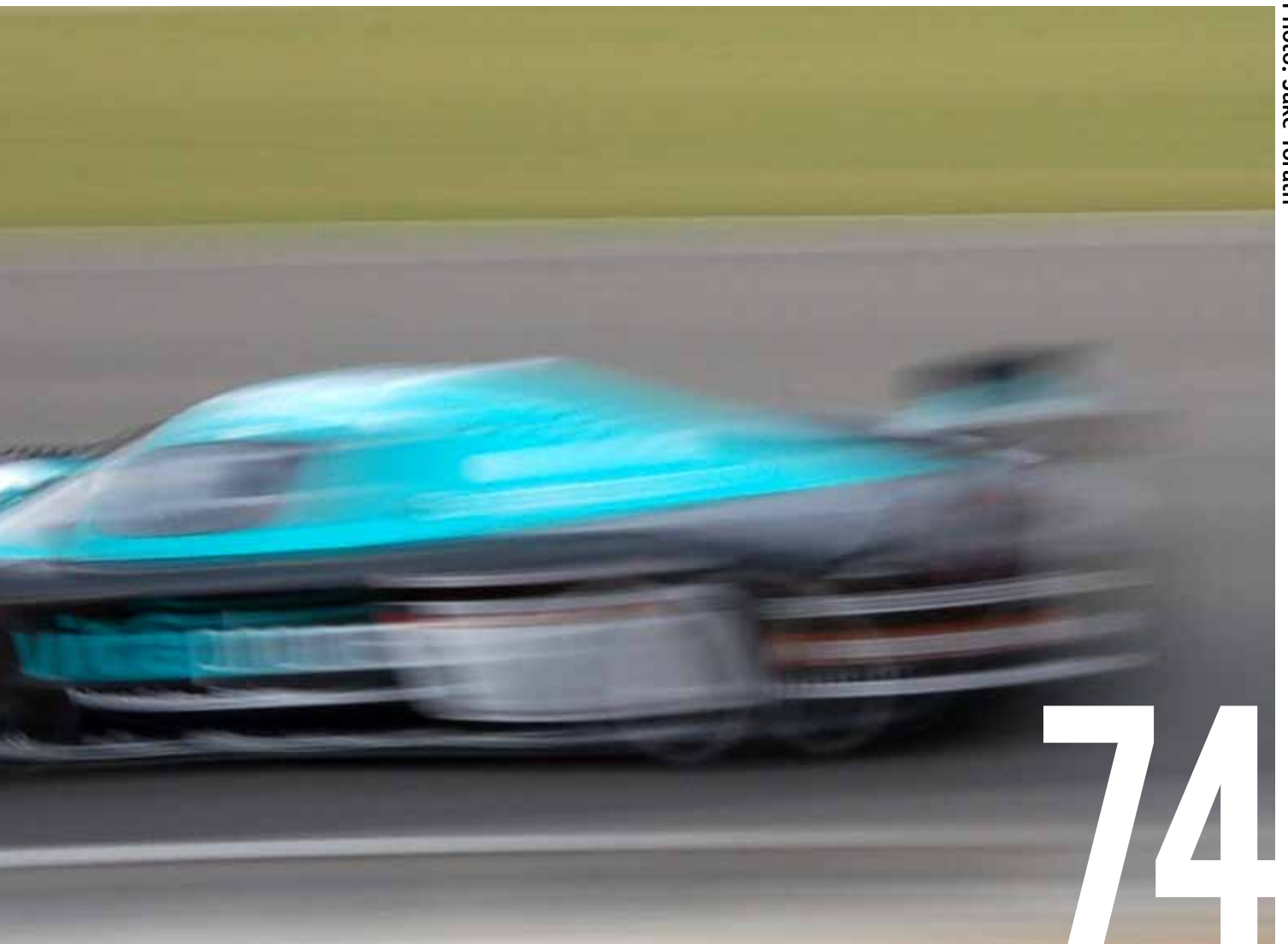


Photo: Jake Yorath

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In
FOCUS

Nurburgring, FIA GT1 World Championship.
Brecht Decancq used a Nikon D300 and 70-200 F2.8
Nikkor. Shutter speed 1/1600th at F2.8.





10

we

**650 BHP?
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In
FOCUS

Silverstone, FIA GT1 World Championship.
Jake Yorath used a Nikon D50 and 80-200 F2.8 Nikkor. Shutter speed 1/100th at F11.





PHOTOG

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In
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Silverstone, FIA GT1 World Championship.
Steve Shurey used a Nikon D200 and 50-500 F4
Sigma. Shutter speed 1/320th at F10.





In
FOCUS

Silverstone, FIA GT1 World Championship.
Ste Hodges used an Olympus E500 and 70-300 F4-
5.6 Zuiko. Shutter speed 1/30th at F11.





In
FOCUS

FIA GT1 World Championship.
Nat Hills produced this artwork, specifically commissioned for *l'endurance*. Oil on canvas.





Mi
01/2011

COMI

Jake
YORATH



Anyone who tuned into a GT1 race in 2010 will have one overriding memory: action. From passes like Jamie Campbell-Walters stunners at Silverstone and Paul Ricard, to clashes all too often surrounding Enrique Bernoldi. Incidentally, none of them were his fault but he was caught up at least three times.

So who was my driver of the season? There are a few very worthy candidates, starting with the winners themselves. There's no doubt that Michael Bartels is a very good GT driver. Having won everything going with his Vitaphone Racing concern, his speed and consistency are well proven. Howev-

Photos: DPPI/ GT1World.com (left), Jake Yorath (right)

MENT

“ *To be honest, it's been bloody hard work convincing people this magazine could work. Here goes...* ”

er, he tends toward the steady rather than the spectacular and thus, for me, neither he nor team mate Bertolini can be driver of the year.

Both Darren Turner and Tomas Enge starred at Young Driver, holding down a challenge for the title until the very last round. The experienced pair, both with huge experience at the wheel of various DBR9s, showed it. Enge's slide out of Luffield on the way (briefly) to the Tourist Trophy will live long, long in the memory.

For Reiter, we might have expected, above all, to see Peter Kox star. Though he did, he and team mate Christopher Haase (the reigning GT3 champion) were outshone by the two stars from the sec-

ond car. Ex F1 driver and GT champion Ricardo Zonta was a brilliant find and a partner from heaven for young German Frank Kechele, who matched his illustrious team mate with aplomb. The pairing were supreme both at Spa and Navarra. In Spain especially, they were untouchable.

But the real stars drove blue Fords. First up, Neel Jani. The Swiss driver showed awesome pace on board his Matech car, making Nicolas Prost look like a rank amateur and regularly matching the pace of his racy team mate... Richard Westbrook. The Britain was and continues to be fantastic. His aggressive style may have lost him one or two Christmas cards in the paddock, not least the

aforementioned Bernoldi, but his aggression was rarely untamed. His Algarve display was wonderful, full of passing moves from the textbook and the opportunist's hand book.

The other stand out driver of the year was a surprise to many. Having had a disastrous Formula One experience with Renault, Romain Grosjean arrived in GT1 and blew the field to pieces. His pace was, for want of a better word, explosive. At Abu Dhabi he was brilliant. At Silverstone he was weighed down but still a sight to behold. At Brno, brilliant again. Paul Ricard weight slowed him again and after bad luck at Spa, he was gone to test tyres for Pirelli's F1 charge. He was sorely missed.

2

0

10

TEAM BY TEAM

Read our succinct team by team guide.

The
TEAMS

VITAPHONE RACING



Photo: Jake Yorath

1



ANDREA BERTOLINI (ITA)



MICHAEL BARTELS (DEU)

2



ENRIQUE BERNOLDI (BRA)



MIGUEL RAMOS (POR)



XANDI NEGRAO (BRA)

RACING



Maserati MC12
6.0 Litre V12
(Mid Engine)

Teams' Championship

Position: Champions

Points: 195

Wins: 4

Poles: 1

Podiums: 13

Photo: DPPI/ GT1World.com



Photo: Jake Yorath

At the beginning of the season, you wouldn't have gotten much capital back for a bet on Vitaphone Racing or lead driving crew, German team owner Michael Bartels and Italian factory Maserati driver Andrea Bertolini. But the turquoise and black cars didn't have it all their own way and it was as much down to others making mistakes as it was down to the metronomic consistency of the Championship's leading force. Mind you, that is not to take away from a brilliantly weighted title charge from the most successful team of recent years.

Led again by another German, Jens Hagelauer, it would have been easy for a team so dominant in recent years to slip into complacent mood and in many ways, they would've been forgiven for that. They kicked off the year with a car that had probably had the rough end of Stephane Ratel's patented equalisation stick yet still managed to score reasonable points in Abu Dhabi. It was the number one crew (of course) who seemed to have the upper hand over their team mates, with a Qualifying Race third followed by fourth in the main event. Though Enrique Bernoldi showed a good turn of speed, Portuguese amateur Miguel Ramos was showing unfortunate signs of being a little out of his depth aboard the GT1 Maserati. It would be a pattern repeated all season long,

with the second car's only win coming when Ramos was replaced by impressive local (and ex season long contender for the team) Xandi Negrao for Brazil. Bernoldi was regularly amongst the fastest runners, though and a natural racing talent hidden in Formula One, but exposed to European fans with Sangari Corvette in 2009, shone again. Bertolini was again class. The Italian, so long a mainstay of the team and regularly amongst the very best in the series, once again proved that he and Bartels are all but unbeatable at this level. Alongside his German partner, consistency was a word never far away. It's arguable that only once all season was the Maserati the best car (at Paul Ricard) but Vitaphone were pretty much favourites from start to finish. As usual, it was not just good driving but the best prepared cars and crew in the Championship that scored the best points. Not only is the Vitaphone garage the shiniest in the land, the cars are also prepared to a level rarely seen in GT racing. The contrast with other teams, particularly those further down the grid, was marked and it showed on track. All in all, almost infallible in car one, with car two occasionally a solid back up.

By JY



CABANAS

210
DRIVER

2

vitaphor

KESSEL

TRUCKER

MICHELIN

W MASEIATI

vitaphor
123
↓
20
CHAMP



one 11
3 4
-
10
PION

The
TEAMS

SWISS RACING

Photo: Jake Yorath



3



KARL WENDLINGER (AUT)



HENRI MOSER (CH)

4



SEIJI ARA (JAP)



MAX NILSSON (SWE)

TEAM



Nissan GTR 5.5 Litre V8 (Front Engine)

Teams' Championship

Position: Tenth

Points: 5

Wins: 0

Poles: 0

Podiums: 0

Photos: DPPI/ GT1World.com



Talking to SRT about their season is a little bit like reminding someone that their favourite pet was put down in 2010. It's hard to find many positives in a season that, sadly, just didn't click for what is not a team lacking quality or talent. The raw statistics (and we'll not dwell long) count up five points, three top ten finishes and... not a whole lot to cheer. One of those five points came courtesy of Phoenix's disqualification from the Championship.

Were there positives? Well, certainly there were at least a few. At the final round of the season there was promise, with a season best seventh place finish in the Qualifying Race. But in reality it probably came too late, though it does provide the team with something to build on, despite it being an astute tactical call rather than outright pace that earned the place.

Pre season there was great optimism. Karl Wendlinger, veteran Austrian with a wealth of experience, led the attack in car number three. Having been the fastest driver in FIA GT, he was one of the pre season favourites to be fast. He was teamed with Swiss youngster Henri Moser, and it's not been long since he grabbed the GT3 title. In the other car, Le Mans winner Seiji Ara (fast, perhaps, but probably not at the level of either Wendlinger or the drivers he shared his winning Goh

Audi with in 2004) was joined by Max Nilsson. The Swede didn't come with a great deal of pedigree and probably saw 2010 as a development year above anything else.

So it proved. What is most curious for the team was Sumo's apparent ability to outpace their brand buddies. That could be attributed, in part, to the inclusion of Dumbreck and Krumm at Sumo, who were by far the best Nissan crew all season. Their experience with dealing with Nissan must have been a big help whereas SRT probably missed that greatly. It seems the Nissan is hard to drive and set up, and any previous experience with the car and with its engineering team can only help.

For 2011, more success has to happen. Nissan will be wanting to see its cars more regularly up the grid and to do it, Swiss Racing Team have got a lot to do; they'd do worse than borrowing a works Nissan driver who knows the set up.

By JY



PROBIA SAGNER







5



THOMAS MUTSCH (DEU)



ROMAIN GROSJEAN (FRA)



RICHARD WESTBROOK (GBR)

6



NATACHA GACHNANG (CH)



CYNDIE ALLEMAN (CH)



OLIVIER PANIS (FR)



RAHEL FREY (CH)



NEEL JANI (CH)



NICOLAS ARMINDO (FR)



NICOLAS PROST (FR)



ROMAIN GROSJEAN (FR)

COMpetition



Ford GT
5.3 Litre V8
(Mid Engine)

Teams' Championship

Position: Fifth
Points: 135
Wins: 2
Poles: 0
Podiums: 7

Photos: DPPI/ GT1World.com



What a season it could have been for Martin Bartek and Matech Competition. GT1 World Championship, Le Mans 24 hours... and it all started so well. Before Abu Dhabi, we laughed at the appointment of F1 flop Romain Grosjean, but it soon became clear that the Frenchman was a shrewd appointment alongside Matech stalwart Thomas Mutsch. But unfortunately the season just lacked any kind of continuity. Opening round drivers Natacha Gachnang and Cyndie Alleman looked out of their depth and after a horrific accident (that saw Gachnang, cousin of F1 driver Sebastien Buemi, break a leg) the second car would sit out Silverstone. What followed was a merry-go-round of professional drivers of various statures and reputations with very similar results (poor ones) until the team finally settled with impressive Swiss Neel Jani. He made Nicolas Prost look rather average and with Nic Armindo, proved that he has a lot of talent that could be very useful in the future and would've scored better but for plain bad luck.

In the lead car, upheaval came at Spa as Grosjean left to test Pirelli tyres for F1 (not before he'd won two rounds all but by himself) and was replaced by Richard Westbrook. There is not a superlative that covers just how entertaining an appointment the British charger was and his drives from the

midfield (Mutsch often struggling to get the best out of the Ford in qualifying, or the race) netted action aplenty. His style was agricultural at times (ask Vitaphone) but it kept Mutsch in the title race until Brazil, where an unfortunate piece of Frank Kechele related violence sadly put paid to the effort. It was a valiant effort from the British/ German pairing though and it could've paid so much more dividends had it not been for a touch of over eager driving here and there, and poor luck at the wrong moments.

As a team, Matech were polished (though not quite in the same bracket as Vitaphone) and professional as well as popular, thanks in no small part to the pants worn by their grid girls. Of course, the thunder of the Ford V8 and the beauty of the car itself helped too and they will be sorely missed in the 2011 series. Without stunning results, though, the number of professional drivers being hired and swapped by the team meant that something really had to give; sadly, it is the team's 2011 season that has given.

By JY

Mutsch 5 Westbrook





SINTEZ

Armando 6 Jani

CME
6



The
TEAMS

YOUNG DRIVER

Photo: DPPV/ GT1World.com



7



DARREN TURNER (GBR)



TOMAS ENGE (CZE)

8



CHRISTOFFER NYGAARD (DEN)



STEFAN MÜCKE (DEU)



JOSE MARIA LOPEZ (ARG)



PEDRO LAMY (POR)

R AMR



Aston Martin DBR9
6.0 Litre V12
(Front Engine)

Teams' Championship

Position: Fourth

Points: 147

Wins: 3

Poles: 3

Podiums: 7

Photo: Dan Bathie



Photo: DPPI/ GT1World.com

A slightly disappointing season for the team with the most confusing name. Darren Turner, Tomas Enge and Stefan Mucke aren't the youngest of drivers at 36, 34 and 30 respectively but I'll stop there before I'm accused of being ageist! The Young Driver team although a new name was essentially the Fischer Racing outfit, responsible for running a Ford GT in the GT3 Championship. Often seen as the favoured Aston team the fact was the Young Driver Team was funded by Danish entrepreneur Jan Struve which enabled them to take up AMR's offer of factory drivers (which Hexis couldn't due to needing drivers that brought money) bringing on board Turner, Enge and Mucke, with young Danish driver Christoffer Nygaard joining them - a line up that many teams would be envious of.

As you would expect from a team widely tipped as a title contender, the 7 car of the hugely experienced Turner and Enge was often at the sharp end of the grid with the sister car proving to be a good back-up, also capable of delivering strong results of their own. The opener in Abu Dhabi proved a struggle, the team coming away from the desert with nul points. Silverstone, and their luck seemed to have changed, the DBR9 the quickest car around the Northamptonshire circuit. Leading from pole the seven car seemed to have the qualifying race

wrapped up until two penalties left them once again without points. The main race saw them become the winners of the Tourist Trophy, only for the car to be excluded due to a worn plank.

The third round at Brno finally saw Enge and Turner put points on the board with two second places. The 8 car then claimed their first podium at Spa. Nurburgring was the weekend Silverstone should have been, the seven car dominating with a clean sweep. The team almost claimed the double win feat again at Interlagos but for an ambitious move by the number two Maserati relegating them to second in the championship race. By now the championship was still within grasp but it was slim - a disappointing race one at San Luis saw the inevitable happen as Vitaphone clinched the championship, and with Hexis taking home a huge points haul, the number seven crew dropped to fourth in the championship matching the teams position in their championship.

In the end it was lack of consistency (and a harsh penalty) that saw the lead car miss out on the title - the ingredients for a title run were there but the final outcome proved to be more pub grub than Michelin star!

By DB

ASTON MARTIN

GT1 World Championship

ENERGY™

8

GT1World.com

youngDriver



youngDriver



youngDriver



Photo: Brecht Decanq

The
TEAMS

HEXIS AMR

Photo: DPPi/ GT1World.com



9



FRED MAKOWIECKI (FRA)



THOMAS ACCARY (FRA)



STEPHANE SARRAZIN (FRA)



PHILIPPE DUMAS (FRA)



YANN CLAIRAY (FRA)

10



CLIVIO PICCIONE (MCO)



JONATHAN HIRSCHI (CHE)



Aston Martin DBR9 6.0 Litre V12 (Front Engine)

Teams' Championship

Position: Second

Points: 177

Wins: 3

Poles: 0

Podiums: 8

Photos: DPPI/ GT1World.com



The French Hexis outfit made the step up to GT1 this year after three years in GT3. Pairing up again with Aston Martin, the team enjoyed a successful season with the DBR9 finishing in second place in the championship and beating the rival Aston team, the more fancied Young Driver squad. It was maybe a surprise to see Hexis in 2nd place by the end of the championship but look at their results and you can see a consistent points haul with only both cars not scoring in the first round at Abu Dhabi. Perhaps look at it like a Vitaphone championship run without the polished floor. The driver line-up for the two cars stayed fairly consistent throughout the season. In the number ten car young Swiss driver Jonathan Hirschi joined Monegasque Clivio Piccione for all ten rounds. The line-up was strong but unspectacular with both driver fairly even, however they were never really a match for the sister number nine car. Leading that was Frenchman Frédéric Makowiecki, who stepped up from GT3 with the Hexis team. For the first round Makowiecki was partnered with team manager come racing driver Philippe Dumas after a deal with Jean Denis Delétraz fell through. Thomas Accary joined for rounds 2, 4 and 5 with Stephane Sarrazin filling in for the 3rd round at Brno. Yann Clairay finally joined for the sixth round and stayed un-

til the championship's conclusion.

After disastrous races at Abu Dhabi the team enjoyed a great weekend at Silverstone, a 1-2 in the qualifying race was followed up with second place in the main event for the nine car (it could have been a win but for a pit infringement.) Another podium didn't follow until the championship race at the 8th round at Navarra. In the next round at Interlagos the ten car claimed a third place in the qualifying race and fourth in the feature race. The team saved the best for last, however with a performance that mirrored the magnificence of the backdrop of the Potero de los Funes circuit.

Second on the grid translated into a convincing victory in the qualifying race for the number nine car. They followed this up with a stroll to victory in the feature race, with the sister coming home third. The impressive points haul in the Arginine volcano clinched the runner up place in the teams' championship behind Vitaphone. It also meant that Frédéric Makowiecki claimed third place in the drivers' championship, no easy feat when you look at the competition. Fast and fault free he has earned his place in the top flight of GT racing. With a stable team mate for the year we could have seen him challenging for the title.

By DB



HEXIS

Gulf
Gulf.com





8
Young Driver AMR
Aston Martin DB9
Damen Mücke DB9 / Chevrolet

MOTUL

MICHELIN

HEXIS

HEXIS
ENERGY

HEXIS

ASTON MARTIN
RACING

www.hexis-a

The
TEAMS

MAD-CROC RA

Photo: DPPV GT1World.com



11



XAVIER MAASSEN (BEL)



JULIEN JOUSSE (FRA)



ALEX MULLER (DEU)



NICOLAS ARMINDO (FRA)



JOS MENTEN (NLD)



SERGIO JIMENEZ (BRA)



MIKE HEZEMANS (NLD)



CLAUDIO DAHRUJ (BRA)

12



PERTTI KUISMANEN (FIN)



OLLY GAVIN (GBR)



LAURENT CAZENAIVE (FRA)



DUNCAN HUISMAN (NLD)



MIKA SALO (FIN)

RACING



Corvette C6.R 7.0 Litre V8 (Front Engine)

Teams' Championship

Position: DQ

Points: n/a

Wins: 1

Poles: 1

Podiums: 1

Photos: DPPI/ GT1World.com



For Corvette fans, it's probably best to look away now. Rather like Phoenix, Mad Croc Racing's season ended in disrepute and controversy, having gone through a tumultuous bump and grind since the flag dropped in the Emirates so many months ago.

DKR Engineering ran the team for Pertti Kuismanen and were generally not quite as fast as Phoenix. Just like many other teams, there was a distinct lack of cohesion. Xavier Maassen proved to be an excellent choice and various drivers teamed with him could also have been inspired. Curiously, German speedster Alex Müller couldn't really get to grips with the big American quite like he can a Maserati. Nicolas Armindo was another who probably needed more time behind the wheel and even Mike Hezemans struggled to get the car to the sharp end. However, with Jos Menten at Spa, only a desperate piece of luck prevented Corvette taking a Championship Race win after cruising to the Qualifying Race win. It never got any better, despite the conveyor belt of drivers continuing. For Kuismanen, it probably wouldn't be harsh or inaccurate to describe him as out of his depth. Mika Salo and, most notably, Olly Gavin, outpaced the veteran Finn comfortably when they were partnered with him. It was a coup to get Gavin on a part season deal (the Briton was signed

for non ALMS clash rounds) but that sadly ended on a sour note when the deal was ended early and Gavin stayed permanently Stateside. Frustration could well have played its part, with the works Pratt and Miller driver regularly amongst the very fastest while his Finnish team mate was almost universally slowest. Strangely, Mika Salo couldn't find a great deal of pace, either, and neither Laurent Cazenave nor Duncan Huisman were able to match Gavin's pace. It still is slightly mystifying how Corvette didn't win a Championship race, with either team. Like Phoenix, Mad Croc were often near the mark rather than being smack dab on it and that probably didn't help them with performance balancing. Had the stellar performances of Gavin been matched to Maassen's solid pace, more could well have been achieved but sadly, it didn't work out quite like that.

By JY

Freude



CORVETTE

12

MAD-CROC

Krismanen
COMPETITION

energy

Krismanen
COMPETITION

MICHELIN

www.selleslaghracing.com

e am Fahre



Photo: Brecht Decanq

The
TEAMS

PHOENIX RACING

Photo: DPPV GT1World.com



13



MARC HENNERICI (DEU)



MIKE HEZEMANS (NLD)



ALEX MARGARITIS (GRE)



ANDREA PICCINI (ITA)



ANDREAS ZUBER (AUT)



STEFAN ROSINA (SVK)

14



ANDREA PICCINI (ITA)



MIKE HEZEMANS (NLD)



ANTHONY KUMPEN (BEL)

NG



Corvette C6.R
7.0 Litre V8
(Front Engine)

Teams' Championship

Position: DQ

Points: n/a

Wins: 1

Poles: 2

Podiums: 8

Photos: DPPI/ GT1World.com



Phoenix Racing did not compete in the 2010 FIA GT1 World Championship. Well...they did, but they won't be remembered for it. After an unfortunate fire at Silverstone, the team entered one car at Brno and Paul Ricard, before two appeared at Spa but the second was not seen again. The team were therefore disqualified from the Teams' Championship. It's a shame, because it was so nearly a very good effort from the German team. The season started with mixed luck for the two cars. With experience duo Mike Hezemans and Andrea Piccini in number 14 and Marc Hennerici joined by Andy Zuber in 13, the signs were good. However, electrical problems dogged the 14 car all weekend and it was left to Zuber to score pole and, with Hennerici, win the Qualifying Race. In the Championship Race both cars managed podiums. But unfortunately for the team, the weight struck in Britain, with neither car near the front before the 14 car burned down in consummate style on the Hangar Straight. After that, a number 14 car would appear once more (at Spa) before disappearing for good and leaving the team with a sour taste and disqualification from the series. At Brno and Paul Ricard, the team's fire damage was seen as an adequate excuse for running one car but without a good reason for the absence

of a second car in Germany, the stewards had no choice but to remove the team for good. Despite that, Hennerici would stay in the hunt right until Brazil, partnered by Zuber (Abu Dhabi and Silverstone), Stefan Rosina (Brno), Andrea Piccini (Ricard), Hezemans (Spa), Alex Margaritis (Nurburgring onwards). Margaritis was mighty impressive, showing his DTM performances were not representative of his talent. Sadly for the Greek ace, he couldn't help Hennerici to the title his performances at times warranted, third place in Brazil not enough to keep him in the running. It must also be frustrating to not win a Championship Race all season; Corvette were the only marque not to manage it, despite a number of close calls and the Abu Dhabi Qualifying Race win. Sadly for their fans, the team never quite had the cutting pace after Abu Dhabi and despite regularly being 'thereabouts' they were all too rarely 'there'. It's disappointing because it seems increasingly likely there will not be a Corvette in GT1 in 2011, leaving them without any kind of winning record in a category in which they've been stalwarts for a good few years now. Overall it wasn't a bad season for the team, but it certainly wasn't a good one or one they'll be rushing to point possible sponsors at; unless Chubb

By JY





Photo: Alex Roache

The
TEAMS

SUMO POWER



Photo: Jake Yorath

22



JAMIE CAMPBELL-WALTER (GBR)



WARREN HUGHES (GBR)

23



PETER DUMBRECK (GBR)



MICHAEL KRUMM (DEU)

GT



Nissan GTR 5.5 Litre V8 (Front Engine)

Teams' Championship

Position: Sixth

Points: 130

Wins: 2

Poles: 0

Podiums: 8

Photos: DPPI/ GT1World.com



Only formed in January, the newest team in GT1 and clad in minimalistic but striking monochrome (apart from the Union Jack blazed on the roof) exceeded all expectations that come with a new team, delivering a solid if unspectacular season. The hiring of Jamie Campbell-Walter, Warren Hughes and Peter Dumbreck proved well thought out, mixing speed with experience.

However, it was Michael Krumm (who came with the Nismo backing as a works driver) who proved to be the star in the team, showing brilliant pace especially in qualifying. He shared the twenty three car with experienced Scot Dumbreck. Krumm often had the edge on Dumbreck, the German's talents finally being broadcast to Europe again after spending many years racing in Japan.

Leading the team was the infamous ex Ferrari/McLaren man Nigel Stepney. Coming from previous experience with the GTR after working with Gigawave. His experience certainly helped the team on their way to 6th.

The season got off to a tough start for the British based team. In the pre-season performance balancing tests the Nissan proved fastest, come the race weekend they were at the tail end of the grid suggesting that Mr Ratel and co may miscalculated the performance balancing! With no points scored in Abu Dhabi

the team headed to their home event at Silverstone 20kg lighter, hoping for a more successful weekend. It was. Hughes and Campbell-Walter claimed the historic Tourist Trophy, only due to the exclusion of Turner and Enge's Aston Martin however. This would prove to be the highlight of the season for the 22 car, although they did go on to claim two more podiums. The 23 car of Dumbreck and Krumm proved more fruitful despite no championship race win on their way to 9th in the championship, producing five podiums including a double third place at Brno and a qualifying win at the seventh round in the Algarve.

This haul comfortably trumped Nissan's other outfit the Swiss Racing Team who scored 5 points from the whole season. Compare this to Sumo's 130 and you can probably guess which team might have received a Christmas bonus from the Japanese marque!

For a team formed in so short a time, the results were impressive. The team never looked out of place and often showed up the more established teams. With the proven driver line up and experienced team manager Sumo have the capacity to make their presence felt on the grid next season.

By DB



NISSAN

FIA GT1 World Championship

SUNPOWER

MICHELIN

R.COM



Photo: Brecht Decanq

The
TEAMS

REITER ENGINE

Photo: Brecht Decanq



24



PETER KOX (NLD)



CHRISTOPHER HAASE (DEU)

25



RICARDO ZONTA (BRA)



JAN DENIS (CZE)



FRANK KECHELE (DEU)



SERGIO JIMENEZ (BRA)



JOS MENTEN (NLD)



RAFAEL DANIEL (BRA)

ERLING



Lamborghini LP670 R-SV

6.5 Litre V12
(Mid Engine)

Teams' Championship

Position: Third

Points: 155

Wins: 3

Poles: 1

Podiums: 8

Photos: DPPI/ GT1World.com



2010 was a surprisingly good season for the German Reiter Lamborghini team. Always a fan favourite, the Lamborghini has impressed in looks and sound but never really on track in the previous GT Championships. The Reiter developed Murciélago LP670 R-SV (doesn't exactly trip of the tongue does it) an evolution from the R-GT however proved to be much more successful.

Leading the team was the great Lamborghini tuner/race car builder and general enthusiast Hans Reiter. He bought on board the vastly experienced Dutchman, Peter Kox and young German Christopher Haase in the number 24 car. Kox was solid as always but Haase was very impressive, consistently fast and outpacing the Dutchman regularly. In the number 25 car ex F1 and former GT1 champion Ricardo Zonta drove for the majority of the season and showed he hadn't lost any speed in a GT car. He was partnered for most rounds by another young German, Frank Kechele who was an absolute revelation. The quickest of all the Lamborghini drivers he was also consistent and when paired with Zonta it was a formidable line-up. The 25 car also featured four other drivers. Rafael Daniel drove alongside Zonta in rounds one and four while Kechele partnered Jos Menten in rounds two and seven, Jan Denis in the third round and Sergio Jimenez in

the finale.

The season kicked off with a solid points score for both cars. The 25 car then took third place in the next round at Silverstone, Jos Menten teaming up with Kechele for the event. The sister car claimed its first podium at Paul Ricard, taking second albeit in the Qualifying race. It was at Spa where the Lamborghini really shone, Kechele and Zonta taking second place in the Qualifying race and winning the Championship race. The team followed on the strong form at the next round in Germany; the 24 car claiming a double podium this time. More solid points at Algarve for both cars were followed by Reiter's highlight of the season. Zonta and Kechele dominated the Navarra event, taking pole and a double victory.

Third place in the championship was well deserved and being ahead of such teams as Young Driver and Matech showed how well the team performed during the season. But you can't help think that if Zonta and Kechele had been paired together for the full campaign we could have seen them fighting for the Championship- Kechele taking sixth in the drivers' championship despite missing two rounds.

By DB



BMW Power

25
L2

LINING



Photo: Brecht Decanq

TRIPLE H TEAM HEGER

Photo: Jake Yorath



33



ALTFRID HEGER (DEU)



ALEX MARGARITIS (GRE)



ALEX MULLER (DEU)



BERT LONGIN (BEL)

34



NICO VERDONCK (BEL)



MATTEO BOBBI (ITA)



NIKI MAYR-MELNHOF (AUT)



BERT LONGIN (BEL)



FRANCISCO LONGO (BRA)



DANIEL SERRA (BRA)



ALESSANDRO PIER GUIDI (ITA)

ERSPORT



Maserati MC12
6.0 Litre V12
(Mid Engine)

Teams' Championship

Position: Seventh

Points: 84

Wins: 0

Poles: 0

Podiums: 3

Photos: DPPI/ GT1World.com



Triple H Hegersport declared right at the start of the season that they would be working in close conjunction with Vitaphone Racing. The two Maserati teams had very similar liveries, the same cars and the cross contamination in the pitlane was evident, but Hegersport failed to reach the highs that their illustrious brothers managed. The driving line up featured an interesting mix. Experienced Maserati pilots Alex Müller (who came in at Spa and saw out the season, starting particularly at Brazil and Spa) and Alessandro Pier Guidi (who only did four rounds) helped out. Team owner Altfred Heger, who had retired from racing but returned when the team he started in 2000 came into the World Championship, proved a steady and reliable hand at the wheel. He was a good partner first for Greek driver Alex Margaritis (who was replaced by Müller at Spa and later moved to Phoenix) and for Müller, with whom he finished the season. Season's best results came with a third alongside Margaritis at Paul Ricard and then a memorable second at Spa from a late Alex Müller charge.

Belgian Bert Longin did all but the South American rounds and will probably leave 2010 disappointed, with a season's best finish of fourth at Silverstone. He scored only four times during the season alongside Matteo Bobbi, Nico

Verdonck and Alessandro Pier Guidi. The Belgian sat out the Algarve round for Niki Mayr-Melnhof but the Austrian, who had shown promise in GT3 Alpina, struggled to get onto the pace.

At Brazil, promising local Daniel Serra showed a great turn of pace on his GT1 debut, but unfortunately Francisco Longo, his team mate for the weekend, couldn't match it. At the final round, the car was crewed once again by Nico Verdonck and Alessandro Pier Guidi, both of whom having already done part seasons. It seemed largely like the team would remain bridesmaid for the season, not unlike Scuderia Toro Rosso to Vitaphone's Red Bull Racing. To be fair that comparison is a little extreme, as the teams were not at opposite ends of the grid, as such, just that the pale topped cars never really got out of the midfield to challenge their partner team.

By JY





Photo: Jake Yorath



37



MARC BASSENG (DEU)



THOMAS JÄGER (DEU)



RICARDO RISATTI (ARG)



CHRISTOPHE BOUCHUT (FRA)

38



DOMINIK SCHWAGER (DEU)



NICKY PASTORELLI (NDL)

MOTORSPORT



Lamborghini LP670 R-SV

6.5 Litre V12
(Mid Engine)

Teams' Championship

Position: Ninth

Points: 28

Wins: 0

Poles: 0

Podiums: 0

Photos: DPPI/ GT1World.com



All-Inkl racing started the season, in many ways, looking a little shabby. The cars looked phenomenal, wearing pretty much the same livery as they were last seen in during 2007, slightly tweaked and fantastic under the Abu Dhabi lights. However, come Silverstone and the crew were still a mix match of 2007 overalls and plain all in ones. A stark contrast to Vitaphone.

The pace wasn't great either, not helped by brake fade crippling their Lamborghinis just like Reiter's at Abu Dhabi. It took the team until Brno to score points, Dominik Schwager and Nicky Pastorelli scoring a Championship Race seventh after third in the Qualifying race. The season followed in a similar vein with slim pickings for the German squad who seemed perennially in Reiter's illustrious shadow. In car 37, the season was shared between team owner and supercar video star Marc Basseng, veteran Frenchman (and twice champion) Christophe Bouchut, Thomas Jäger and Argentinian Ricardo Risatti, who stepped in for San Luis. Not much sparkled for the car, with a solitary sixth place for Basseng and Risatti in San Luis to show for a year's hard toil.

In 38, Schwager and Pastorelli things were not much better, with a season's best of fourth in a Qualifying Race and seventh in the Championship Races at both Brno and Sao Paulo.

The pace was clearly there in Brazil, the pair going second on the grid before falling back to fifth in the first race and then dropping further in the second race.

It seems a shame that the stand out event of their season was Christophe Bouchut's curious ignoring of the flags in Brazil. In morning practice, the Frenchman ignored a chequer and then two red flags and so was disqualified for the race itself. No real reason has been given for the incident but rest assured it'll live long in the memory and quiz questions for years to come.

Overall then, not the most successful season for the team despite odd flashes of pace and definite promise. Hopefully they'll be back to improve in 2011.

By JY



auto motor sport

motor presse stuttgart

auto motor sport

RENAULT

MICHELIN

13

All-inkl.com Mümich Motorsport
Lamborghini Murcielago R-SV
Schaubert & Wöhrle, Stuttgart, Schwaben (DEU)





AUDI - ABT

12

37
All-Inkl.com Münnich Motorsport
Lamborghini Murcielago R-SV
Christophe Bouchut (FRA) / Marc Basseng (DEU) / Thomas Jäger (DEU)

FIAT T1 World Championship

Racing

All-Inkl.com

MICHELIN

Photo: Brecht Decancq

The
TEAMS

MARC VDS RACING

Photo: DPPV GT1World.com



40



BAS LEINDERS (BEL)



MAXIME MARTIN (BEL)

41



MARKUS PALTALA (FIN)



RENAUD KÜPPENS (BEL)



MATTEO BOBBI (ITA)

CING



Ford GT
5.3 Litre V8
(Mid Engine)

Teams' Championship
Position: Eighth
Points: 62
Wins: 0
Poles: 0
Podiums: 2

Photos: DPPI/ GT1World.com



Marc VDS racing, founded by Marc van der Straten to race Gillet Vertigos in Belcar, reached new highs in 2010. The team raced across the globe in Moto2, the support series for MotoGP, rally raid events and in the GT1 World Championship as well as an entry for the Le Mans 24 Hours and a win at Spa in the Le Mans Series.

The GT branch of the team was organised and managed by swift Belgian racer Bas Leinders. Having run the Ford for a year already, they were well placed to slot into the hierarchy of the series somewhere towards the top. However, they didn't reach the highs they would have hoped and languished in the mid-field, struggling to match the big names in blue Fords just across the way.

Certainly, it was not always the fault of the Belgian squad. At Nurburgring for example, Markus Palttala had a nightmare weekend, involved in a series of shunts that simply were not his fault. At Algarve a hard charging Leinders was put into a spin by an errant Lamborghini and his charge was halted when he wasn't far behind the all conquering Westbrook.

The drivers were not rank amateurs, for sure. In car 40, Bas Leinders was teamed with ex Morgan driver, another Belgian, Maxime Martin. Both showed flashes of stunning pace, particularly in Brazil and San Luis, which both saw

great charging drives from the pair, to unsatisfying conclusions. Qualifying Race third spots in Navarra and San Luis were scant reward for a season's hard work. Their best Championship Race finish was fourth, at Paul Ricard.

In the other car, Finnish hand Markus Palttala took the reins alongside first Renaud Kuppens (again of Belgium) then Italian Matteo Bobbi. The bare facts do not make pretty reading. The car scored just two points, both from tenth place Championship Race finishes, and didn't score a top ten in a Qualifying Race once. A combination of bad luck and often just seeming a little wide of the mark on pace will leave them with a disappointing taste at the end of a season that showed a lot of promise. With Matech gone for 2011, the team have to step into the void and again, have the potential to do it. They'd need a little more luck, and to avoid other cars with target sights on theirs, but there's still a good chance the team could prosper.

By JY



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Photo: Jake Yorath

20

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10

ROUND BY ROUND

*2010 was the year of the Maserati, again.
Read all about it.*



ABU DHABI ROU

Yas Marina Circuit, April 17th 2010



MATECH'S MIXED START

Matech Competition and its Ford GT took a double victory out east with Thomas Mutsch and Romain Grosjean the class of the field, but Natacha Gachnang had a horror crash. Dan Bathie reports.

The Yas Marina circuit was the first challenge for the 48 drivers. Opened in late 2009 ready for that year's Formula One finale, the circuit sits on the Yas Island 30 minutes from central Abu Dhabi.

Former F1 driver and GT racing new-boy Romain Grosjean was one of the only entrants to have driven it prior to the meeting, and it showed - despite it being his first GT1 outing, he topped the practice session with a time of 2:07.580 in his Matech Ford GT, 1.2 sec-

onds quicker than reigning champion Michael Bartels in the Vitaphone Maserati MC12.

Qualifying saw the sister (apt in this case) Matech Ford of all-female line-up Natacha Gachnang and Cyndie Allemann take the limelight for all the wrong reasons. Gachnang suffered a brake failure at turn eight - the fastest part of the track - and was merely a passenger as the car speared into the barriers at terrifying speed. She ended up in hospital with a broken leg, but would go on to make a full recovery. The session was aborted after repairs

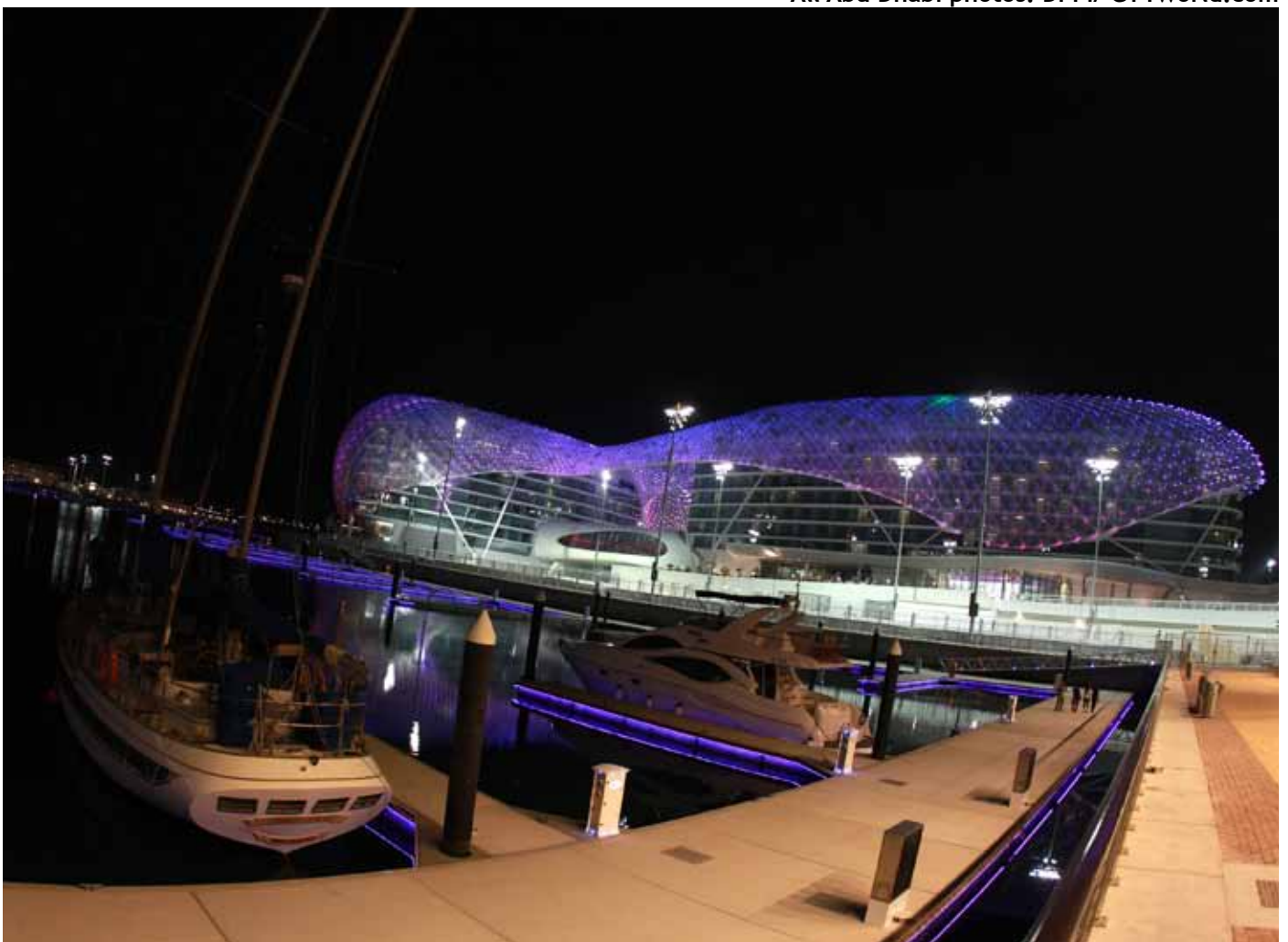
to the track could not be made in time so Austrian Andreas Zuber claimed the first pole of the season in the Phoenix Carsport Corvette. In the first ballast-related twist of 2010, however, all four Corvettes were thrown in the sin bin for not complying with rules regarding the position of the lead weights - they would be given a ten place grid drop for the championship race.

Second on the grid went to Frenchman Fred Makowiecki driving the Hexis Aston Martin DBR9, with Vitaphone's Enrique Bernoldi just behind

UND ONE



All Abu Dhabi photos: DPPI/ GT1World.com



Top: GT1 began in awesome style, with Yas Marina providing a fitting setting (below).

“

The start was like a Formula Ford race, there were cars going everywhere!

Jamie Campbell-Walter

QUALIFYING RACE

Hennerici and Zuber used their pole position to full effect to take victory in the championship's first qualifying race of the season.

Hennerici made a great start and led into the first corner, just missing the chaos unfolding behind him - Miguel Ramos, starting the #2 Maserati, lost the car under braking for the first corner and spun in front of the rest of the field. Surprisingly everyone missed the MC12 apart from Tomas Enge in the Young Driver Aston who suffered rear suspension damage. Pertti Kuismanen also was involved after getting tagged by Enge. The first lap action didn't stop there. Phillip Dumas also spun in the Hexis Aston but re-joined at the tail of the pack.

With debris and the Mad Croc Corvette stranded out on track the safety car was deployed. Benefitting from the first lap carnage was Matech's Romain Grojsean - a poor qual-

ifying performance from Mutsch meant he started the race from eleventh, but by the end of the first lap he was up to fifth and on a charge. Once the race was under way again Grojsean was all over the back of fourth-placed man, veteran Peter Kox in the Reiter Lamborghini. After a great battle of wheel to wheel racing Grojsean finally got past. He then proceeded to pass Bartel's Maserati and Alex Muller in the other Mad Croc Corvette in the space of a few laps.

Pit stops over the Phoenix C6.R still led, and with Zuber behind the wheel and on new tyres the Corvette was able to pull away from Mutsch who was struggling to match the pace of his team mate.

By the end things had settled down and Zuber cruised to victory, Mutsch's Ford second, Bertolini third and Christoffer Nygaard fourth after a great drive from him and Stefan Mucke from twentieth on the grid.





Hennerici and Zuber ran out comfortable Qualifying Race winners for Phoenix.



CHAMPIONSHIP RACE

After some great battles and close racing in the qualifying race, the championship race promised to be much of the same and it delivered. Under floodlights Thomas Mutsch and Romain Grojsean took a dominant win in the series' first championship race. Owing to the Corvette's penalties, winner of the qualifying race the Phoenix Corvette would start in eleventh giving the Mutsch/Grojsean Ford pole. Mutsch led away from pole with the Bertolini Maserati close behind in second.

This time everyone made it through the first corner safely but it didn't all go so smoothly once they got to turn eight. Karl Wendlinger in the SRT Nissan tried to out-brake Michael

Krumm's Sumo Nissan but contact was made, leaving Krumm facing the wrong way. Wendlinger then took a tight line into turn nine but with Nygaard and Piccione already in the corner it wasn't going to work. Contact was made between the two Astons, Piccione becoming another wrongways-facing road block and Nygaard up against the wall having nowhere to go. Somehow the rest of the field missed the cars and both Krumm and Piccione were able to rejoin the race. Nygaard wasn't so lucky.

Qualifying race winner Andreas Zuber had managed to pick his way through the carnage to end the first lap in fourth and was soon right on the back of Ricardo Zonta's Lamborghini who was another driver to make up places on

the opening lap. Zuber was much quicker than the Reiter car and on the back straight made his move. Zonta didn't make it easy though, forcing him up against the barriers on the inside to get through.

With the Lamborghini cleared, Zuber set about hunting down the two leaders and within a lap was right on their tail. Nothing separated the three cars as the pit window approached. Bertolini got a great run out of turn seven onto the long straight and was right in the slipstream of the Matech car. Mutsch defended on the inside approaching turn eight, making Bertolini go the long way around. But Bertolini couldn't make it stick. With the Maserati getting a slow run out of turn nine Zuber seized the opportunity to take second



“

I have always liked GTs. It is a very nice championship, six big brands and very good drivers. We will see at the end of the season but we started quite well and if we keep working like this with Thomas it will be a very interesting season.

Romain Grosjean



Nissan struggled to adapt the heavy GTR to the technical but spectacular Yas Marina circuit





Night racing provided spectacular entertainment.

place with a great out-braking manoeuvre into turn eleven.

As soon as the pit stop window was open, Mutsch was straight in handing over to young Romain Grosjean. Zuber and Bertolini stayed out hoping to jump the Ford while in clear air. A lap later and the Vitaphone crew were ready for the MC12 - it was a slick stop as always but Grosjean's first lap on cold tyres was fast and he easily cleared the Maserati as it exited Abu Dhabi's unique subway pitlane. The next lap and the Phoenix Corvette was in - it was another slick stop and as Grosjean exited the final corner it looked as if it would be a lot closer than with Bartels. It was, but Grosjean had just done enough.

After only a few laps with Grojesan at the wheel he had opened up a seven second lead and was flying. With the battle for the lead somewhat diffused by the Swiss drivers' pace, another battle had come alive a little further back. The Hezemans/Piccini Phoenix Corvette had been having an awful weekend with two engine changes and a grid penalty. Like all the other Corvettes they started at the rear for the championship race but a great

stint by Hezemans had got them up to fourth by the pit stop. With Piccini in the car it was flying and had soon caught Bartels. Piccini got a great exit coming onto the back straight the overtaking move looking quite easy on the experienced Bartels.

At the front and Grojsean was continuing to build his lead over Hennerici, lapping over two seconds a lap quicker than anyone else. This really was a master class of driving from the birthday boy Grosjean. After 28 laps of great racing the chequered flag flew to greet the Matech Ford GT of Romain Grosjean and Thomas Mutsch. Crossing the line second 23 seconds behind was the Marc Hennerici / Andreas Zuber Phoenix Corvette with their team mates Mike Hezemans and Andrea Piccini in third - a great result for the team after a difficult weekend. Fourth was the Vitaphone Maserati of Andrea Bertolini and Michael Bartels with fifth going to the Ricardo Zonta and Rafael Daniel Reiter Lamborghini. As in race one the Nissans struggled, the furthest up being in fourteenth in the hands of veteran Karl Wendlinger and young Swiss driver Henri Moser.



“

The team did an amazing job. They really worked so hard over the winter. All the mechanics and engineers pushed hard from the end of last season to develop a new car.

Thomas Mutsch



GREAT BRITAIN

Silverstone, May 2nd 2010



ASTON'S MISFORTUNE

On a weekend that had seemed destined to be Aston Martin's, Young Driver were controversially stripped of their victory and Sumo's Nissan took the spoils. Dan Bathie reports.

The next stop of the GT1 circus on its world tour was the home of British motorsport.

The fast flowing Silverstone track was not, however, as many drivers would have remembered. Instead of the Abbey chicane and the magnificent Bridge corner the circuit now went right at the now very fast and tricky Abbey and included a new straight that led back to the old circuit at Brooklands. The new Arena circuit drew mixed feelings

from drivers as many loved the old bridge circuit, but overall they felt that Silverstone hadn't lost anything from the changes.

After Abu Dhabi a few changes to the cars' weight had been made to try and keep the performance balanced. Aston Martin got the largest break with a 50kg reduction, Nissan lost 20kg and Lamborghini 10kg but also gained a slight increase in restrictor size. After being very fast in Abu Dhabi the Corvettes gained 40kg and the Maserati 35kg with a slight reduc-

tion in restrictor size as well.

The loss of 50kg certainly seemed to help the Astons around the Northamptonshire circuit as they locked out the front row in qualifying. Darren Turner put the Young Driver car on pole four tenths ahead of Makowiecki's Hexis DBR9. Third place on the grid went to Micheal Krumm in the Sumo Power Nissan, who was also enjoying a lighter car after a disastrous first round. Championship leaders Mutsch and Grojsean struggled for pace and could only manage fifteenth.

N ROUND TWO



Photos: Jake Yorath



Top: It looked great for Aston but it wasn't to be. Bottom: Who needs cars anyway?



QUALIFYING RACE

Pole sitter Enge led away the pack away with Bartels getting past the Sumo Nissan into third. Behind them Bert Login and Nygaard made contact going into Copse, Login's Hagersport MC12 spinning in the middle of track. Nygaard didn't come off much better either, a rear puncture all but ending his race.

After a disappointing qualifying the Matech Ford of Mutsch and Grojsean was looking to make up places in the race, but their aspirations went up in smoke when Mutsch spun

into the gravel while defending thirteenth and lost a lap being put back on track. They would finish twenty first.

Enge continued to head the pack up until the pitstops, stretching out a two second lead before he brought the DBR9 in to hand over to Turner. At this point the unfortunate duo's race descended into farce. Coming in to the pits, Enge cut the white entry line, earning them a drive through penalty. Their race in tatters, Turner came in to serve it the next lap, and in his frustration made the exact same error.

Two penalties in as many laps left them floundering down in seventh, but Turner seemed spurred on by their misfortune and set the fastest lap as he closed down and passed Warren Hughes for sixth. Not satisfied with that, he then caught and passed the #14 Corvette for fifth and would eventually finish fourth behind the #1 Maserati. Aston Martin could at least take consolation from a 1-2 for the Hexis team, the #9 car of Makowiecki/Accary taking the flag 3.5 seconds ahead of team mates Piccione/ Hirschi.



Aston Martin comfortably had the rub of the grey in the Qualifying Race.

“

I'm really happy, this is incredible for me. My first race in GT1 and a victory!

Thomas Accary





Haase on the limit for Lambo. They were out of the points all weekend, though.

CHAMPIONSHIP RACE

The story of the 2010 RAC Tourist Trophy will forever be at odds with the stats in the history books. While the chequered flag may have fallen on an Aston Martin at the end of the race, the cold hard facts paint a different picture.

As the lights went green Jonathan Hirschi made a great start and led his pole-sitting team mate into the first corner with Turner making it an Aston Martin 1, 2, 3. Yet again there was contact further back, this time it was Christophe Bouchut, Romain Grojsean and Stefan Mucke making contact going into Copse. Grojsean's Ford GT collided with the Young Driver Aston Martin before spinning backwards off the track, the All-Inkl.com Lamborghini retiring at the end of the lap.

Going into Stowe on the second lap Hirschi ran wide allowing Frédéric Makowiecki through into the lead. At the end of the second lap the Mucke Aston Martin pitted after a tyre had come off the rim, a result of the damage caused in the first corner incident. As the cars thundered down the Hangar straight for the third time there was a big cloud of black smoke as the Mike Hezemans Phoenix Carsport Corvette caught fire by the side of the track. Hezemans got free quickly but soon all that was left of the car was charred remains. This brought out the safety car; useful for the #8 Young Driver DBR9 which was able to catch back up the pack after its unscheduled pitstop.

The race restarted on lap eight, with positions staying

the same up front but further back in the pack the second of the Phoenix cars was also experiencing difficulties. Restarting eighth, by the end of the lap he was down to fourteenth. It would later retire with an engine problem.

A small mistake at Becketts on the restart by Jos Menten in the Reiter Lamborghini had allowed the Vitaphone Maserati of Enrique Bernoldi to close right up to the back of him. After a number of attempts he finally got down the inside going into Brooklands. Behind them was a great battle between Menten, Bertolini, Michael Krumm and Oliver Gavin. Going into Vale, however, it all ended in tears - Krumm got his Nissan GTR alongside the Maserati, meanwhile Gavin came down the inside to go three-abreast as they turned in. Krumm came across the front of the MC12 and was turned into Gavin, spearing him into the gravel. The Sumo Nissan retired on the spot.

As soon as the pit window opened Turner brought in the Aston and handed it over to Enge, this time using the correct line into the pits. Meanwhile, second place man Hirschi suffered a front puncture and was forced to limp back to the pits.

A few laps later and Makowiecki was in. Handing over to Thomas Accary, he came out just ahead of Enge who had been posting fastest laps since taking over. The Young Driver car was now all over the back of the Frenchman's DBR9. On lap 17 Hexis' race suddenly became a different story. Piccione spun while in a large bat-



“

Sport can be cruel sometimes. We did a great job over the weekend; despite picking up the penalties on Saturday we turned it around for Sunday. Winning the Tourist Trophy on the road still means a lot. It was a great effort by the team in the pits and Tomas and I played our part on the circuit. I really enjoyed being a Tourist Trophy winner for a few hours!

Darren Turner



Photos: (L-R) Brecht Decancq, Jake Yorath, Brecht Decancq

“

Of course I would have preferred to be first across the line on the track, but it's always good to take a win. I have to admit that I was delighted with third, so this result is amazing.

Warren Hughes

The sun (and Lady Luck) shone down on Sumo, gifting them the Tourist Trophy



tle for sixth and race leader Accary was given a drive through penalty for starting the car while on jacks. The same lap saw Henri Moser hit the wall at Stowe in his SRT Nissan.

With the fight for the win seemingly over as Accary came in for his penalty, fifth placed man Jamie Campbell-Walter

was on a charge in the remaining Sumo Power Nissan. He easily slipped down the inside of Miguel Ramos at Stowe for Forth then soon caught Frank Kechele, passing the Reiter Lamborghini into Copse. Another man on a charge was Christoffer Nygaard, coming from the back of the pack he



was now in eleventh but was absolutely flying. In two laps he had made it up to seventh (helped by the demise of Ramos due to a puncture) and made it past Altfried Heger on the final lap.

At the chequered flag Enge crossed the line 12 seconds ahead of Accary, however the

names on the Tourist Trophy would be not those of Enge and Turner but instead Nissan duo Warren Hughes and Jamie Campbell-Walter. The Enge/Turner Aston Martin was disqualified for having too much wear on the plank underneath the car while the Accary/Makowiecki Aston received a 15

second time penalty for not serving a drive through within 3 laps. Such was the advantage around Silverstone of the DBR9, the Hexis car managed to keep second behind a somewhat surprised Sumo Nissan pairing, with Frank Kechele and Jos Menten taking the final step of the podium.



CZECH REPUBLIC

Brno, April 17th 2010



MATECH ON TOP AGAIN

Vitaphone took their first win of 2010 in the Qualifying race but Matech's lead duo again showed their class as Mutsch and Grosjean won the Championship Race. Dan Bathie reports.

The Czech Republic circuit of Brno was home to the third round of the championship. Local hero Tomas Enge was relishing the prospect of racing here again, his last visit having been in 2002 at the wheel of a Ferrari 550.

"I'm really looking forward to racing again at my home track in front of my home crowd," he said. "I know we're going to have great weather with a great audience and we're going to have a great race in the Czech Republic."

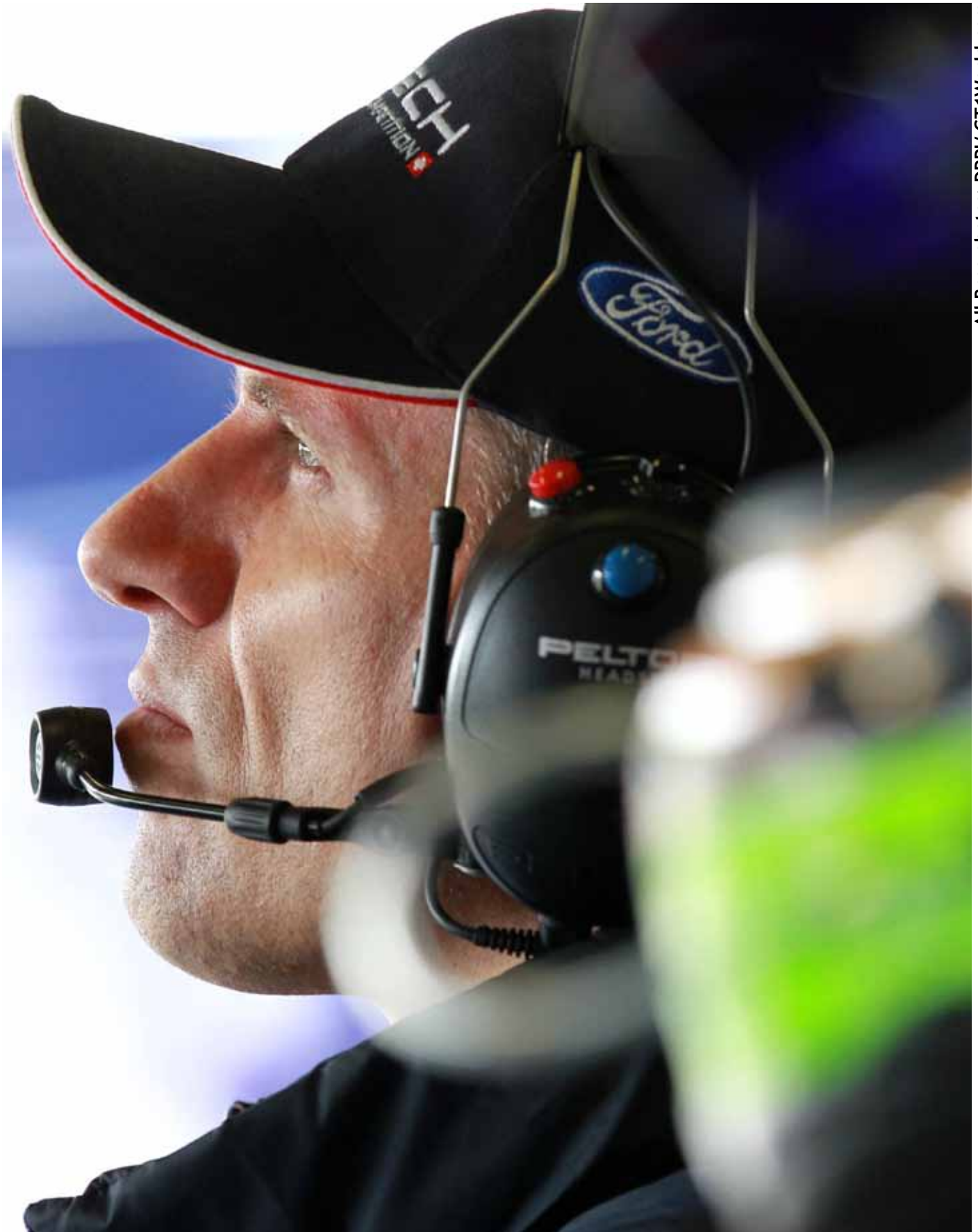
Even though the #7 Young Driver AMR had its win taken away at Silverstone, the DBR9 was still landed with 40kg of success ballast for good measure. The victorious #22 Sumo Nissan would run with 30kg, the #9 Hexis Aston with 20kg and the #25 Reiter Lamborghini with 10kg.

The ballast, however, didn't seem to hurt the #7 Aston too much. Enge claimed third on the grid, but the front row was a distinctly black and turquoise affair with the Vitaphone Maseratis first and second. Ber-

tolini took pole by four tenths from teammate Bernoldi and was almost a second quicker than Enge. Sumo continued its strong form with the #22 car of Krumm setting the fourth quickest time. The big upset came in the form of Silverstone winners Hughes/Campbell-Walter, who failed to make the cut in Q1 and ended up 21st.

The starting grid for Brno would still only see 23 cars despite the return of the second Matech car, the #14 Phoenix Corvette withdrawing after the Silverstone fire.

IC ROUND THREE



All Brno photos: DPPI/ GT1World.com

Above left: Mutsch and Grosjean repeated their Abu Dhabi form for boss Bartek (above).

QUALIFYING RACE

The start of the qualifying race saw differing fortunes for the two Vitaphone Maseratis. While the #1 car sprinted off into the distance, Miguel Ramos was eaten up by the pack - including a fast-starting Peter Dumbreck in the Sumo GT-R - and was down to fourth by turn one.

The battle for second was close and Turner looked to have the faster car but couldn't find a way past the Dumbreck's GT-R. As soon as the pit window was open Turner dived in

to hand over to Enge who once installed was right on the pace posting the fastest lap, getting him ahead of the Nissan once stops were completed.

Behind the top four there was a close battle for fifth, Xavier Maasen in the Mad Croc Corvette holding off Grojsean, Bernoldi and Makowiecki who was sharing his car with Peugeot driver Stephane Sarrazin this weekend.

Meanwhile after starting at the rear of the field the #22 Sumo Power Nissan was making up ground well and was run-

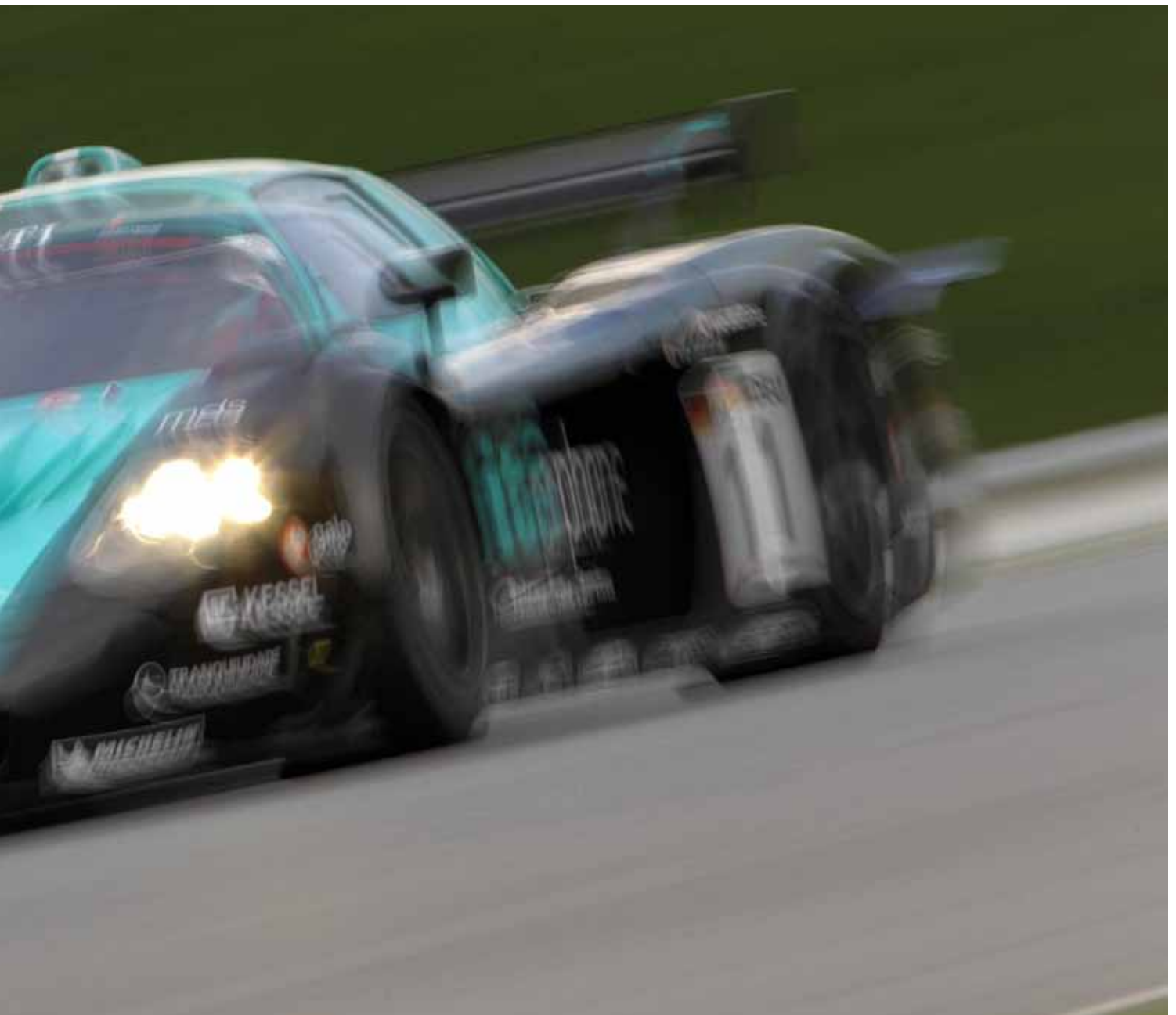
ning ninth until Hughes spun into the gravel on the last lap. The Maserati duo of Andrea Bertolini and Michael Bartels claimed their first victory of the new championship, taking the chequered flag five seconds ahead of Enge, with Krumm following a further five seconds down the road. The All-Inkl. com Lamborghini of Pastorelli/Schwager took fourth, and with a Corvette and a Ford in fifth and sixth, all six marques took the top positions for the first time. Quite the balance of performance.



“

I think this is the best track for our car, as in the past, because the balance was good.

Andrea Bertolini



Vitaphone took their first win of 2010.





Brno; green racing.

CHAMPIONSHIP RACE

Pole man Andrea Bertolini got a great start as the lights went green but the same could not be said for Tomas Enge, whose disastrous first lap saw him languishing down in 16th and with a lot of work to do. The sister Vitaphone car also got away well in the hands of Enrique Bernoldi, the Brazilian moving from seventh to fourth.

There was more misfortune for the Warren Hughes / Jamie Campbell-Walter car, Hughes spinning in turn ten on the first lap and losing considerable amount of time after a visit to the pits. The long run of bad luck continued for the #6 Matech Ford GT of Cyndie Allemann and Rahel Frey, who was replacing the recovering Natasha Gachnang. Frey was holding off the very fast Stefan Mucke but the two made contact on lap three, resulting in

Frey beaching the car in the gravel. This brought out the safety car - the first twist in an eventful race. On lap five the race resumed, with Bertolini leading from Michael Krumm and Nicky Pastorelli. The race director, however, decided that Bertolini was too fast on the restart and the Italian was given a stop go penalty, handing the lead to Micheal Krumm.

Meanwhile a battle for eighth was developing between Fred Makowiecki in the Hexis Aston and Matteo Bobbi in the Hegersport Maserati. After a few panel-bashing moments, the Frenchman was still ahead but Bobbi had lost speed and was passed by his team mate Alexandros Margaritis and Bas Leinders's Marc VDS Ford GT. The next lap it all ended in tears: Margaritis tried to pass Makowiecki but out-braked himself, allowing Leinders to get alongside him



“

In the first corner, the Aston Martin just didn't brake and hit me very hard from the right and I thought the car was destroyed, because the noise inside was incredible. But I have to get used to GT cars, they're strong. The car was alright. I had to work my imagination to find an opening amongst the cars. I made the moves on the two Aston Martins and the Corvette, who I'd thought about all night, having been stuck behind him for 35 minutes yesterday.

Romain Grosjean



Matech were back with a bang after a British bruiser.



“

I came here with good memories from the win in 2008 in GT3, and will leave with another one.

Thomas Mutsch



Clockwise from bottom; Lambo in the wet. Gratuitous pretty girl. Vitaphone stop.

going into turn 13. Margaris went for the inside at the next corner but as he turned in Leinders swept across his nose and the cars clashed, spinning off in a dramatic spray of tyre smoke and gravel. An incandescent Leinders stormed over to the stricken Maserati and made it abundantly clear who he thought was at fault. While this was unfolding Romain Grosjean had managed to get past Jonathan Hirschi for fourth place and Frank Kechele took a trip into the gravel at turn one but rejoined.

With two cars stuck in the gravel the safety car was once again deployed - just as the pit window was opening. Most teams took advantage of this and brought their cars in, although those that played this card struggled to get them both away cleanly which meant that the #23 Nissan lost the lead to Thomas Mutsch, and the Turn-

er/Enge Aston pulling off a tactical masterstroke and leaping from tenth to second.

At the restart Clivio Piccione dived down the inside of Dominik Schwager's All-Inkl.com Lamborghini to steal fourth from the German. Further down the field the #1 Maserati, now in the hands of Michael Bartels, was on a mission to reclaim the places he had dropped after the costly stop-and-go penalty and was doing so with relative ease, moving up four places in three laps. Bartels was now in seventh and right behind teammate Miguel Ramos, finally getting through down the inside at turn 13 after a few half attempts.

The next target for Bartels was fellow German Dominik Schwager, but Schwager's was the widest Murciélago in the Czech Republic and the Maserati was struggling to find a way

through. The move finally came on lap 24 - Bartels got the nose of his MC12 down the inside of the Lamborghini and forced it onto the astro-turf on the exit of turn five. Miguel Ramos in the second Vitaphone car also pounced, demoting Schwager yet another place.

Less than a second covered the top three as the clock counted down, but despite them being nose to tail no one made a move and the Matech Ford GT of Thomas Mutsch and Romain Grosjean crossed the line to claim its second championship race victory of the season. Darren Turner came home second but the Young Driver AMR team was left pondering what might have been if its start had gone to plan. Peter Dumbreck claimed the final spot on the podium - yet another strong result for the British-based Sumo squad as GT1 headed to France.





FRANCE ROUN

Paul Ricard, July 4th 2010



VITAPHONELAND, AGAIN

Matech Competition and its Ford GT took a double victory out east with Thomas Mutsch and Romain Grosjean the class of the field, but Natacha Gachnang had a horror crash. Jake Yorath reports.

The GT1 World Championship was still looking fairly fresh arriving in Paul Ricard, with stunning action having characterised the series right from that hectic first Arabian corner. So it continued in France, but with a familiar feel from GT series past: that feel was turquoise and black.

In qualifying, it was a close run thing. Five of the six manufacturers were in the final eight and it was the Italians who prevailed. Fastest was Andrea Bertolini, the Maserati showing its

worth around the French track that saw Corvette dominate previously. Lamborghini were second, Peter Kox giving the car its best qualifying performance of the year so far and reinforcing the notion that they could be big players. Third and fifth were Sumo, with Krumm and Dumbreck edging Campbell Walter and Hughes. They were split by Mad Croc's Corvette with Mike Hezemans joining Xavier Maasen for the French round. Right back in fifteenth came Championship leaders Grosjean and Mutsch, the Ford

struggling with the weight incurred from recent successes.

"The car was good, everything was perfect," said Bertolini. "We are here, we did two pole positions."

"I want to congratulate Michael and Andrea on their lap," added a pragmatic Peter Kox. "We have a fantastic car and we're very happy with this position. It's the maximum it can put out, we're pleased. The team has had some time to work on the car. They did a fantastic job. I think all 4 Lamborghinis are competitive."

D FOUR



All Paul Ricard photos: DPPI/ GT1World.com



Top: Vitaphone weren't behind for long. Bottom: No, we haven't got a clue either.

QUALIFYING RACE

In scorching temperatures, the start of the Qualifying Race was an awkward one. As the cars swept towards the first corner for the first time, the start lights appeared to flicker.

Michael Bartels takes up the

story. “I think that first there was a problem again on the start, it went red, green and red, green which was not the way I expected to start, I think that Christopher [Haase] can confirm this. So I think there was a little bit of trouble which

influenced the starting procedure.”

Haase agreed. “The lights were a little bit strange but the last time I saw it, it was all on the green lights so I got on the power.”

Down to the first corner, the



cars fanned out and Haase's Reiter Lamborghini emerged in the lead. "After the first corner I was in first place. I could hold the first place for a few laps but it was really difficult."

A great battle in the opening laps between the two Sumo

Nissans, culminating in Jamie Campbell Walter nailing Peter Dumbreck, who started on older tyres and so was a less tough target than he might have been.

At the finish, it was Bartels and Bertolini who drove to a

comfortable victory in the Maserati, with the Christopher Haase and Peter Kox Lamborghini second having fended off a late charge from Warren Hughes' Nissan, who came in third. The Mad Croc Corvette was fourth.







CHAMPIONSHIP RACE

The familiar site of Andrea Bertolini leading a pack of fanned out GT cars from pole position is one that we hadn't seen much in 2010, but it happened for the second time in two days on the Sunday. Again, the Maserati was beaten down to turn one by a Lamborghini. This time it was Dutchman Kox, who raced down the outside and swept across to the apex of the first turn and away. He was followed by Hughes, who destroyed Bertolini down the left hand side, sweeping inside him and closing the door in turn one.

Behind them, the second Lamborghini was rotating, forcing avoiding action all around but thankfully no one hit the target. Maasen was fourth briefly but Bernoldi soon had him, striding down the inside under braking for the chicane on the Mistral; rare for a Corvette to be beaten on the brakes. More trouble behind as one of the Matech cars at-

tacked the second Mad Croc 'Vette, leaving the black car rotating and the Ford to cut the track and rejoin unscathed.

Drama and controversy at the front though, as both leading cars are handed penalties. First Warren Hughes, who crossed the white line (and then crossed the next white line over) at the start to pass Bertolini, is handed his for not respecting track limits. Second, it's the leader Kox, told he jumped the start. Back to square one for both, leaving the leading trio as Bertolini, Bernoldi, Piccini (Corvette).

The trio was soon a duo. Piccini dived for the inside at the final corner, and went through. He'd drifted too far wide, however, and in closing the door on the exit whacked Bernoldi's car with a great deal of force. The Brazilian was left to crab down the straight, stopping at the pitlane exit and looking frustrated and angry. The Corvette would be handed a drive through for his muscular conduct. A few laps later





Matich were back with a bang after a British bruiser.





and Piccini was off, spinning and rejoining at the final turn as Bertolini pitted. Swift work from Jens Hegelauer's squad saw Bartels installed and the car on its way in short order.

On the charge were Sumo's British duo, making up places and time at a great rate of knots; on the final lap, Jamie Campbell-Walter used the Nissan's mountain moving power to get alongside both the number nine Hexis Aston and the 25 Lamborghini, going around the outside into turn one to the delight of the crowd and one young fan made famous in the footage with a virtuoso celebratory performance. That was for ninth and on the final lap, despite the penalty, he dragged the other Hexis car for eight. Brilliant.

Michael Bartels, however, had it all to himself. With Kox and Hughes having been penalised and Piccini also been penalised for taking out the other car that conceivably could have won, it was a cruise to the line for the German. Behind him, Dumbreck charged to second, with Alex Margaritis scoring third for himself and Alfrid Heger, the first podium for Triple H Team.

"The conditions out there were quite difficult, I don't think that I've raced in these

conditions in all my racing life. Well maybe a few times - it was really hot in Bucharest in 2008," said a rather warm Bartels. "At the end of my stint I was really taking care of the tyres. We knew that especially with the outside temperature the tyres were really working at the limit but I think today I must say thank you to Michelin tyres; they manage to work in this environment. It's very impressive. It was a great day, a great victory."

At Nissan, there was a lot of worry overnight, explained Michael Krumm. "Last night I don't think any of the team really slept, we were all wondering what was going on with the car but today we are all really happy, fantastic result. The Nissan performed really well in the race, it was balanced, there was enough grip but as the race started there were cars everywhere, sometimes three abreast so I was just focusing on keeping the car in the race for a little while."

For Heger, it was the realisation of a long time dream to be on the podium. "I am very happy. I finished racing about 10 years ago and it was always my hope and my wish to be on the podium, now it's happened. We had a really good car, and a really good team."

“
I must say thank you to Michelin. The tyres were really working at the limit! It's very impressive. It was a great day, a great victory.

Michael Bartels

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BELGIUM ROUND

Spa Francorchamps, July 31st 2010



All Spa photos: DPPI/ GT1World.com



Top: Getaway. Bottom: Hans Reiter celebrates with Zonta. It was a long time coming.

ND FIVE



HANS REITER'S HAPPY DAY

Matech Competition and its Ford GT took a double victory out east with Thomas Mutsch and Romain Grosjean the class of the field, but Natacha Gachnang had a horror crash. Dan Bathie reports.

The fifth round of the already exciting championship saw the beautiful Ardenne Forest become filled with the sound of 24 raucous monsters. Though as soon as the cars ventured out onto the legendary circuit, the weekend was already clinched by Lamborghini (if they were judging on sound), the V12 wail echoing around the cascading circuit like a symphony.

The less important prize of pole position was also up for

grabs in the 60 minute qualifying session, and the honour went to Dutchman Xavier Maassen in the number 11 Mad Croc Corvette who was just ahead of two Lamborghinis, Nicky Pastorelli in the 38 All-Inkl car with the 25 Reiter car of Ricardo Zonta in third. Championship leader Andrea Bertolini was a surprise casualty of Q1, the experienced Italian only managing 21st after lugging around 40kg of success ballast for the 4.3 miles. Also joining the lead Vitaphone crew out at the end of the first session was

the Enge/Turner Aston Martin. Enge put the Young Driver car 18th on the grid leaving team mate Darren Turner with a lot of work to do in the Qualifying race.

In the Matech squad there was some re jiggling of drivers, Romain Grosjean moving to the number six car, to join fellow Swiss driver Neel Jani, while reigning GT2 champion Richard Westbrook, the Britain who was more used to the twitchy tail of a Porsche than the poise of the large Ford GT, joined Thomas Mutsch in the lead car.



QUALIFYING RACE

The 11 Mad Croc Corvette of Xavier Maasen and Jos Menten took the team's first race win of the season at Spa in dominant fashion. Menten used the pole position to full effect as he led the pack going into La Source.

Further back and a rather ambitious move from Michael Batrtels into La Source resulted in the German making contact with Jamie Campbell-Walter's Nissan, the Sumo car then colliding with the 12 Mad Croc Corvette turning him into a spin. The Maserati retired after lap one, while the Nissan

lost a lap with a puncture from the incident.

Dominic Schwager starting the 38 Lamborghini from second lost a place on the first lap as Menten went through at La Source. Stefan Mucke then put the Lamborghini down to fourth as he passed the German at Les Combes, a fight which saw the Lamborghini take to the grass as Mucke muscled his way through.

The 14 Corvette was back in action at Spa after missing two rounds due to the fire at Silverstone. Their luck wasn't about to change though, the car stopping at the Bus Stop three laps

in and not restarting.

After all pit stops had been completed the Mad Croc Corvette still lead, now in the hands of Maasen. Zonta was second in the 25 Lamborghini with Mike Hezemans in the thirteen Corvette third. The gap between first and second stayed at around a second until the end. Drama came late on however, Romain Grojsean hitting the wall at the Bus Stop on the final lap. After the race the 13 Corvette was excluded for not having enough fuel left for a sample. This promoted the number 8 Aston Martin into third place.

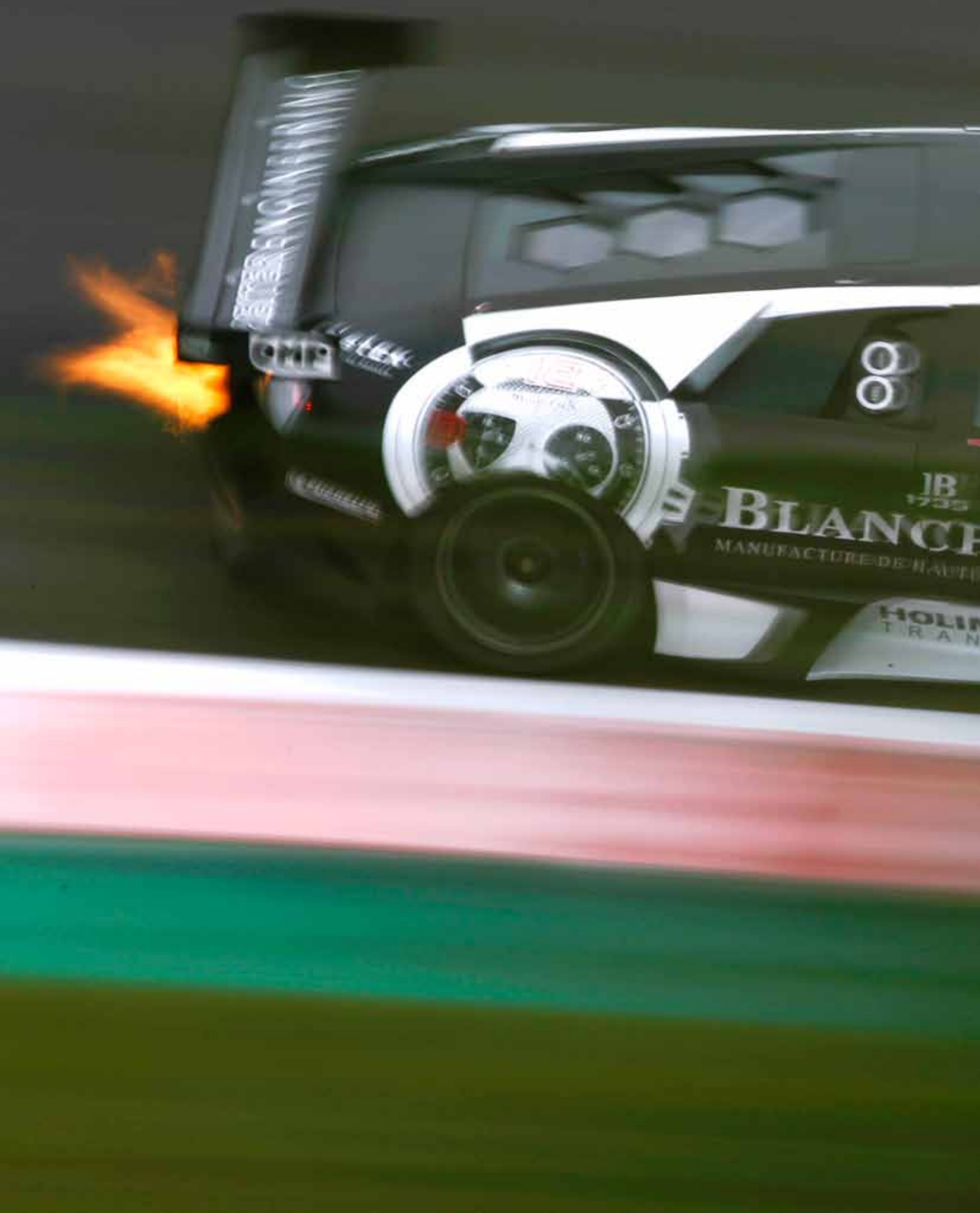


Mad Croc chases Reiter; finishing order was reversed.

“

I'm very happy with second. I think we did a good job.

Ricardo Zonta



Porsche Carrera GT

PMP

LEX

Porsche

00

1B
1735

BLANCHE

MANUFACTURE DE HAUTE

HOLM
TRAIN



As a magazine *sans* bias, we have no comment on this car, this track, or this image.

CHAMPIONSHIP RACE

Lamborghini claimed their maiden victory in the FIA GT1 World Championship with Frank Kechele and Ricardo Zonta taking the honours.

Qualifying race winner Xavier Maasen started from pole but a poor start saw him slip back behind Zonta and a fast starting Peter Kox - up from Seventh in the sister Reiter car as the cars started the drag up Eau Rouge for the first time. Maasen managed to get in the slipstream of the Lamborghini on the Kemmel straight and passed him going into Les Combes.

There were spins early on for Maxine Martin who made light contact with fellow Ford GT driver Richard Westbrook at Les Combes and Oliver Gavin who spun coming out of the Bus Stop, following contact

from behind. Both drivers continued without damage. A few laps later and the second Marc VDS Ford also suffered a spin, a tag from the number ten Hexis Aston Martin left them facing the wrong way on the exit of the Bus Stop. Once again the fourteen Phoenix Carsport Corvette suffered more bad luck. On lap three the car stopping at Radillon with an electric problem which cut the engine.

Four laps gone and the top three were separated by less than a second as they crossed the line. It was a thrilling dual. The Corvette looked to be quicker though and Massen finally made his move going around the outside of Zonta into Les Combes to take the lead. Zonta then slipped back to third as team mate Peter Kox carried great speed through Stavelot and passed

him on the run to Blanchimont. The Corvette's lead would be short lived however, a few laps later he suffered a puncture at Les Combes, his hopes of seizing the double victory deflating like his Michelin!

The demise of Massen now meant it was a Lamborghini one, two, three with championship debutant Richard Westbrook fourth and Bernoldi fifth, both having got past Bert Login's Hagersport Maserati.

With the pit window now open, Zonta was the first man to stop, handing over to Frank Kechele. Meanwhile the number eight Young Driver stop didn't to go to plan, a non-attached wheel nut delaying Mucke. Out on the track and the now leader Nicky Pastorelli was trying to defend from Westbrook and Bernoldi. All three pitted on lap four-



teen, the Matech crew doing the best job getting Mutsch back out right behind the two battling Reiter cars. The Ford driver wasn't settling for third though, and passed both Lamborghini before he got to Les Combes just as the safety car was deployed for the stranded 40 Marc VDS Ford GT at Eau Rouge.

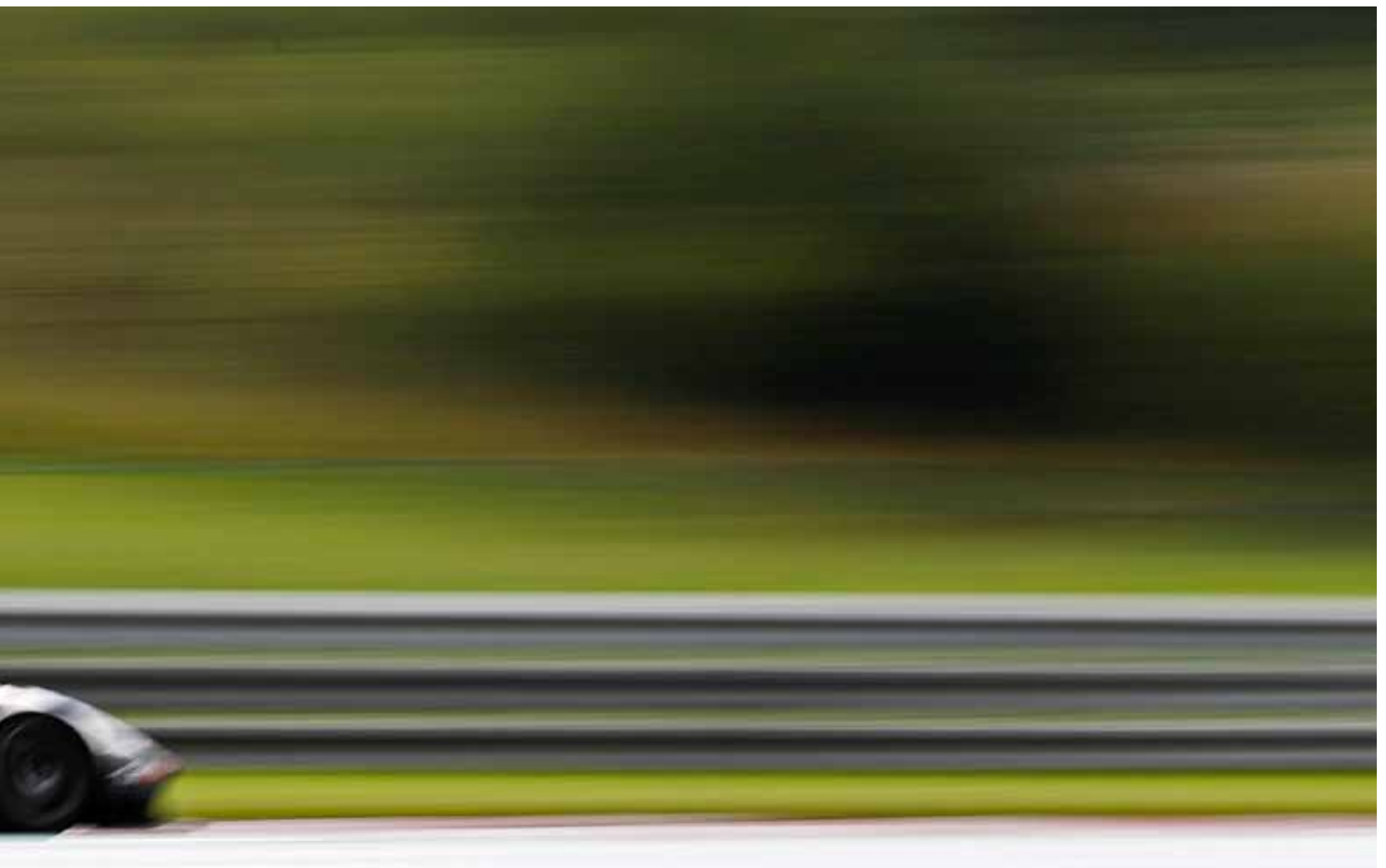
Under the safety car the 24 Reiter Lamborghini stopped, ever since the pit stop the car had seemed to develop an engine problem. At the restart, Kechele was all over the rear of the Ford as they ascended Eau Rouge but Mutsch wasn't relinquishing the position easily and hung on for now. Two laps later however and Kechele made a move into La Source and with a better exit cleared the Ford.

Meanwhile another man was

“

We had the fastest car out there today and the thing that feels best about it is that it wasn't luck. Riccardo's pit stop was a disaster. We still have a lot to learn. When you look at the likes of Vitaphone, you realise that we must get better.

Hans Reiter



Zonta, Kechele, Murcielago, Spa Francorchamps. Perfect harmony.

on the move. Alex Muller back in an MC12 for the Hagersport team was enjoying his afternoon, making progress through the field. After restarting in sixth the German was now pressuring Peter Dumbreck for third who in turn was catching the Ford GT of Mutsch.

Tyre issues were now beginning to cause further problems for Mutsch, as he struggled for grip. Soon he had been forced to surrender second to Dumb-

reck and then at the next corner, Muller climbed another place at his expense. Dumbreck's joy was short lived as on the next lap the Sumo Nissan stopped in a cloud of smoke at Les Combes, promoting Mutsch to a podium position once again.

The last lap saw Bertolini take seventh from another debutant Nicolas Verdonck while at the front Muller was catching Kechele but the Ma-

serarti driver ran out of time as Kechele crossed the line, Reiter claiming their first victory in the Championship. Alex Muller was the stand out driver though, claiming Hagersport's best result of the season so far. The Mutsch/Westbrook Ford managed to hold onto third despite pressure from Ramos in the number two Vitaphone-Maserati with Makowiecki/Accary's Hexis DBR9 rounding out the top five.



The cruelest of cruel luck hit Maassen and Menten in the Mad Croc 'Vette.





GERMANY ROL

Nurburgring, August 29th 2010



'YOUTH' STANDS OUT

Young Driver's Darren Turner and Tomas Enge were untouchable at the Nurburgring, winning both races with ease. Alex Roache reports.

And so from the Belgian Ardennes to the neighbouring Eifel in western Germany as the FIA GT circus crossed the border to another legendary motor racing venue.

That's right - after a hiatus of almost a decade the world's premier Grand Touring car championship was returning to the Nürburgring. Alas, the days of modern racing series tackling the mighty 22km Nordschleife are long since past, but the modern 5km Grand Prix circuit is still a challenge for the drivers and the weather

can throw up a surprise or two.

Lamborghini was hoping to carry through the momentum from its debut victory in the previous race at Spa, and it would be the All-Inkl.com München Motorsport squad pulling out all the stops to ensure this time it was one of its Murciélagos taking the honours rather than the rival Lambos of Reiter Engineering. Marc Basseng would certainly have felt confident, having earlier in the year smashed the production car lap record around the Nordschleife in a Pagani Zonda R.

Pole position, however, was

snatched from under the noses of the Lamborghinis by the resurgent Young Driver AMR DBR9 pairing of Darren Turner and Tomas Enge, with Turner setting a blistering lap on a circuit that had only recently dried out after the wet morning sessions.

"Considering that the last two races we didn't make it through to Q3, making it to Pole position at the Nürburgring is really good," said Turner. "Our goal for today was to do a good job in Q2, so to make it into Q3 and be on pole was extra special."

UND SIX



Photos: DPPI/ GT1World.com (above) and Brecht Decancq (below)



Top: Awesome sight. Bottom: Large parts of the weekend were decidedly watery.

QUALIFYING RACE

Things were about to get even better for the Brit and his Czech teammate. Enge took the start for the qualifying race, and despite losing out to the fast-starting Corvette of Alex Margaritis on the run down to turn one he was able to reclaim the lead into the first corner on the second lap.

The Aston held onto the lead during the pitstop window, but it wasn't over yet. With exquisite timing - just as the whole

field was on fresh, slick rubber - the heavens opened. The notorious Eifel weather had played its joker card, and it was time for the teams to employ a bit of tactical nous.

Turner pitted straight away for wet tyres along with most of the field, but it was Andrea Bertolini in the championship-leading Vitaphone Maserati who fancied his chances on slicks as the rain continued to fall. He sailed into a 20-second lead, but was clearly struggling for

grip. They say fortune favours the brave - and Bertolini was certainly that - but 'they' have clearly never driven a 630bhp rear-wheel drive GT1 machine on a damp track with slicks. After two painfully slow laps, the Maserati was eaten alive by the wet tyre-shod DBR9 of Turner/Enge, which went on to claim victory and a pole position start for the championship race. Bertolini slithered over the line in a rather damp tenth.



Hard worked brakes cool off at Hegersport.

“

“This was an interesting race. The beginning was great I saw a gap on the inside and managed to get away in first place.

Tomas Enge



Photo: Brecht Decanq



OMP
NISSAN
RISMO

100-1

OMP
OMP



Frustration at SRT but Phoenix's indiscretions meant a point for the team come raceday.

CHAMPIONSHIP RACE

The circuit had dried out for the main event. Turner would start alongside the Phoenix Racing Margaritis/Hennerici Corvette which had snatched the lead from them at the start of the qualifying race, but the Brit was on his guard this time around and covered off the Chevy brilliantly as the lights went green and the field funnelled down into turn one.

The jostling pack emerged remarkably unscathed from the tight hairpin, the only drama being a collision between the Altfried Heger Maserati and Marc VDS Ford GT of Renaud Kuppens - both cars were out on the spot.

By the end of lap one the number 7 Young Driver Aston

was beginning to edge away from Hennerici's Corvette, but both of them were pulling clear of a fearsome scrap for third between the two Reiter Lamborghinis, championship protagonist Thomas Mutsch in the Matech Ford GT and Clivio Piccione in the number 10 Hex-is Aston.

With the Vitaphone Maseratis further down the pack, Mutsch was keen to capitalise on the misfortune of his title rivals in the qualifying race, hustling the Murciélagos all around the opening lap and then pouncing on Ricardo Zonta to move into fourth. The Ford set about chasing down third-placed Kox, but Mutsch hadn't banked on the close attention of Piccione who had followed the German through past Zonta

and into fifth. At the beginning of lap seven the Monegasque driver sailed down the inside at the first corner, snatching the position from Mutsch with some demon braking. Mutsch saw him coming and left just enough room, but in all the excitement Zonta had braked too late and had no option but to try and follow the Aston through past the Ford. It was never going to work, and the Lamborghini crunched into the side of the number 5 car and spun it round.

It was a double blow for Mutsch - not only did it send him plummeting down the order, it also promoted the Bertolini/Bartels Vitaphone Maserati up two places giving their title chances an enormous boost.

Meanwhile Fred Makow-



Photo: DPPI/ GT1World.com

“

I just kept my head down, tried not to make any mistakes and was happy with the gap I broke on the Corvette in the first couple of laps.

Darren Turner



Threatening skies didn't concern Young Driver one bit.



Wet 'Vette (above). Express train (below).



Photos: DPPI/ GT1World.com (top) and Brecht Decancq (above)



iecki in the other Hexis Aston was making superb progress through the field, moving into the top ten from 22nd on the grid as the leading cars began to pit. Every team was keeping a close eye on the skies for any indication that the earlier rain would return, but they couldn't risk leaving their cars out too long on old rubber and on lap thirteen the frantic pitlane activity began.

Turner in the Young Driver Aston had built up a commanding 6.5 second lead over the second-placed Phoenix Corvette, but it was Hennerici who was first to stop while Turner and Kox in third stayed out for an extra lap. The Dutchman used the opportunity to put in a blisteringly quick lap before switching over to Christopher Haase, which to the amazement of Alex Margaritis saw Haase resume in front of the Corvette. A smooth stop for the number 7 car ensured that Tomas Enge resumed at the head of the field, where it would remain for the rest of the race.

All attention was now focused on the battle for second. Former DTM racer Margaritis was determined to reclaim the second spot lost to the number 24 Reiter Lamborghini during the stops, but as they blasted

down the pit straight nose-to-tail on lap 17, Jonathan Hirschi's number 10 Hexis Aston - which Piccione had pitted later than most - emerged from the pitlane in front of them both. The Corvette had been knocked down another place, but the race wasn't over yet. Hirschi's tyres were not up to temperature, and down into the Dunlop loop Haase dived up the inside, pushing the Swiss wide and allowing Margaritis to muscle his way through at the same time. The Lambo/Corvette battle raged on until the chequered flag, but there were no further changes.

At the front, Enge had a trouble free run to the finish and took a convincing victory to reinvigorate his and Turner's championship hopes. The other Aston Martins came home 4th, 5th and 7th, confirming the DBR9 as the class of the field around the Nürburgring.

Enge was delighted with the result: "I think that we just had two very clean races," he said. "We did not make any mistakes, we were very consistent and we had the fastest pit stop too. The team did a perfect job again, and we're also happy that we got closer to the top of the table at the championship standings."





PORTUGAL ROU

Algarve, September 19th 2010



All Algarve photos: DPPI/ GT1World.com



Top: Vitaphone secured Championship Race glory. Bottom: Campbell-Walter conference.

UND SEVEN



VITAPHONE BACK ON TOP

Sumo won the Qualifying Race but Vitaphone's lightning pitwork won them the main event as Westbrook starred for Ford. Alex Roache reports.

The Algarve region in southern Portugal; home to oranges, figs and - since 2008 - one of the world's great racing circuits. After a cool, damp outing at the Nürburgring the FIA GT1 World Championship was heading to sunnier climes and to the Autódromo Internacional do Algarve in Portimão.

The series' last visit to this rollercoaster of a race track saw Bert Longin and James Ruffier take victory in the Sell-eslugh Corvette (now Mad-Croc Racing), so this season's pairings of Julien Jousse / Xavier

Maassen and Laurent Cazanave / Pertti Kuismanen were out to repeat the success and break the Corvette's 2010 duck.

If qualifying was anything to go by, however, they were in for a tough weekend. While the Phoenix Racing Corvette of Mark Hennerici and Alex Margaritis was basking in the limelight having claimed pole position by a mere three-thousandths of a second, the Mad-Croc cars were floundering down in 12th and 16th.

Their frustration was shared by the Ford GT of Maxime Martin and Bas Leinders, who

qualified on the front row but were subsequently relegated to the back of the grid owing to a technical infringement.

"During a technical check the airbox cracked," explained Leinders. "And because the crack caused another air flow, the airbox failed the test and our times were scrapped."

The Marc VDS team's misfortune dealt Peter Dumbreck and Michael Krumm a welcome piece of luck after the misery of the previous two rounds - they would now start on the front row alongside the Phoenix Corvette.

QUALIFYING RACE

As the lights went green Margaritis used the grunt of the growling 7-litre Detroit V8 to pull clear of Krumm who had his mirrors on both sides full of Vitaphone Maserati. Under braking for turn one though Miguel Ramos was swallowed up by a gaggle of cars including a fast-starting Dominik Schwager in the All-Inkl.com Lamborghini, the Maserati positively hung out to dry.

Further down the order reigning FIA GT2 champion Richard Westbrook was also on a charge, braving the outside line at turn ten to sweep around teammate Neel Jani and immediately launch an attack on the Palttala/Kuppens Ford. Westbrook made short work of Marc VDS machine before pulling off a series of brilliant out-braking manoeuvre into the turn five hairpin over the next few laps. Karl Wendlinger, Peter Kox, Max Nilsson and Fred Makowiecki all fell victim to the Brit's decisive overtaking prowess as a frenzied midfield battle from 6th down to 16th position ensued. "It's like stock cars without the contact!" enthused John Watson from the commentary booth.

At the front, meanwhile, the Phoenix Racing Corvette had

pitted and retained the lead with Mark Hennerici now in control of the race. Peter Dumbreck, now behind the wheel of the second-placed Sumo Power GT Nissan had resumed some way behind the German and just in front of the number 1 Vitaphone Maserati, but as the new drivers settled into a rhythm and the tyres bedded in, it became clear that both Dumbreck and Andrea Bertolini had the pace to catch the leader.

Sure enough, with ten minutes remaining on the clock the trio at the front were glued together on the race track. Down the pit straight Hennerici covered the inside line and braked deep into turn one, but Dumbreck had it all worked out and swept in from a wider line to blast past the Corvette on the exit in an inspired manoeuvre. A few laps later and the Maserati had demoted the Phoenix Racing car another place - it would have to make do with third and a second row start for the championship race the next day.

And so Dumbreck crossed the line to win the Qualifying Race ahead of the number 1 Maserati. "Tomorrow, it's a case of get a clean start and don't do anything silly," said the Scot.



“

Everything went perfectly for us today, from qualifying onwards. The start was okay, not brilliant, the pitstop was fantastic, Peter's [Dumbreck] drive was fantastic.

Michael Krumm



Sumo Power took another success, this time with Dumbreck and Krumm.

Hazy days.





CHAMPIONSHIP RACE

So championship leaders Bertolini and Bartels joined Krumm and Dumbreck on the front row, with title contender Thomas Mutsch lining up in fifth in the Matech Ford GT.

Following the departure of Romain Grosjean from the Matech squad after Paul Ricard, GT2 and former Porsche Supercup star Richard Westbrook had stepped into the fray as Mutsch's teammate. The Ger-

man may have been forgiven for fearing for the consistency of his championship charge, but so far the Brit had proved his worth - particularly with his aggressive drive in the qualifying race which saw the duo climb from 22nd to 5th.

Mutsch would be hoping for similar progress from the third row as the pack rolled towards the start line for round seven of the championship. Peter Dumbreck was hot off the mark from

pole as the lights went green, edging ahead of Bertolini who had a charging Darren Turner trying a move on the outside in the Young Driver Aston Martin. Also making a lightning getaway was the Swiss Racing Team Nissan of Seiji Ara, who went for a gap between Mutsch and Nicky Pastorelli's All-Inkl.com Lamborghini as the pack dived into the first corner. Three has never gone into one, however, and the Nissan tapped the Mur-



Dumbreck leads at the start, but it wouldn't last.



“

It's a long way to come from 22nd yesterday, and it's really not where we should have qualified.

Richard Westbrook



We are here, and we won this race, 50% is for our crew, probably more. All these drivers had a really good weekend, Corvette and Ford, because we shouldn't forget that the guys from Ford were unbelievable during the weekend.

Michael Bartels

ciélago into a spin causing it to collect Enrique Bernoldi's Maserati as the Brazilian minded his own business on the outside. The Matech Ford escaped unscathed but Ara would later incur the wrath of the stewards and receive a drive-through penalty for a move deemed a little too dangerous.

The first corner kerfuffle had allowed the front four to break away, and the order as they crossed the line at the end of lap one was Nissan (Dumbreck), Maserati (Bertolini), Aston (Turner) and Corvette (Hennerici), with Mutsch in hot pursuit. Jamie Campbell-Walter and Warren Hughes in the second Sumo Power GT Nissan had endured a miserable few races since their Tourist Trophy victory at Silverstone, and Portimão was about to strike another blow to the British pairing. Having scythed through the first corner chaos, Campbell-Walter was struck from the side in turn two and

his GT-R was irreparably damaged.

It was status quo at the front as the pitstop window opened, and Dumbreck's Nissan was first to blink. The Scot scrambled out of the car and teammate Krumm leapt in, but there was a problem with one of the wheels and the lead car was stationary for a painfully long time, all chances of victory evaporating before their eyes. It was a massive blow to the Sumo Power GT squad - particularly with the Campbell-Walter / Hughes car out in the opening stages - but a bonus for the Maserati of Bertolini and Bartels which swept through into the lead. Could anyone stop the Vitaphone Maserati now?

Enter Richard Westbrook! The Brit had already starred in the qualifying race, and some handy pit work from Matech saw him leapfrog the Turner/Enge Aston (whose tyres were now struggling in the heat)

and come out just behind the Phoenix Racing Corvette of Alex Margaritis. True to form, Westbrook was impossibly late on the brakes and up the inside of the Greek into turn six, before setting off after Bartels.

A valiant effort saw Westbrook gobble up the nine-second gap in just 19 minutes, but time wasn't on his side and the Maserati was able to cross the line just over one second ahead of the Ford. It was an excellent damage limitation exercise for Matech and for teammate Mutsch, who lay 27 points adrift of the Vitaphone Maserati pair going into Navarra.

"We're delighted to come second after qualifying," said Westbrook after the race. "We had to get our heads down and stay clean and really attack. I just thought I'll throw caution to the wind and then I could see Michael. As Michael said with the points situation, you never know. We'll keep fighting till the end."



The Maserati snuck in after Nissan and Corvette had looked strong.



SPAIN ROUND

Navarra, October 24th 2010



LAMBORGHINI INVINCIBLE

Reiter Lamborghini dominated on GT racing's first visit to the rather uninspiring circuit at Navarra.

Dan Bathie reports.

The eighth round was scheduled to be held in Durban. Instead the new Spanish Circuito de Navarra hosted the GT cars for the final round in Europe before they headed off to South America for the conclusion of the championship.

There were two absentees at Navarra, Mad Croc and Phoenix were both down to one car each, lack spares cited as the reason. After practice there became another car missing

from the grid, Stefan Mucke taking the rear right corner of his Young Driver DBR9 in a heavy shunt.

Qualifying saw the number 25 Reiter Lamborghini of Ricardo Zonta and Frank Kechele take Lamborghini's first pole position of the season, Ex F1 driver Ricardo Zonta setting the time, which was two tenths quicker than Alessandro Pier Guidi in his Hagersport Maserati. The Italian sharing the car with NicoVerdonck. Neel Jani was third in the Matech

Ford that he shares with Nicolas Armindo, just behind them was another Ford. Maxine Martin fourth in his Marc VDS liveried version. Fifth place went to Darren Turner; the number seven Aston still in contention for the title outpaced his rivals. His nearest were back on row six and all together. Thomas Mutsch just ahead of Marc Hennerici with championship leaders Andrea Bertolini and Michael Bartels another place back in thirteenth, looking to advance.

EIGHT



All Navarra photos: DPPI/ GT1World.com



Top: Reiter at the start. They were unstoppable, again. Bottom: Covered up by her hand.

QUALIFYING RACE

Frank Kechele and Ricardo Zonta claimed their second Qualifying race win of the season at Navarra in dominant fashion.

Kechele started the Reiter Lamborghini from pole and got away cleanly followed by the Hegersport Maserati, behind them it all got a little too close - Clivio Piccione spinning a full 360° after contact with Christopher Haase and Warren Hughes. As they all ploughed into Turn 2 Miguel Ramos spun his Vitaphone MC12 in the middle of the pack with help from the 13 Corvette; every-

one just managing to miss the Portuguese driver. Piccione's afternoon took another blow, quite literally. The number one Maserati hitting the Hexis car into a spin, the resulting damage causing the Aston to retire. Soon there would be only one Aston Martin left in the race as Tomas Enge stopped his Young Driver DBR9 while in third by the side of the track with transmission problems.

A few minutes before the pit window opened Christopher Haase was in to serve a drive through penalty for his part in the Piccione spin at the start. Mutsch was the first car

to stop once the window had opened handing over to Richard Westbrook. Soon after the leader was in, handing the car to Ricardo Zonta and regaining the lead of the race with the two Hegersport cars behind in second and third. The 33 car with Login now driving soon lost third to Maxime Martin and then Neel Jani who were battling to be best Ford. Their fight lasting right until the finish, Martin managing to keep third. Second was the 34 Hegersport MC12 driven by Alessandro Pier Guidi and Nico Verdonck four and a half seconds behind winners Zonta and Kechele.



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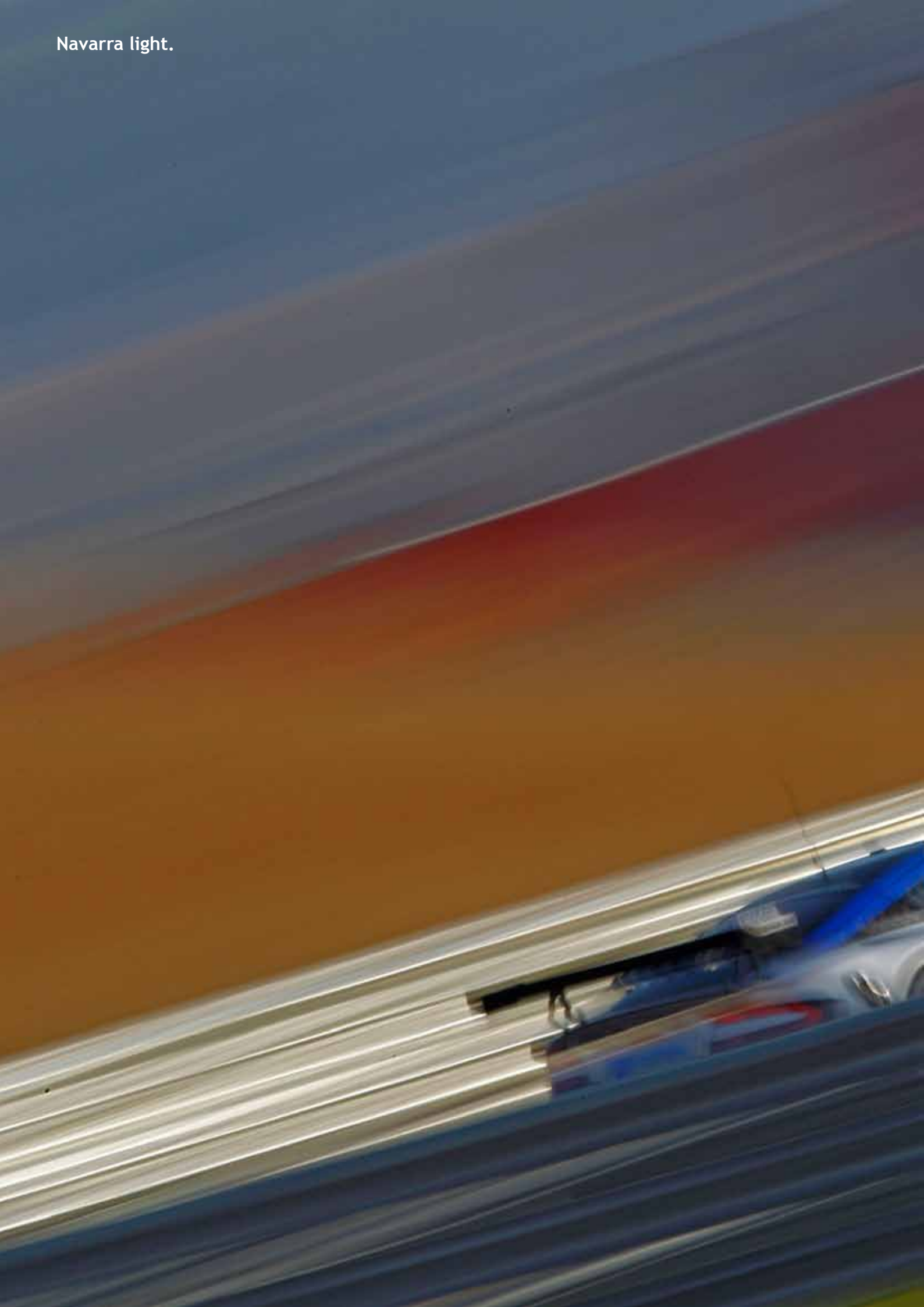
The car was really nice to drive, very consistent.

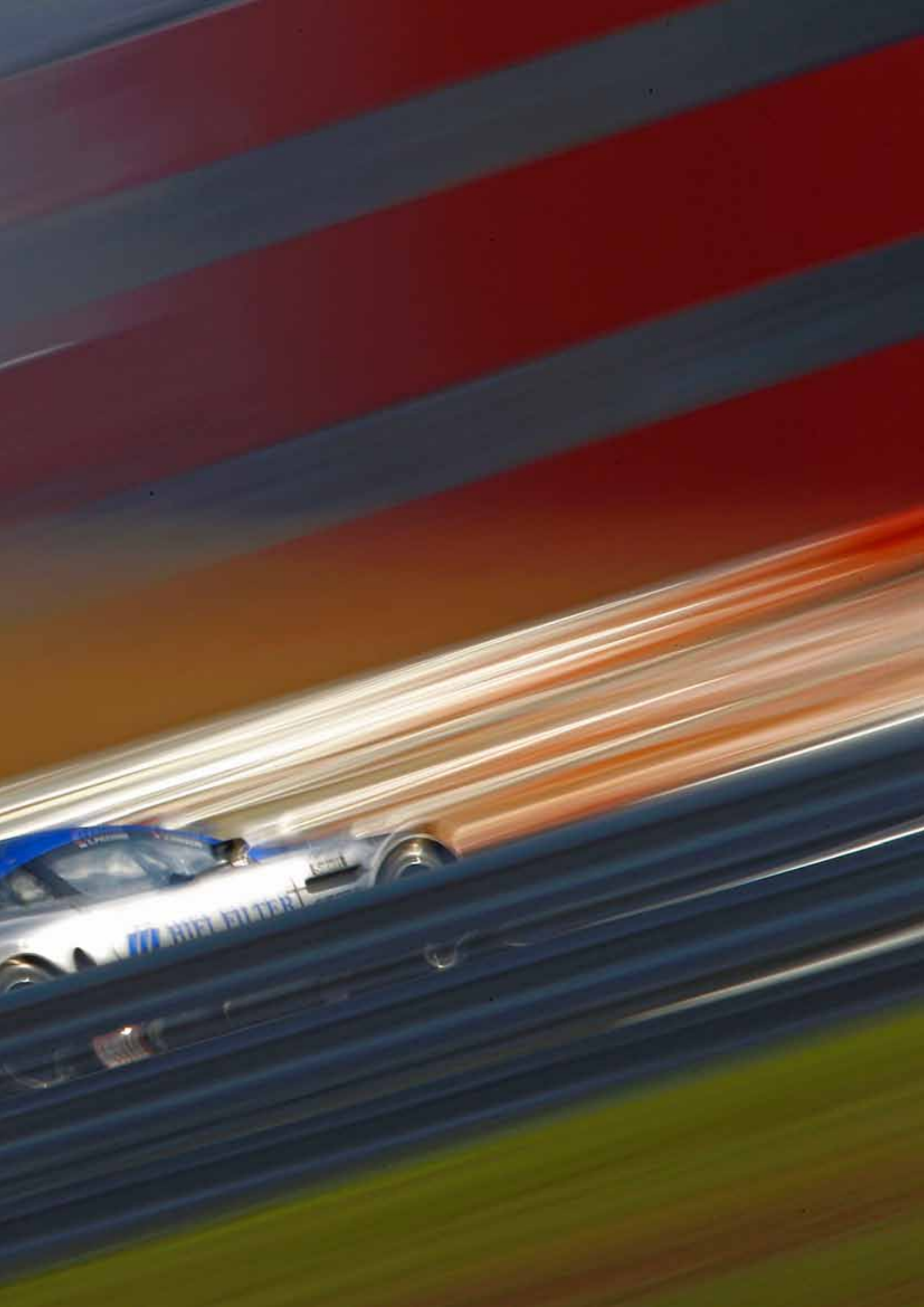
Ricardo Zonta



All Inkl, as for most of 2010, trailed Reiter by some margin.

Navarra light.





CHAMPIONSHIP RACE

Frank Kechele and Ricardo Zonta claimed the clean sweep as they took victory in the Championship race at Navarra.

Zonta got a great start from pole as the lights went green but it was Jamie Campbell-Walter who made the best get-away, moving from fifth to second before the first corner. The first lap then became carnage. Peter Kox was the first casualty when his attempt to make up places by carving a path down the inside of Turn 3 resulted in contact with the 41 Marc VDS Ford and the 3 SRT Nissan. The battle left the Lamborghini with suspension damage and could not complete the lap.

A few corners later and there was more of the same. This time Duncan Huisman in the 12 Mad Croc Corvette and Bert Login in the 33 Hagersport spun from tenth and eleventh place respectively; resulting in half the field trying to miss the stricken car. Wendlinger and Hirschi failed to and were out before lap one was over. More chaos was still to come. This time Alessandro Pier Guidi made contact with Neel Jani ending with the Ford GT sideways across the track with Christophe Bouchut also spinning to avoid Jani.

A few laps in, as Frederic Makowiecki passed Maxine Martin for third place, spots of rain began appearing. The slippery conditions caught Richard Westbrook out, the Britain suffering a spin but re-joining just in front of team mate Neel Jani. Meanwhile Makowiecki, in his Aston Martin, seemed to be

loving the slightly greasy track and soon passed Jamie Campbell-Walter for second. The pit window opened and Zonta was the first leading car to stop, the Brazilian handing over the Lamborghini to the German revelation Frank Kechele. A lap later and Makowiecki brought the Hexis Aston in to hand over to YannClairay. The Hexis team were slick and efficient and Clairay just came out ahead of Kechele in the number 25 Lamborghini. Clairay, however was unable to push on cold tyres and the Lamborghini with the tyres already up to temperature and working well, charged past the Hexis Aston into Turn 1 and regained the lead of the race. Behind them Tomas Enge was making up ground after starting 19th, the Czech passing Bas Leinders for fourth place. Further down the field there was more drama. After almost colliding coming out of the pits, Thomas Mutsch and Enrique Bernoldi continued their wheel to wheel battle on the track. The pair were too busy with their own scrap to realise that Alex Margartis in the 13 Corvette had caught them. Maragritis then passed Mutsch around the outside and looked to get Bernoldi as well, but as they turned in Mutsch left his braking late and ran into the rear of the Phoenix Corvette sending him into a spin. Mutsch didn't get away with the contact so lightly. The front end of the Ford GT was a crumpled mess, bits flying off as he made his way back to the pits where he would retire. This spelled disaster for Mutsch's title hopes as well as Hen-





Zonta was so fast, it was impossible to take a sharp photo.



nerici's. Westbrook however took all the blame for his team mate's accident when asked about it, saying "We shouldn't have been fighting down there. I made a stupid mistake and should have taken it easy with the loss of front downforce"

Championship leaders Bartels and Bertolini were having a quiet afternoon compared to their title rivals. Bartels had been running in sixth but was passed by Nicky Pastorelli with a few laps to go. Further inspired, the Dutchman continued his progress, tak-

ing fifth from Bas Leinders after sending him into a spin on the penultimate lap. Up front and the fight for runner up behind the Reiter Lamborghini was close but YannClairay did just enough to keep the Sumo Power Nissan of Warren Hughes and Tomas Enge's Young Driver Aston Martin behind him - the gap just over one second between all three as they crossed the line, twelve seconds behind Zonta and Kechele. Zonta was delighted with his second Championship race victory "I've enjoyed this weekend,

this first time I drove here I felt the car was very quick and easy to drive. The team have done a great job; Frank has done a great job. We didn't make any mistakes all weekend and that is very important for us"

Fifth place on track went to the All Inkl Lamborghini of Pastorelli/Schwager but the race officials weren't impressed with Pastorelli's move on Leinders and the Dutchman was penalised with a 30 second penalty which demoted him to ninth just behind the number 13 Corvette.

“

My stint was not that exciting but it is always very difficult when you are at the front and you have to keep your concentration.

Frank Kechele



Clairray and Makowiecki performed well.



BRAZIL ROUND

Interlagos, November 28th 2010

Photos: DPPI/ GT1World.com



Above: Dropping that camera would be expensive. Above right: Victors.



HOMETOWN HEROES

Aston Martin won the Qualifying Race but when it mattered, local lads Enrique Bernoldi and Xandi Negrao took the season's most popular win in Brazil. Jake Yorath reports.

And so to the first of a South American double bill, with two rounds in two weekends - and both at brilliant circuits. As the GT1 circus cruised into the popular Interlagos venue in Sao Paulo, Brazil, it was Vitaphone, and specifically Michael Bartels and Andrea Bertolini, who were comfortably championship having scored consistently all season. In the driver's standings, they had a 35 point lead.

Darren Turner put it thus: "Effectively, they need to score no

points over the next two meetings, and I don't think they're going to make that much of a mistake." It was certainly unlikely.

Their closest challenger, Thomas Mutsch, had a disaster in Spain and came out with no points to show for the weekend. Reiter's pairing of Frank Kechele and Ricardo Zonta dominated, leaving Kechele with an outside chance of a good placing in the title hunt. It also left Reiter with a reasonable shot at the teams' championship in South America. Marc Hennerici was also

in good stead, remaining as he was with a mathematical chance of winning the title and a realistic shot at the top three. "The main issue is to score points, keep cool," said the German, who would be paired with Alex Margaritis for the weekend.

In qualifying, it was home hero Enrique Bernoldi, alongside Xandi Negrao, who took pole. Alongside him was All-Inkl's Nicky Pastorelli, teamed with Dominic Schwager, with Darren Turner and Tomas Enge third for Young Driver Aston Martin.



QUALIFYING RACE

Christophe Bouchut would not start the race after a curious incident in practice where he inexplicably completed three extra laps after the chequer (and then a red flag) had already flown. On the grid, though, all the talk was about tyres. Analyst John Watson: "It's an abrasive surface, it's torture for the tyres. It's all about conservation of the tyre."

At the start, Xandi Negrao led away from Pastorelli, with Turner sneaking into second ahead of the Lamborghini, with Margaritis passing the All-Inkl car for third. Ominously,

Michael Bartels was already making a serious amount of progress from the back of the grid, and they were soon ninth - from nineteenth! It was a seriously bruising first few laps, with bodywork under threat all over the track. Hughes (Sumo Nissan) and Armindo (Matech Ford) clashed and dropped to the back.

The big drama was saved for lap three. As Thomas Mutsch and Frank Kechele dived for position, the Lamborghini pulled off a bulldozing block on the Ford, crunching into its side and leaving it with broken steering. Both were out on the spot, but Mutsch had lost so

much more.

Disaster also befell title contender Hennerici on lap four, as Pastorelli made a rash dive at a locked up Margaritis, putting the Corvette into a spin. Hennerici was off his seat.

The Young Driver AMR's team was king of the pits, beating Vitaphone having come in nose to tail. Tomas Enge emerged into a lead he would not relinquish. Bernoldi came home fourth after a drive through incurred thanks a mechanic throwing a wheel at the stop. Second were Michael Krumm and Peter Dumbreck and third were Clivio Piccione and Jonathan Hirschi.



Turner and Enge dominated the Qualifying Race.

“

It's really nice to be finishing the season at such exciting places. I've never been to Interlagos before!

Darren Turner



It was just another step closer for Bartels and Bertolini with consistent scoring.





The racing was fantastic around the Interlagos circuit, which might have been designed just for these cars.

CHAMPIONSHIP RACE

So it was, then, that Aston Martin (Enge) started on pole position followed by Nissan (Dumbreck) and Aston Martin again, with Piccione. Behind them was eager home hero Bernoldi, who was immediately on the attack. All 22 cars (minus one Phoenix Corvette and the dismissed All-Inkl Lamborghini) made it through the Senna Esses in one piece. Enge just held out into turn one from Piccione with Dumbreck holding second with a bit of force, too.

Quick mover Bernoldi was into third on the second lap, muscling his way past Piccione's Hexis Aston like a boxer and setting off after Dumbreck. He didn't get far however - the audacious Piccione was swiftly back through at the Senna Esses (no contact involved, this time). Englishman Richard Westbrook was also living up to his well-deserved reputation as a hard charger and a feisty racer. From the back, he made four places in three laps and then another three by the end of the ninth tour. The Fords, however,

were struggling, as Westbrook later explained: "We overtook a lot of cars but our car wasn't quite quick enough today so we couldn't really fight for the positions where we wanted to be. It was just too hot for us today. We struggled with engine and gearbox temperatures. It was the same for all the Fords."

Also moving through the field was Zonta, but the Brazilian was soon out with engine trouble. Championship leader Bertollini, having briefly been seventh, was shuffled back to ninth in quick succession by Neel Jani and then to tenth by Hegersport substitute Daniel Serra. Sensibly, the heavily weighed down Italian did not put up too much resistance.

Coming up to the stops, there were just three seconds covering the top six and a series of great scraps down the field - Westbrook versus Kox versus Ara was especially entertaining. Particular note for the aforementioned Serra in his first GT1 event - he drove fantastically well against series regulars, putting in fast laps and proving adept at overtaking.

As the pit window opened, Enge dived straight in to hand over to Turner and Dumbreck followed suit, with Krumm taking the reins. Krumm, however, lost out badly in the changeover, going in second and coming out effectively fourth, with Negrao and Margaritis both jumping the unfortunate German. Piccione stayed out an extra lap and then handed over to Hirschi, who had a sniff at the lead but couldn't quite make it. Negrao took advantage of the Frenchman's struggle on cold tyres, nipping through for second.

It was soon a two horse race, Negrao's home experience leaving him in prime position to attack Turner. The Brit, though, had an ace up his sleeve in the form of his smooth style, which would keep the tyres in prime condition and leave him in good shape towards the end. Each time the leaders passed the packed stands, there was a standing ovation for the Brazilian, not that he was likely to be able to hear it.

Meanwhile, Michael Bartels was all over Yann Clairay, apparently forgetting his position

“

I don't care about the Championship, I'm just happy I won at home!

Enrique Bernoldi

as champion elect as he attacked at almost every corner. With the German held up, they soon had more freunden to join in. Thomas Mutsch and Alex Müller, in Ford and Heger Maserati respectively, soon made it a fantastic four way battle. Mutsch had a good go at Bartels, then Müller put huge pressure on Mutsch and slipped through. Mutsch wasn't done, carving around the outside into turn one.

Brilliant racing it certainly was and soon Müller was through again. Yet still Mutsch wasn't done and had one more go before Bartels passed Clairay (who was really struggling with ruined rear tyres), followed by Müller, followed by Mutsch - four disastrous corners for the Aston man. He was soon back past the Ford, Mutsch sliding wide and then a lap or so later he'd been passed by Stefan Mücke and had squeezed Christopher Haase onto the grass to hold on. A lap later, Mücke touched Clairay and then passed, which let the other two through, setting up a superb final few laps for Mutsch against Haase, which ended with the Ford having a self induced pirouette.

At the front, Negrao was so close to the Aston that he could reach out the window and touch it. And touch it he did, slamming through with an opportunistic dive just like Bernoldi had pulled on Piccione in the first race. Having shown that he could stick to Turner, the young Brazilian romped away for a lap or two before holding the gap for a comfortable and supremely popular win at home. Second were Enge and Turner, with Henericci and Margaritis a lonely third.





Negrao was a jubilant victor.



ARGENTINA RO

San Luis, December 5th 2010



ON TOP OF THE WORLD

In a weekend dominated by Aston Martin, with Hexis taking a double win, the headlines were made by Vitaphone; Michael Battels and Andrea Bertolini were crowned FIA GT1 World Champions 2010.

All San Luis photos: DPPI/ GT1World.com



Top: Champions! Bottom: Makowiecki and Clairray were untouchable.

OUND TEN



Just about every superlative in the hacks' guidebook has been used to describe San Luis, from spectacular to fantastic, via magnificent. Set in beautiful mountainous country and running round the Portrero de los Funes (a big lake). The track itself should probably have a Matt Munro soundtrack and come with obligatory open back driving gloves, but the glory of the GT1 field was enough to contend with.

Besides the setting, there was the minor business of a championship to contend with.

Andrea Bertolini and Michael Bartels were going to need the weekend from hell to lose the series itself, but behind them anything could still happen. The same was true for Vita-phone and the Teams' title, but Reiter or either of the two Aston teams had a more than plausible title shot.

In qualifying, it was all about Jose Maria Lopez (and not a toaster in sight), who replaced Nygaard in the number eight Aston. The Argentinian showed the kind of class that attracted the stillborn USF1 Grand Prix team and comfortably took pole position for Young Driver

AMR. Second on the grid was Hexis, Makowiecki and Clairay outpacing the title leaders but for the German-Italian duo it was simply a case of outpacing Turner and Enge. If they finished above the Aston in the qualifying race it was champagne time and the white car was seventeenth.

Turner: "My fastest lap didn't felt too bad. But it wasn't fast enough. The 40kg success ballast, which we have to carry around here after the victory and the second place last weekend at Brazil, certainly didn't help us."



QUALIFYING RACE

Just as superlatives are hard to find for the circuit itself, describing what happened at the start of the qualifying race at San Luis is a bit of a headache. Mücke, starting the pole car, got away badly and was swamped by Clairray. That held up Bartels and it was swiftly an Aston one-two-three, with Jonathan Hirschi coming past and in the wheel tracks of his team mate.

Then in a moment only he can explain, Mücke rammed Clairray, leaving the Frenchman's car irreparably dam-

aged - the red-trimmed Aston continued unharmed. Alongside them, Hirschi pulled off the move of the season, completing an entire 360 in the middle of the first corner and continuing, losing just six places.

After the pits the order was shaken up with Frederic Makowiecki in the lead, Clivio Piccione in the number ten Aston in second ahead of Peter Dumbreck in the Sumo Nissan and Richard Westbrook in the Matech Ford, which had suffered a slow pitstop. Westbrook was all over the rear wing of the Nissan as Dumbre-

ck defended at every turn. On lap fifteen Piccione ran wide and Dumbreck had to back off allowing Westbrook, Maxime Martin in the Ford and Frank Kechele to overtake him. Before the end of the lap Westbrook moved up to second as he swept ahead of Piccione.

It finished Makowiecki, Westbrook, Martin - but the race belonged to Bartels and Bertolini, who became the 2010 FIA GT1 World Champions. "We probably won't realize it today," admitted Bartels, "but when we are back in Europe it will sink in that it is something special!"



Carnage. Mücke hit Clairray and Hirschi managed a total 360 and continued in ninth.



“

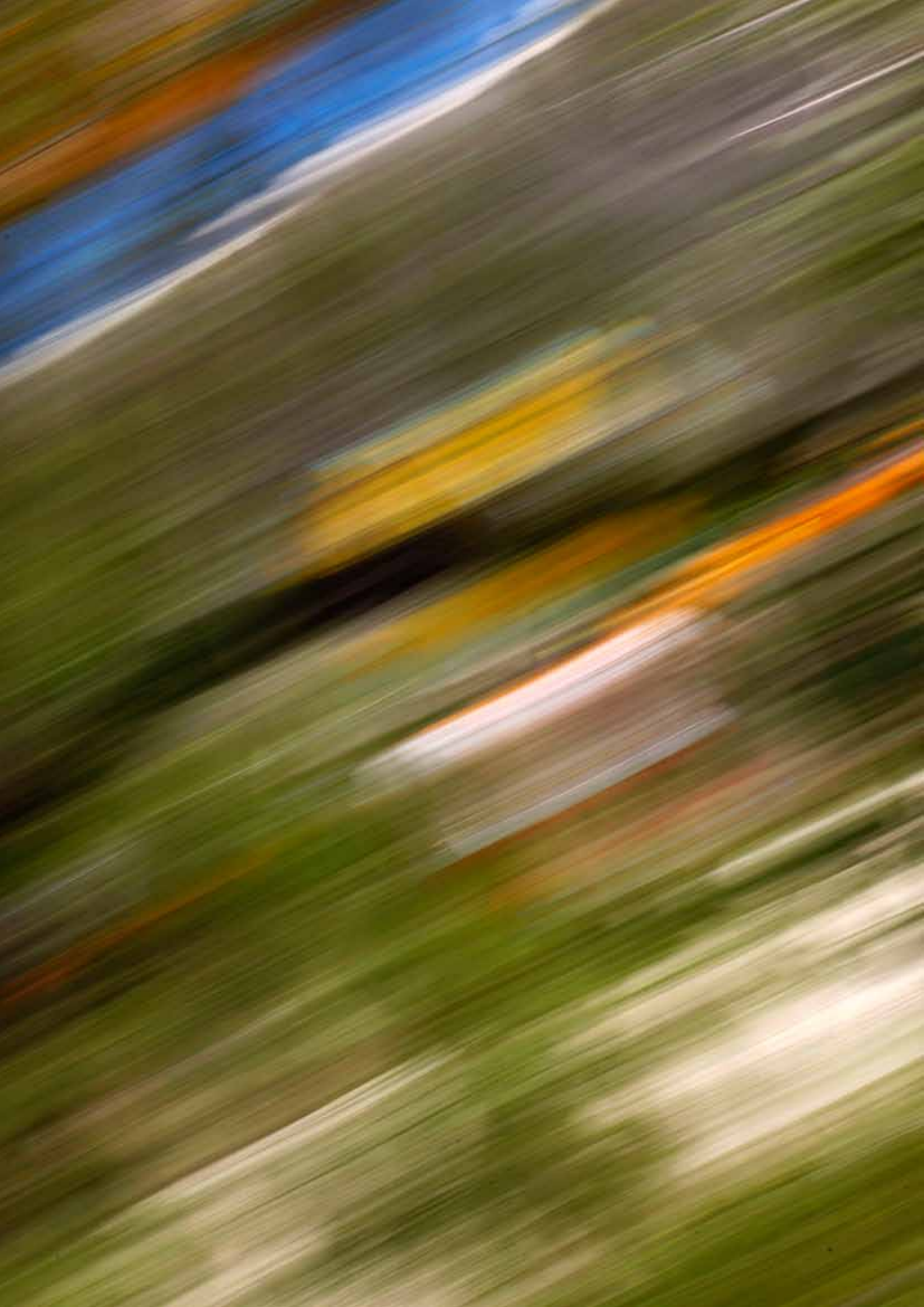
For me, working with Maserati is like being with a family. They give me the motivation just like I had with my time with Ferrari.

Andrea Bertolini



Vitaphone undoubtedly deserved both crowns.







The last getaway of 2010.

“

We were not fighting for the last metre to the chequered flag but we still had to bring it home.

Michael Bartels



CHAMPIONSHIP RACE

With the Championship decided, all eyes were on Jose Maria Lopez. The Argentinian would be starting dead last in the Aston Martin and after his performances in qualifying, bets against everything up to and including a podium were on short odds.

At the front, it was Fred Makowiecki on pole, the rapid Frenchman having comfortably conserved the lead handed to him by team mate Clairay

in the first race. As the field fanned out towards the open first sweeps, Westbrook lost out from second, dummied by Clivio Piccione from fourth place, who tucked in behind Hexis teammate Makowiecki through turn one.

Peter Dumbreck was slicing through the field after an underwhelming race one, using the Nissan's power to find a way past Bertolini. Richard Westbrook, not content with being third, gave the rear fac-

ing camera on the Piccione car a good thump as he got frustrated behind the Aston in second. He soon thundered past but must have wondered where Makowiecki had gone - the Hexis car was long gone up the road after just a couple of laps. Westbrook simply couldn't match that pace.

Lopez, meanwhile, was into the big money places and already past his teammate. He carved through like a hot knife in the proverbial and was

helped by Dumbreck making a mess of his Nissan, spinning after getting onto the dirt off line. Bas Leinders was also charging, passing first the Reiter Lamborghini and then the Swiss Nissan of Wendlinger, who had scored a season's best seventh in race one after a canny stop.

One time championship hopefuls Darren Turner and Tomas Enge might as well have stayed in Brazil. Their car was just too heavy and really struggling to make ground, fighting at the back with the Ara and Nilsson Nissan. Nilsson would soon spin his car attempting to get back at Enge, later crashing heavily and ending the season on a note as sour as it had been all year.

Makowiecki's pitstop came and went - he handed to Clairay with a lead big enough for a quick snooze and a book in the garage back to Mutsch, now installed in place of Westbrook.

Krumm, having taken over from Dumbreck at Sumo, was fighting back, passing Enge and Kox in the same move. The unfortunate Czech was left to wonder where it had all gone wrong as he came out on the wrong end of a three way shuffle. Sadly for Nissan, Krumm was soon out though, his Nissan calling quits and being left in the pitlane. The other car also retired with gearbox trouble. Bad day at the office for Sumo.

Bad luck, too, for Marc VDS... again. Leinders and Martin were both out with engine trouble and the 41 car completely missed the pit window in the hands of Markus Palttala. A curious and unfortunate way to end the season.

At the end of the race,

Clairay crossed the line miles ahead, and seemed very pleased about it, and the series as a whole. "This is the perfect result to end the season," beamed the French driver. "Overall I think it's a beautiful championship because you have the best drivers in GT and the best cars. The format is good with two races, too. I like the Qualifying format of Q1, Q2 and Q3. I am looking forward to next year."

Second were Westbrook and Mutsch and third, the other Hexis Aston Martin for Piccione and Hirschi. Lopez eventually hauled his car, with some help of course from Stefan Mücke, into a well deserved fifth with Reiter's Frank Kechele and Luis Jimenez fourth.

The Hexis team's great performance, scoring more points in one race than the previous nine combined, earned them second in the teams' standings and secured Aston Martin the SRO Trophy, awarded to the top scoring brand in the championship.

Makowiecki: "It has been a great weekend for Hexis and the Aston. The car was really strong on this circuit which is quite tricky and new for a lot of the drivers and the teams. I got a good start and just tried to keep a good pace going and we were lucky enough to build a lead and keep it until the end. I have to thank all the guys at Hexis as they did another great job this weekend and for the whole season."

The weekend may have had a Franco-British flavour to it, but really it belonged to Vitaphone Maserati. A brilliant season's racing, topped with deserved and fitting champions.





Above: Lopez worked hard to recover after Mucke's mistake. Below: Scenery.



“

We always collected our points and when we had our chances we won races. We made one or two less mistakes than our rivals and if you do that you are there.

Michael Bartels.

It has been a pleasure again to work with the Vitaphone team. They are a great group every member of the team is very motivated to do the best job they can. They deserve this championship

Andrea Bertolini

”

Championship

World
ship

2010



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09

CHAMPION

In
FOCUS

Silverstone, FIA GT1 World Championship.
Alex Roache used a Canon 40D and 70-200 F2.8
Canon. Shutter speed 1/1250th at F2.8.





In
FOCUS

Silverstone, FIA GT1 World Championship.
Jake Yorath used a Nikon D200 and 80-200 F2.8
Nikkor. Shutter speed 1/400th at F4.





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