



June 2011

Le Mans 24

LE MANS



Background word cloud containing various instances of 'LE MANS' and 'le mans' in different sizes, orientations, and shades of gray.

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Photo: Brecht Decanq

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EVENTS

l'endurance is:

Jake Yorath (editor)

Alex Roache (deputy editor)

Dan Bathie (sub editor)

Sam Tickell (reports editor)

Brecht Decancq (photographer)



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Photo: Alex Roache



FIA GT3 European Championship, Silverstone
Alex Roache used a Canon 40D and 10-22 F3.5-5.6
Canon. Shutter speed 1/8th at F29.







FIA GT1 World Championship, Silverstone
Jake Yorath used a Nikon D200 and 80-200 F2.8
Nikkor. Shutter speed 1/1000th at F2.8.







Le Mans 24 Hours

Marcel Thomassen used a Canon 40D and 70-200 F2.8 IS Canon. Shutter speed 1/60th at F2.8.







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In
FOCUS

Le Mans 24 Hours

Jake Yorath used a Nikon D300S and 80-200 F2.8
Nikkor. Shutter speed 1/25th at F2.8.





In
FOCUS

Le Mans 24 Hours

Jake Yorath used a Nikon D200 and 300 F4 Nikkor.
Shutter speed 1/125th at F13.





In
FOCUS

Le Mans 24 Hours

Brecht Decancq used a Nikon D300s and 500 F4
Nikkor. Shutter speed 1/400th at F4.5.





In
FOCUS

FIA GT3 European Championship, Silverstone
Alex Roache used a Canon 40D and 10-22 F3.5-5.6
Canon. Shutter speed 1/10th at F22.



In
FOCUS

FIA GT1 World Championship, Silverstone
Jake Yorath used a Nikon D200 and 300 F4 Nikkor.
Shutter speed 1/30th at F32.







Photo: Jake Yorath



THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH

The Le Mans 24 is motorsport's greatest festival.
Jake Yorath takes on a French classic, some French
energy drinks and a beautiful French lady

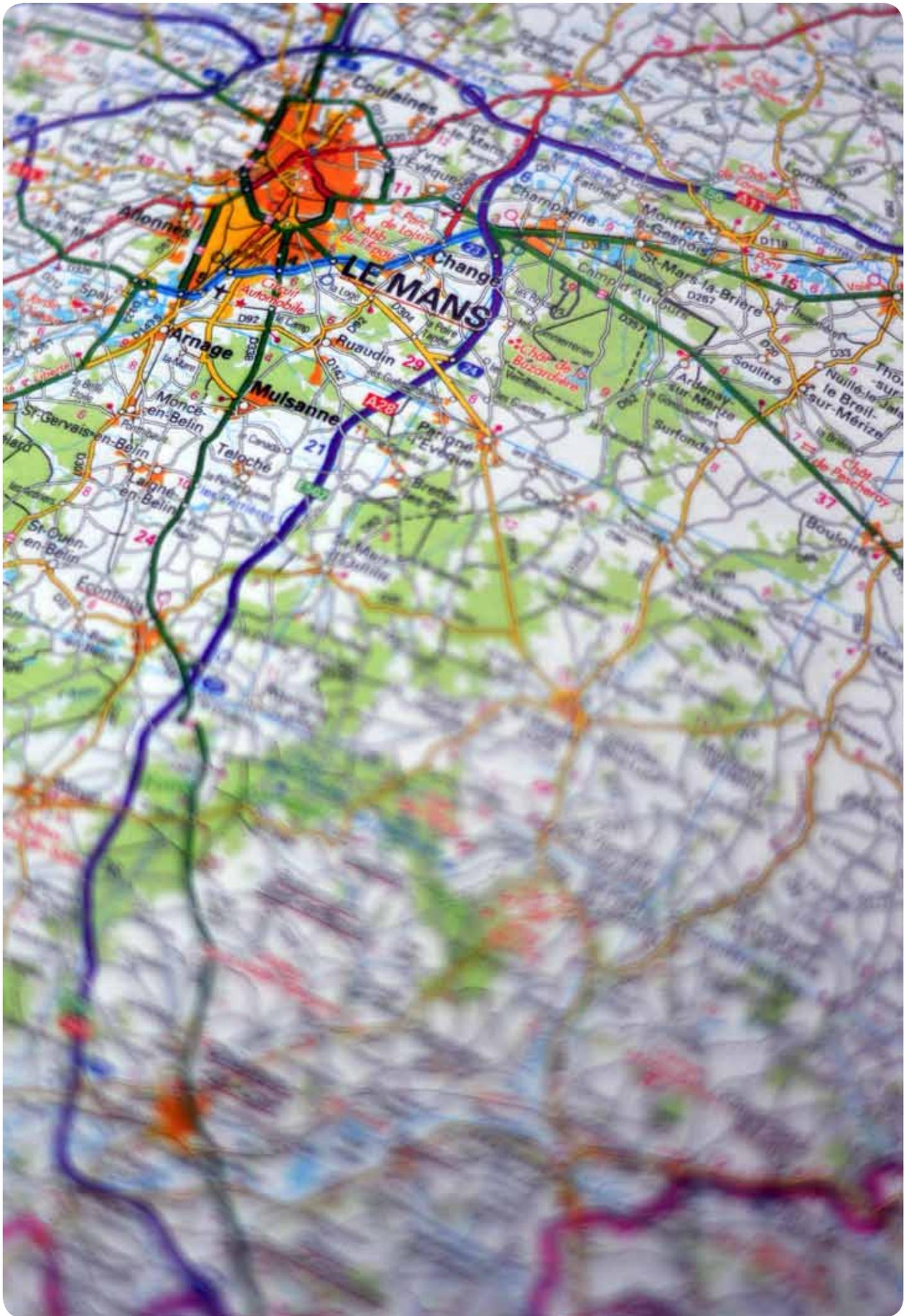


Photo: Jake Yorath

DAY ONE TUESDAY JUNE 7TH

EN ROUTE

It is 8:30am on Tuesday the seventh of June. “We’ll be away in half an hour,” I confidently pronounce, failing to take into account the various entrails of our luggage strewn over the floor of the kitchen, living room, dining room, stairs, bedrooms...

It is 9:30am and, despite my confidence, we have still not left. I am, however, at least now in a car with my British compadres for the week: the standard l’endurance taxi drivers Dan Bathie (whose job is to sit in the back, quietly) and my enduring father Tim Yorath, who has provided our battle scarred Golf TDI estate for the trip.

“Passports?” he enquires. Check. “Speed Chills docs?” Check. Helpfully in a big blue envelope, with Speed Chills plastered across the front. Helpful when you’re only four parts awake. “Everyone ready?” As we’ll ever be.

A few hours later and we’re late at the Channel Tunnel. The great thing about the Channel Tunnel is that they are used to idiots, and their robotic check in machine simply moves us on to the next available train. That gives us time for a Burger King, which I graciously buy (“I’m buying this, but I don’t expect to spend a Euro Cent in France!”) to feed the flagging troops.

Tim parks next to a very, very expensive orange Aston Martin with number plate ‘AML1’, which after our last visit to this port, seems a little over confident. I am also accutely aware

of my Aston Martin shirt (I got it free a while back, don’t worry) and the fact I look like a massive, raving fan boy. Still, it’s worth a good oggle before it bumbles off to go and look pretty somewhere in France.

In the tunnel, we take it in turns to skim (and discard) a well know motoring magazine before taking it in turns to take photos of each other that at the time seem like a great idea. It turns out that, in fact, the lighting inside makes everyone look either dead or like Mick Jagger, which is worse than dead.

France provides us with very little entertainment on our journey down. We rendezvous with Marcel Thomassen, who is photographer from Holland, and friend of l’endurance. Dan jumps in with him while Tim and I turn Led Zeppelin up a little louder and follow the Dutchman and his sat-nav.

A short trip to Super-U

(and its brilliant Gayelord soup) later and we cruise into Beausejour. Explaining in our best shouted French (“Bon appetit Rodney, bon appetit,”) that we have no knives or guns to the guards at the gate, we are obliged to follow a pretty French girl on a bicycle through crowds of already drunk Danes. Their economy must grind to a standstill this same week every year, because every Dane in the world is in Le Mans.

It’s reassuring to see high security fences all around our campsite with Speed Chills and, after brief consultation with the lovely Neil, Chris and Justin, we’re guided (temporarily, as we’ve arrived before the site is officially open to customers) to the corner. Tents up, it’s beer and crisps time. Why Walkers don’t bring Lays Bolognese flavour crinkle cuts to the UK mystifies me, because they’re the best crisps on the face of the earth. If you’ve never had them, you’re making a big mistake.

The highlight of Tuesday was always going to be Le Mans on big screen and it doesn’t disappoint. It’s a very special moment, and a number of top photographers, journalists and race fans (though nowhere near as many as the organisers had planned for!) gather on the start straight for the show. It’s incredible. The footage of the first lap, down Mulsanne, is better every time. Still not sure there’s a plot though - sorry Steve. We stay until the end, frozen but happy.

Vive Le Mans.

“
THE HIGHLIGHT
OF TUESDAY
WAS ALWAYS
GOING TO BE THE
FILM ON THE BIG
SCREEN

DAY TWO WEDNESDAY JUNE 8TH

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Having arrived last night to find the accreditation centre closed, first job Wednesday is to pick up my pass. Now, for a chap like me who built up a little magazine to see that magazine accredited for Le Mans is a huge honour. 'Jake Yorath, l'endurance' it is proudly emblazoned. Top. No other word for it. Just top.

With that proudly hung around my neck and after a trip to the local supermarket, I'm ready to rock. I head eagerly over to the media centre and, after a quick chat with Catherine, it emerges I don't have a permanent vest. No biggie, because I don't need that much time trackside, I need the time to learn the place. After all, this is only my second Le Mans, and my first as

accredited media and this is a bloody big place. Whereas you can walk Oulton Park in about ten minutes, and Silverstone in a few hours, you can't walk Le Mans.

I am booked in for tabards for the two evening into night sessions on Wednesday and Thursday, and so spend the first session settling into the desk I book with the lovely media centre ladies (marked 'Jake



Photo: Marcel Thomassen

Yorth' by the lady who does my desk label, I'm clearly too cool for two As in one name) and chatting with various friends in here.

In no particular order: Brecht Decancq, Belgian photographer and great friend of l'endurance is here, along with Speed TV's John Dagys, fellow Americans Regis Lefebure and Bob Chapman, Dutch agency photographer Ronald Fleurbaa-

ij and the Dailysportscar crew. They include photographers 'Pedro', 'Doris' and 'Lordy' (alter egos perhaps inspired by John 'Winter' of Porsche fame), editor Graham Goodwin and newish recruit Marcel Ten Caat. There's not much these guys don't know about sportscar racing, and if they don't then the chaps I'm desked along side probably will: Sam Collins and Lawrence Butcher

of Racecar Engineering, two of the most likeable and friendly journalists in the world.

Later in the day I also have the pleasure of running into Geoffroy Barre of Endurance-Magazine, who helped us with the Pescarolo issue and Jakob Ebrey, one of Britain's top agency photographers and another all round good chap.

Passing the first session with the skimming of various press



Photo: Jake Yorath



“
IT FEELS LIKE
TEN MINUTES
AND YET, AT
THE SAME TIME,
FOREVER. LE
MANS FEVER IS
UPON ME.

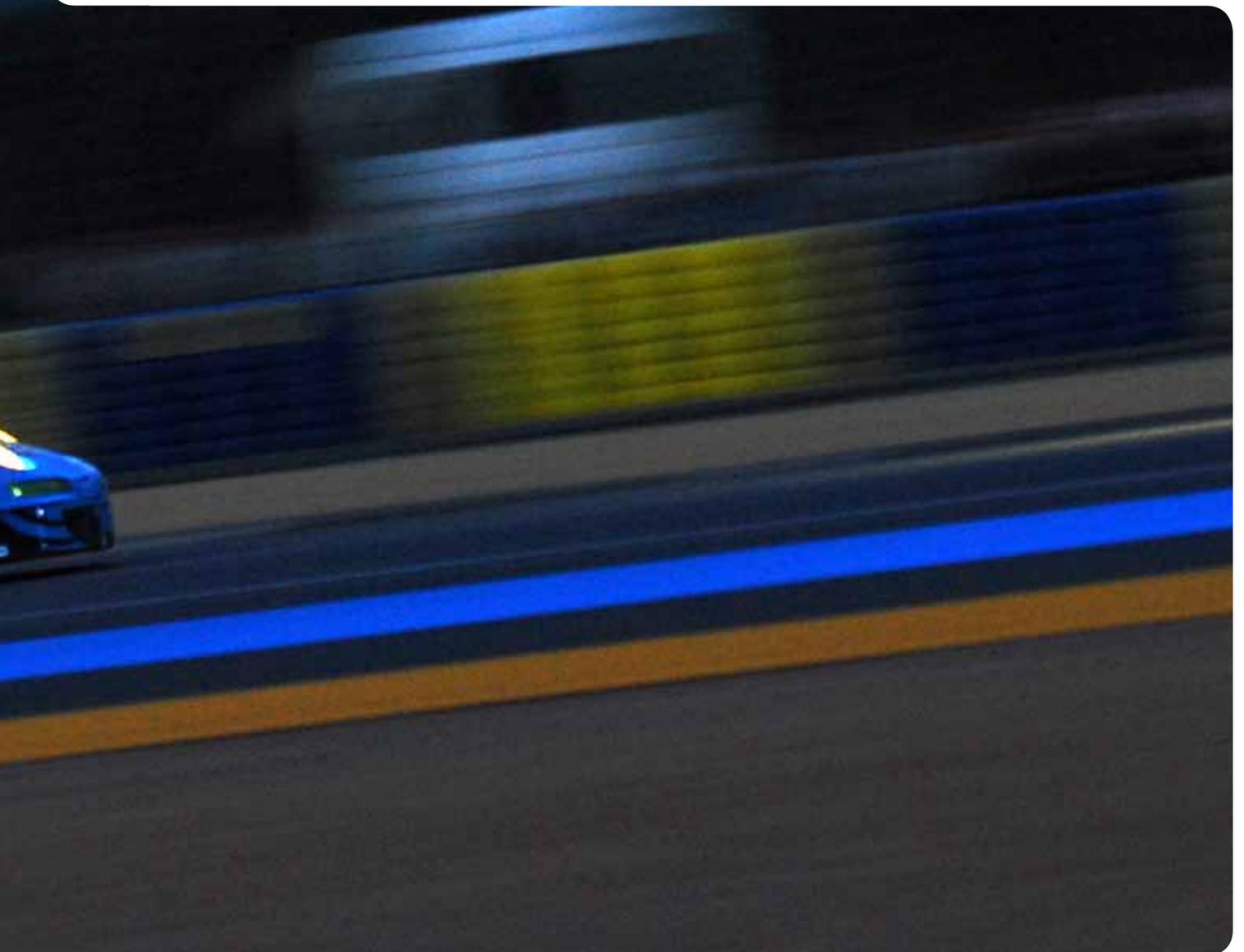
kits and the thieving of many gratuitous cans of Le Mans' very own Endurance Drink (the drivers' choice, the can reliably informs me). The tasting notes go along the lines of 'sugary, fragrant, extremely bad for the health, will keep you awake forever'.

I head out in the evening with Dan. I immediately strike a fairly serious issue: there are a distinct lack of gates on the circuit. I do eventually find one and while my trackside vest gets me into the Dunlop Bridge gate, Dan has to move toward the Esses for a good vantage point.

It is very obvious very quickly that I need to update my equipment for night time photography: the D200, particular-

ly, is rubbish. It's like shooting through a pair of sandy knickers, with grain like harvest on the image. That aside, I get a few shots I'm pretty happy with and content myself with the knowledge that, since this is the first time I've ever shot at night with any idea what I was doing, I've done reasonably well. I'll just pretend they're all shot at the beach.

I make it as far as Tertre Rouge, which is a bloody long walk, but I'm struggling by then. Much to ponder for the next day. I've been out from 8:30am until gone midnight (the session finishes then), and it feels like ten minutes and yet, at the same time, forever. Le Mans fever is definitely upon me.





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Photo: Jake Yorath





DAY THREE THURSDAY JUNE 9TH

POLE DANCING

Thursday begins early for me, as I jump out of bed in time to catch the ACO press conference. It's full of stars, with all the team managers (including Dr Ullrich, Olivier Quesnel and Aston supremo David Richards) joined by the journalists and plenty of Mazda types. One of those Mazda

types is Le Mans legend Yojiro Terada, who mingles quietly with the rest of us and our Lanson breakfasts.

Aside from the news at the conference (which you've no doubt read elsewhere, if it matters to you), the best moment is Jean Todt's stiff rebuttal of a question about Formula One. "This is not a place to discuss

Formula One," he announced sternly. And rightly so.

Later in the day I am introduced to the model of the new Deltawing. I am a little sceptical, but at the same time it is pretty awesome. The Audi R18 may look like the Batcar but that thing actually is the Batcar. I'm told it will lap as fast as the top prototypes and use

Photo: Jake Yorath







half the fuel. I hope so: that's progress.

Apart from that, it's a fairly relaxed day for all of us. We go supermarket shopping again, and leave with more ham than hands. I also buy a SIM card for my phone (mine won't work abroad) and then find I've left my charger in Britain. What a dick.

That aside, Thursday is more successful, photography wise, than Wednesday's noise related disaster. First thing for me is the Le Mans Legends qualifying session, and I spend an hour with a rather contented smile

slapped on my face throughout.

For the Le Mans 24 itself, I'm helped by switching my tabard to the earlier session and heading to the Porsche curves. It's pretty cool here, though I opt to jump in a car with Brecht and John (Dagys) from there to Arnage rather than shoot the classic Porsche Curves shot: I'd rather find my own classic! Having never been out here before, I'm gobsmacked - it's absolutely superb. Watching the cars go from Arnage and down toward the Porsche curves really is special. Indianapolis,

too, is very, very cool. It's sad that spectators can't get to the kink before the left hander, because it is breath-taking.

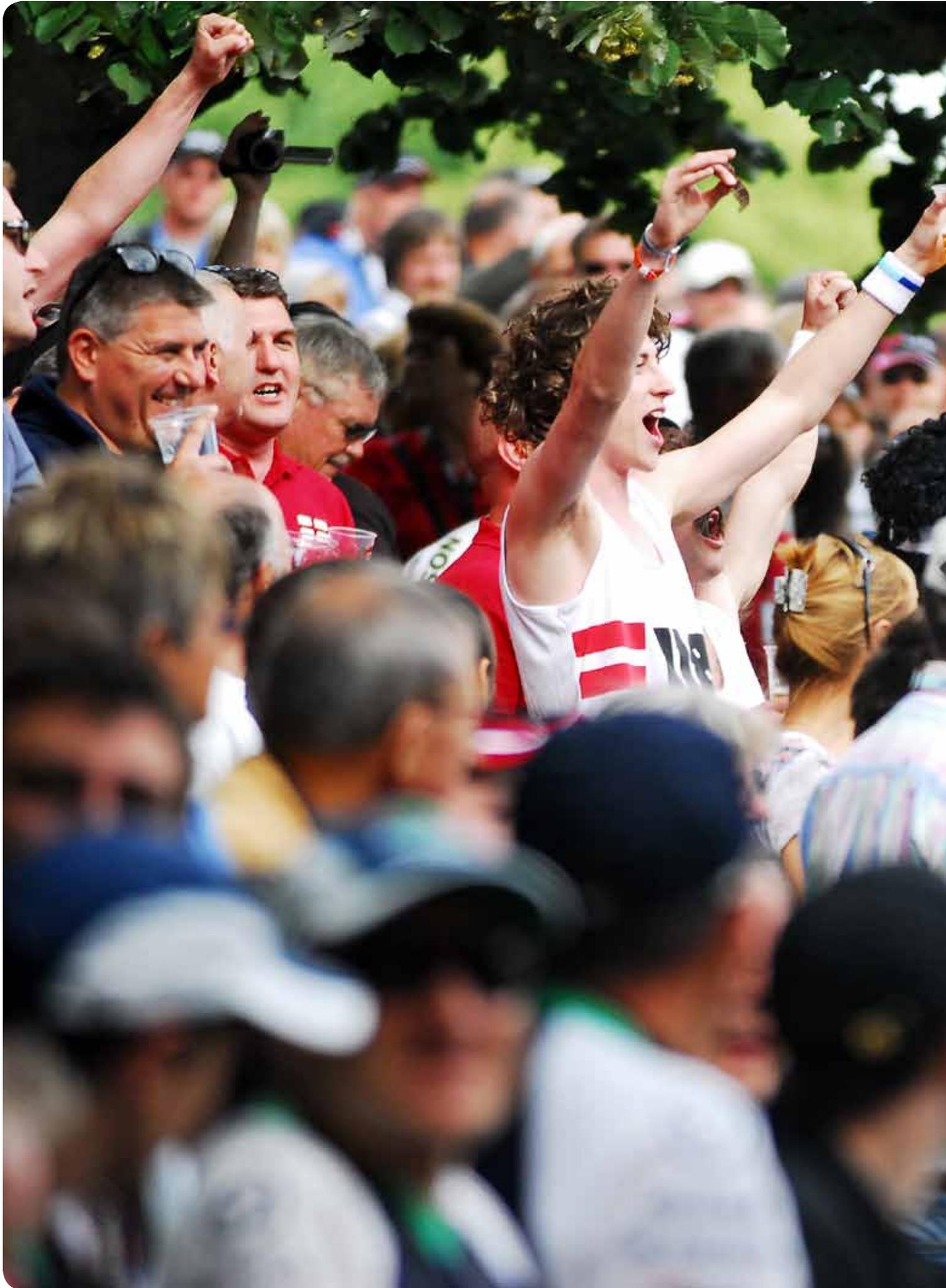
The traffic is horrendous though. We get caught both on the run out and the run back, which is frustrating. But hey, it's Le Mans week and you just have to live with it.

From the media centre I watch Benoit Treluyer take a surprise pole, make a surprised noise, then walk back to the campsite to look forward to my lie in (such as it's likely to be, surrounded by drunk Scots) on Friday.



Photo: Jake Yorath

Photo: Jake Yorath





DAY FOUR FRIDAY JUNE 10TH

THIS WAY, MADNESS LIES

Friday is the day of rest at Le Mans, in that there is no track action or major things to do. It is, however, completely insane. I get up late, knowing that every minute of sleep I can save is a bonus.

After a brief foray into a rather busy pitlane walkabout, we head out to the traditional madness along the main road outside the circuit. Burn out signs, water pistols and a huge

crowd line the road, and as usual one chap has taken it upon himself to organise the event by stopping any car that looks likely to be able to smoke tyres. Aston Martins, BMWs, Caterhams and various vans are all subjected to the raised hand, the water pistols to the tyres and the vociferously hurled shouts of approval from a crowd that has more alcohol in them than blood.

One Dutch chap in a BMW M3

is a big hit, sliding down the road and nearly taking out the traffic in the other direction. But it's OK, it's Mad Friday. Well, it is until the security arrive, with an initially lame attempt to quell the excitement, which results in some comedy antics from the crowd at our pantomime villains. They are soon back, though, so the party is over.

One party inevitably leads to another. Nothing, I've heard,

Photo: Jake Yorath

The 787B was a massive hit with the fans, here in the hands of Yojiro Terada.







Photos: Jake Yorath



says ‘party’ like efficient but overcrowded public transport, so everyone heads to the tram. I love the Le Mans metro, because it’s well built, runs on time and is an awesome orange colour. It is also very, very full of sweaty men of various nationalities. I feel pretty sorry both for the locals, many of whom appear to regard this curious invasion with disdain, and the two small Asian ladies in front of me, who look genuinely scared. Them and me both.

It’s so hot and airless that each time the doors open there is a collective intake of breath before everyone is bracing themselves for another three minutes sans oxygen. Where once there was a palpable sense of excitement for the drivers’ parade, when the doors open on the Place du Jacobins there is nothing but a huge sigh of relief as sardines explode from the orange tin.

Marcel helps out with some directions but, in the end, I end up walking most of the route anyway to find a good vantage point. I bump into Jakob Ebrey by the Mazda 787, and we both agree it’s pretty awesome. Geoffroy Barre is there too, and he’s like a puppy ready for walkies. “It’s so exciting, following the cars, being in the middle of it all,” he enthuses.

I must admit to paying little attention to much else after that because Yojiro Terada, af-

ter a brief conversation with superstar actor Patrick Dempsey, fires the rotary. Though it may look a little like a packet of lime and orange Tic Tacs, this car is superb. Wap, wap, waaaap, wap, is the only way to describe it. But if you're reading that aloud, take note: squeal that a little bit.

I manage to get a superb vantage point near the start of the course and snap of some shots. Wisely, I'm positioned on the side without an exhaust. If you're exhaust side of this from two feet and anyone breathes near the throttle, you won't hear for a week. That is a scientific fact.

The car does two laps, after which I race to the holding area (where the drivers begin their journey) with Brecht. We end up moving rather briskly, and resist the temptation to pause and sign some autographs for fans, who would probably still be appreciative despite our lack of celebrity.

I shoot a few in there, then move down the amazing final stretch. I'm told drivers get out of their cars and sign autographs down this stretch under the bridge, but first things first a whole array of supercars growl, howl and grumble their way through the streets of Le Mans. The 599 FXX is very, very exciting (for want of a better word). It pauses in a queue right next to me, and the driver (my new hero) gives the big V12 a series of ear splitting engine blips. Superb. Less superb is the electric car which does not reach the top of the hill before running out of its '100% electric power' and needing 100% human power to make the finish. Embarrassing for those guys.

At one point, the chaps on the opening spread of the Friday part of this report sing to me. "We love you cameraman, we do, we love you cameraman, we do," they chant at me, in between drunken renditions of Wonderwall and God Save the Queen. Brits on holiday..

Eventually the drivers make it through (not before one of the Harleys falls over at the top of the hill, too) and first are the drivers of Corvette #74. Brits Richard Westbrook and Oliver Gavin are joined by Dane Jan Magnussen and though the Brits stay aboard their vintage vehicle, Jan heads back to the Danes (to great applause) assembled around the final turn.

After this, it descends into pure madness, with fans screaming the name of their favourite (or, in most cases, the nearest) driver for autographs or photographs to add to their Facebook wall photos. Fan favourites from Peugeot are not quite brave enough to tramp up the hill and stop briefly at the bottom before jumping back in their jalopies for the ride up.

Flying Lizard's ever popular beer mats are tossed with great abandon by their drivers, but in a fairly useless arc that goes considerably further up than out. I find myself acting distributor, and spending more time passing dropped or mis-thrown memorabilia to young French children. I feel too guilty ignoring it.

I bump into Roger Wills, who is making his debut here. "It's insane," is how he sums it up. Not much more to add to that, in my humble opinion.

Shortly before the finish, I see Tim in the crowd and make some rather extravagant faces

to him in the crowd, which exacts great mirth amongst the locals arranged between the two of us. For the second time, I decline autographs.

After the madness, the four of us (Dan, Marcel, Tim and myself) head to a small bar above the uphill drag for a beer and a chat. We're briefly joined by some drunk Brits, before I remember how amusing it is to take close up photos of unsuspecting people with the 10mm end of my Sigma wide angle.

The hilarity is broken by the appearance of one of the wonderful ladies from the media centre, who recognises me and so begins a conversation. Never have four jaws dropped in such swift order, mine by far the furthest. In fact, I'm mildly surprised she doesn't reach out and shut it for me. It turns out her name is Alex and has seen me around and thought it appropriate to come and say 'hi', to which I have no qualms. After a short conversation (during which I struggle to form words or even coherent noises) I get a rather exciting kiss on each cheek and she disappears down the road. Stunned silence.

"Get in, son," says my ever supportive father.

I can find no words other than, "Did that just happen?" over and over.

The words 'j'aime Le Mans' would probably have been distinctly appropriate. We 'aime' it some more before the night is over, heading toward a tram via a rather wild town square. We have a Macdonald's, which is predictably rubbish, and take it to the tram. Dan, it turns out, is not very good at holding his drink and can barely stand on the tram.



“
FANS SCREAM
THE NAME
OF THEIR
FAVOURITE
(OR, IN MOST
CASES, THE
NEAREST)
DRIVER



A parade of talent. Clockwise from top left: Lamy. Dempsey. Dolan. Waltrip. Mowlem. Henzler. Terada. Montagny. Lizards. Buncombe and Hancock. Luhr. Holzer. Jani. McNish, Capello, Kristensen.

Photo: Jake Yorath



“
**MORE SMOKE FILLED AIR SURROUNDS
BEAUSEJOUR AS WE APPROACH.
WE ARE SO GOOD AT MAKING AN
IMPRESSION ON HOLIDAY, US BRITS.**



We are both extremely amused when a young lad gets on the tram, who is the spitting image of Justin Bieber. After tormenting him (sorry mate) and embarrassing him in front of his friends (really sorry mate) we get off and walk back to the campsite. We come across more burnout antics, watch for a bit, then continue.

On the way we're passed by a One-77, which I'm reliably informed gets the same rough burnout treatment as everyone else. No respect.

More smoke filled air surrounds Beausejour as we approach, a Gulf liveried Escort getting a serious work out from a man wearing what looks like an extremely large condom, a

crown and a British flag. We are so good at making a good impression on holiday.

Avoiding asthma, we return to the tents, sinking a couple of cheap beers before turning in. After all, there's the small matter of a fairly famous motor race tomorrow and I, at least, have gotta be sharp to make it through 24 hours.



Photo: Jake Yorath

“

ONE DUTCH CHAP IN A BMW M3 IS A BIG HIT,
SLIDING DOWN THE ROAD AND NEARLY TAKING
OUT THE TRAFFIC IN THE OTHER DIRECTION



DAY FIVE SATURDAY JUNE 11TH

LEGENDS!

I get up relatively early in the morning on Saturday to catch the Le Mans Legends race.

I know a couple of guys in the race (including Roger Wills and his awesome Bizzarini, shared with all round top bloke Joe Twyman) and even if I didn't, some of this machinery is superb. D-Types, Ferrari 250LMs,

Daytona Cobra and an absolutely outstanding Chevrolet Corvette, whose aerodynamics are totally useless: it spends its life at 45 degrees to whichever direction it should be going.

The racing is incredible, considering how expensive most of these cars are; top note particularly to Carlos Monteverde, who wins despite dislodging an

oil line under his Ferrari 250LM on the first lap. His sideways antics are a highlight of the weekend and put a smile on almost every face trackside.

On a side note, I love the smell of Castrol R. I don't go to enough classic racing, so that's a resolution to work on for the coming season. Watch this space...



Photo: Jake Yorath



AND SO, IT BEGINS



Photo: Brecht Decanq

You know that expression about an atmosphere so tense it could be cut with a knife? It's three pm, race day at Le Mans. Around me are gathered many of the world's finest journalists (I have opted not to shoot the start but instead watch from the media centre) and in front of me, just outside the window, are the 56 best sportscars on the planet. And we're all pressed to the glass like kids at an aquarium.

Rewind an hour and I've rushed to the grid (bumping

into Roger and Joe again), been shuffled off the grid, mooched the pitlane and hung out with Rebellion for a bit. One of my top ten chaps in motorsport is Neel Jani's cousin, and friend of many beautiful women, Nyan Amer. That might seem like a fairly big introduction, but he's good friends with many people so I'm sucking up a bit. But seriously, he's cool and we mull over the pre race atmosphere for a while. He's handed a lap chart and a pencil, so I leave in case I'm asked to help out, because, frankly, I have neither the concentration

nor inclination to attempt that task.

With Endurance Drink in the hands of a large number of the packed centre, we watch the start with breath bated and fingers crossed for our various allegiances and in the hope of a good clean race. As the field spreads for the first turn, I step back to take in the bank of screens above my head. The start is remarkably clean and over the first hour, the top six simply disappear.

The drama is reserved for the end of the hour. It's tough to describe a moment that, at the







time, I knew very little about. Shortly before the end of the first hour, Allan McNish saw a gap inside Mike Rockenfeller under the Dunlop Bridge and, being the opportunistic driver he is, aimed for the inside of Anthony Beltoise's Luxury Ferrari too. The first Beltoise was likely to know about it was the bang in the door and McNish is sent flying across the gravel, lightly clipping it a few times before hitting the barriers. I've tried to think of a good word to adequately put across the ferocity of the impact and I'm sure they've all been used. Careened, smashed, clattered... none of them explain

the sheer terrifying power of the hit.

It might sound blasé, but in honesty I was not for a minute worried about McNish: I'd seen a friend of mine, photographer Peter 'Pedro' May, running from the car (on the big screen) and a carbon safety cell is a better place to be than under a rain of shattered carbon flying from said safety cell. Everyone who saw that incident and has seen it since will no doubt have thanked whichever deity they do or don't believe in, me included. It was nothing short of a miracle no one was hurt.

At the time I was just trying to shoot some through the crowd

shots on the inside of the first turn. I'd just started hitting a run of good stuff, which is inconvenient. I fairly ran down to the scene though. I bump into Marcel on his way down to check on Pedro. Apparently he has not called in to tell everyone he is OK. Turns out he's gone straight to Arnage to continue shooting, despite having to throw himself at the floor to avoid debris, and has damaged his phone in the carnage. Apparently, that phone is the only casualty.

The racing is superb, when the safety car stays in. The gaps between the leading cars are tiny and the tight space

Photo: Brecht Decanq





between their lap times means it stays like that. And time has a funny way of ticking at Le Mans: one minute it races, the next I'm caught in a kind of daze and it slows to a crawl, which is distinctly trippy.

As Radio Le Mans are so cautious to say, "There's a long way to go yet."

I head back to the campsite for some dinner, later regretting that I don't go shooting in what turns out to be beautiful evening light. Our photographer Brecht Decancq captures it pretty well though, don't you think?

On the way to the site, I meet Tim and Marcel (late, but that's another story). Marcel is only passing, he's off to do that hardcore Le Mans thing and do some walking. Good luck to him, I'm starving. Tim says Speed Chills Esses are serving ham, egg and chips with a side helping of six beautiful girls. I need no more convincing and we all but race there.

As promised, les filles de Speed Chills are all there and we hang out for a bit. Katie

and Jess both borrow my camera equipment and when it's returned, there are some... interesting images imprinted on the memory inside. Safe to say, though, that they won't be employed by this magazine as photographers any time soon.

We end up not eating there and road training it back to the camp site, where Tim cooks rice and sausages, a strange but excellent combination. I can't stay long, wanting to get back to the race. However, it gets back to me at a rather awkward moment. I'm ashamed to say that Mike Rockefeller crashes while I'm on the toilet, perhaps somewhere he might like to have been. I race back to the media centre for the latest news, finding that Rocky is thankfully fine. It is another time we are all thankful that everyone is OK, his accident no less severe than that which befell his unfortunate team mate.

It brings another lengthy safety car, which takes us deep into the early hours of the morning. Goodbye, Saturday.

“
**IT IS ANOTHER TIME WE ARE ALL
THANKFUL EVERYONE IS OK, ROCKY'S
ACCIDENT NO LESS SEVERE THAN THAT
WHICH BEFELL HIS TEAM MATE**





DAY SIX SUNDAY JUNE 12TH

NIGHTTIME IS THE RIGHT TIME

At some point during every 24 hour period, you realise you have a need to close your eyes and stop doing things for a little while. This is the case for every 24 hour period, except for Le Mans.

It's midnight and I'm not tired. I've stayed up until midnight before, at least twice. My parents once let me stay up to see the new year, but I was swiftly parcelled back into my cupboard for some well earned shut eye.

In an hour's time I'll be down in pitlane, with a firesuit bor-

rowed from Ronald, and it's imperative that I keep my wits about me. Pitlanes are pretty dangerous in the day, but at night they're a different ball game and, as it'll be my first time in a pitlane at night, I'm extra vigilant. Fresh in my mind is the video of the inattentive cameraman (not the only one, I'm to find out later) who got wiped out by an Audi last year while concentrating too hard on the team mate car already in the pits. Note to self: pitlane concrete is hard, and racing cars are often sharp.

I pack light, grabbing just my

basic pit and paddock set up again, sink an Endurance Drink and head down. I look an awful lot like a Teletubby that's been through too many washes, but looking like a Teletubby that's been through an awful lot of washes is better than a visit to a burn unit should things get fiery down there.

The first stopper I get is Level 5. Their car is running pretty well and their crew swiftly turn the 33 Lola around. The team helmets are no less cool in the dark than they are in the day: chrome, for me at least, is a winner, the reflections are

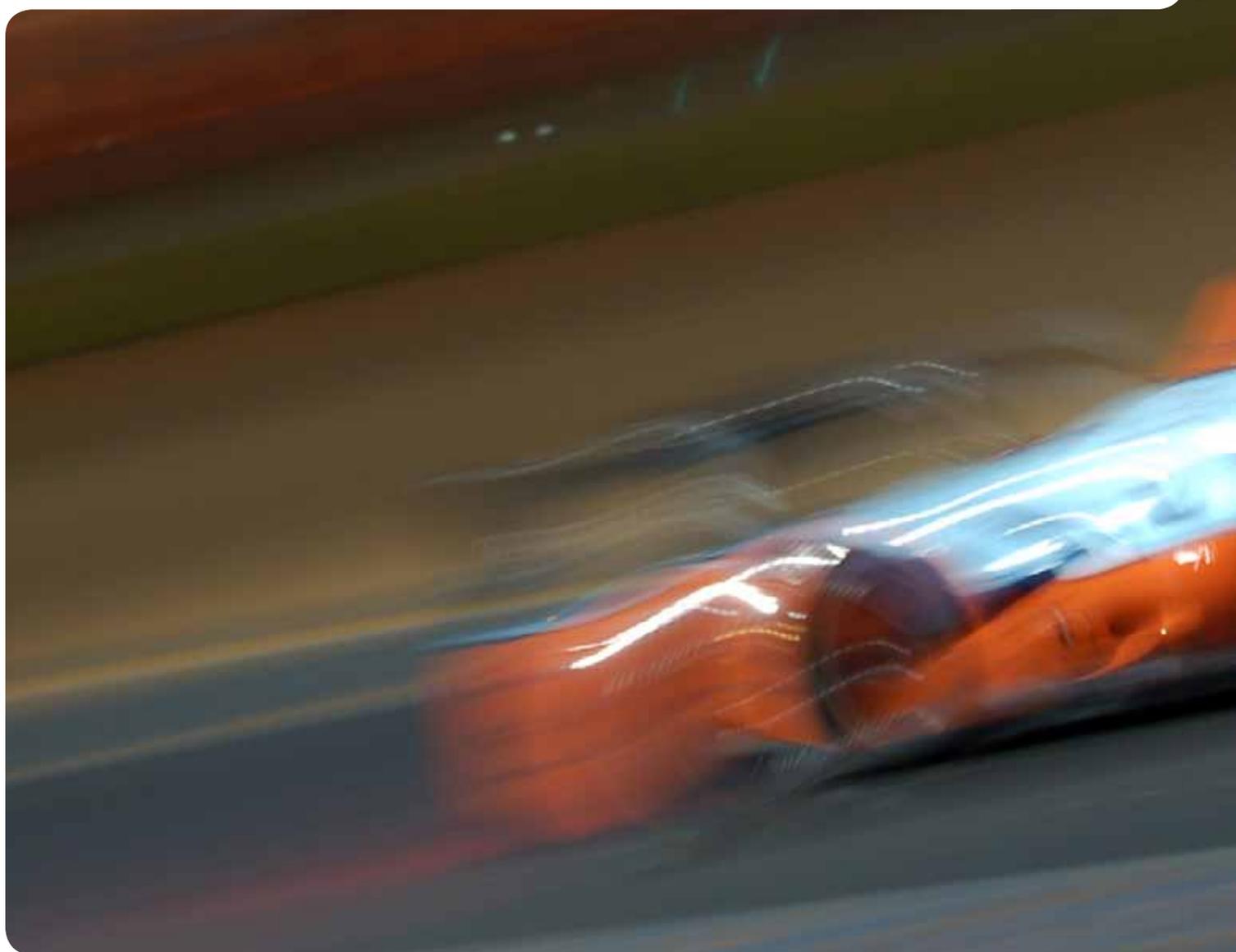


Photo: Jake Yorath



Photo: Brecht Decancq

The ferris wheel is a classic Le Mans feature, and this Lizard livery did it good justice.







“
THE COLOUR
IS INTENSE ON
THE CURIOUSLY
MONIKERED
'IBIRD'



just awesome. Rebellion have the same helmets, but theirs are white with a reflective visor, which is just as cool.

It really is awesome down here. Brecht had told me to come at night when it is less busy (which is definitely a bonus, as I'm neither being obstructed by other photographers nor obstructing anyone) yet far apart from that it's a special place in the dark. Dark is a relative term: the area of the pitlane where the stops actually take place is actually stunningly bright, as it needs to be to allow teams to work. Gone are the days of TWR mechanics with giant lamps on sticks. If all else failed, they could just borrow a Level 5

chap and a stepladder.

Photography wise, things are good. Aside from some standard portrait work (possible at F2.8 in the garages, they're so well lit) I try some crazy wide angle 'car leaving the pits in a hurry' shots. It's best to steer clear of any mechanics working, in my opinion (especially IMSA Matmut, who come closest to hitting me with flailing air hoses) and let them do their job. I prefer to step back and wait until they're doing the final tyre, which I found was always the right rear, then come to the front left corner and pan the car as it leaves. Obviously, give the car room to leave or you're gonna be extremely unpopular. At least once, I'm

kind enough to give someone a gentle tap on the shoulder to attract their attention to incoming vehicular hazards.

The images are good until, inexplicably, after about an hour my flash simply dies. Awesome. Turns out the nearly new batteries in it were, to put it kindly, not high quality and my SB800 has simply munched them like Eric Pickles might munch a five pack of Mars bars. Such is life.

Still, there's so much to do even without a flash, it just changes the nature of my photos from 'a little wild' to 'going on safari covered in raw steak'. As you can imagine with such a tactic, results are mixed but I find some pretty cool abstract

Photo: Jake Yorath

The Kronos/ VDS Aston sounded spectacular from start to finish. Superb.





CROPERO

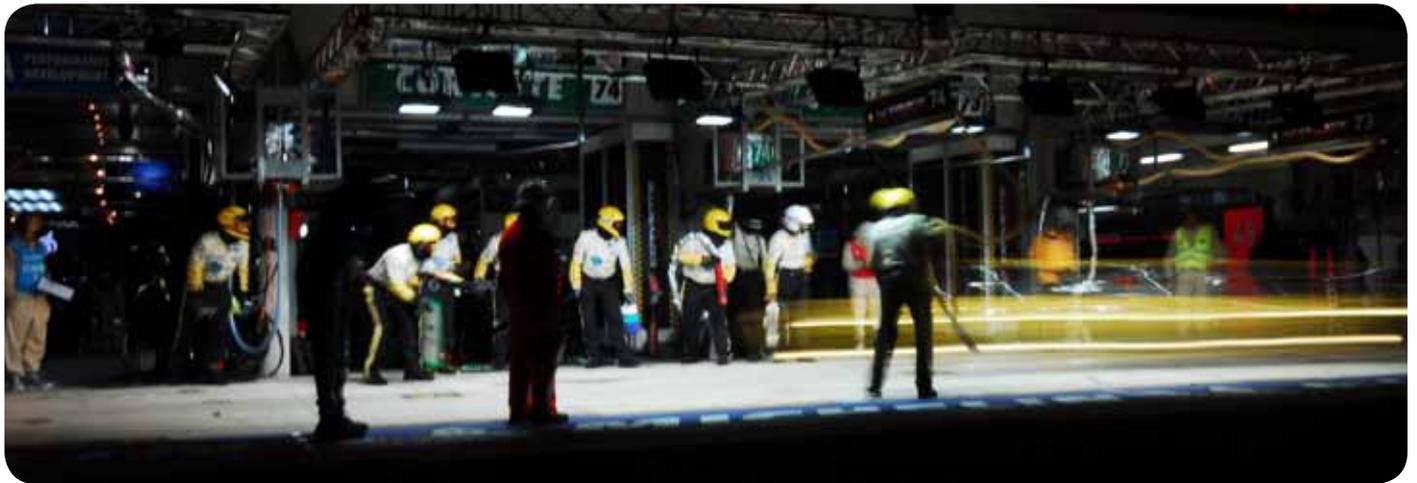
Vanmo IGOR
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MARC VAIN

24 HEURES DU MANS

P1

22



stuff in amongst the variously dark and multicoloured blurs. After all, you've got to speculate to accumulate when it comes to shots at less than half a second. The colour is intense in some shots, especially on the curiously monikered iBird.

Oreca have a torrid time while I'm around. Both cars suffer issues, the P2 dragged into the box for mechanical issues while the Peugeot comes back with heavy frontal damage. Both continue, but theirs is the media scrum of the night.

A quick note for Corvette Racing, who are absolutely superb to watch in the pits. They are up there with Peugeot and Audi for their professionalism (not that anyone is this pitlane is a gang of amateurs) and their pit box is incredible. It's like a show room in there, all shining walls and matching shiny uniforms. Not sure about the ankles (or lack of) on the driver suits, though. Sorry guys.

My time is nearly up so it's time to head back to the media centre. I find the lovely lady from Racecar Engineering is planning to sleep under the desk, which seems a little brave considering the environment but it turns out OK, as she survives the night better than some of the cars. Hope Racing, Hankook Farnbacher and the aforementioned Oreca (amongst others) all suffer dramas in the darkness, with varying degrees of severity.

I, too, survive the night with only minor dramas. I have booked a tabard to head straight back trackside but decline the opportunity, opting for brief rest before heading out for dawn. My biggest error of the weekend comes in choosing my spot for the dawn,

and I'm tentative to admit it in honesty!

I tramp all the way to Tetre Rouge. Massive error. Carrying all my gear, while absolutely shattered, down to somewhere almost useless for dawn photography, forces me to tramp all the way back to the Dunlop Bridge, where it is almost photographic perfection. I am joined by about 15,000 of the world's finest light capturers and the devices of their trade, all desperate to capture the signature shot of the Le Mans 24 Hours. Dunlop are getting their money's worth out of that investment, for sure.

It really is magical, dawn at Le Mans. I was tired to the extreme and pretty jaded by the whole scale of the place and the fact I was trying to cover it largely alone, but dawn changed everything. It sounds like a massive cliché, but every moment of the rising inspired me a little more. Keeping in mind the fact that dawn is always awesome for photography, I force my tired body to keep moving back toward the esses and the sight that greets me defies my belief. "It's like California!" I exclaim excitedly to Pedro, anxious to show off the back of my camera like a child with a new Matchbox BMW.

That is the peak, dawn turning to day disappointingly quickly, so I stroll contended back to the media centre. It's six o'clock in the morning, which comes as a shock because my body is sure it's one in the afternoon three days ago. Tiredness is starting to have its effect, and we're only just halfway through. But it's OK, because there's plenty more energy drink...

“
A QUICK NOTE
FOR CORVETTE
RACING,
WHO ARE
ABSOLUTELY
SUPERB TO
WATCH IN THE
PITS.

Photo: Jake Yorath

BMW go to work on the delayed 56. They did not reach their obvious potential.



ROLEX

24 HOURS DU MANS
LM P2
LA HONDA PERFORMANCE DEVELOPMENT 33

CROWNE PLAZA





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DAY SIX SUNDAY JUNE 12TH TO FINISH FIRST...

First you have to finish. Ron Dennis is often credited with coining that term, but I must admit I'm sceptical that he was the first. Whatever the case, it's one thirty and I'm trackside on the front straight. I'm early, but I've got nothing much better to do than take photos of racing cars.

There are some walking wounded already. AF Corse's

71 car, which had led for so long, has an engine problem that developed over night. The Luchini can only have done about four laps, yet here it is, rolling at the finish to at least cross the line.

Rolling rather more smokily with just a lap to go is the unfortunate Oak #49 Pescarolo, collapsed rear suspension making the final lap extremely difficult for one of the myriad Gulf coloured cars that started

the race an entire day ago. It has to be said, not many remain, just the two Oak LMP2 cars continuing. Two Gulf AMR-Ones, one Gulf Vantage and two Gulf Oak LMP1s do not finish.

Of the cars finishing strongly, the top two are most prominent. I'd love to know what's going on, but reception on my Radio Le Mans radio is patchier than a punk's jeans if I'm anywhere near grandstands or pit-



Photo: Jake Yorath





boxes so I hear only snatches of race news. My big clue to their proximity to each other is the announcer (continuing to announce in English...) telling us that there will be no traditional flag waving finish from the marshals and that the cars will do an entire slow down lap because the lead gap is so small.

I'm surrounded by all the photographers in Europe, yet only one is intent on getting in my way (and subsequently in the way of everyone behind me too). I don't understand this kind of behaviour. We're all here doing the same job, we all want a finish shot. We could work together and help each out. In fact, most of us do but this pleb very nearly ruins my shot. Thankfully he shuffles just out of it. He's still a pleb.

I'm very excited to see this crew win. Lotterer, Fassler and Treluyer are all future stars. We said it last year too, but could this be the next A team? It's tough to see a reason why not. It is a outstanding performance against three factory diesels, alone for a sizeable chunk of the race, but they pulled it off.

A particular note from this correspondent to Robertson Racing. I loved your effort guys, and you were a favourite car for many fans for and journalists alike. I was so happy to see that car cross the line.

That is the spirit of Le Mans.

I do get the shot, as you can see, and then proceed to be caught up in a sea, then a crush against the pitwall with Ebrey. We both figure it's safer to shoot the podium from pit straight, over people's heads. He warns me to keep an eye on my bag and I do my best but, in general, everyone is very good natured and polite. That, I did not expect.

Almost as soon as the podium for LMP1 is done, I'm anxious to escape the crowd and use all my Jonah Lomu to charge across the absolutely wall to wall jammed pitlane and back to the media centre to pack up and bid my goodbyes. Having said goodbye to the lovely Alex in the morning, saying goodbye to journalists isn't quite as sexy...

A particular thanks must go to Catherine and her beautiful array of helpful and friendly ladies who made sure the media centre kept moving, and for being a star at Spa too. It couldn't have happened without them.

Thanks too, to Speed Chills. We talk about them a lot but it's because they're bloody marvellous. Neil, Justin, Chris, Andy, Carol and the team are all fantastic and work so hard to make sure we're happy and comfortable in our home from home. The security, too, are fantastic, so thanks guys. It's

nice to know my stuff won't be pilfered every time I leave!

Finally, the girls...what can you say about the girls? As always, Katie and Lorena were funny as, but this time there were six comedians to deal with. I wouldn't want to try and keep an eye on this lot all weekend, but it was great to hang out with you again! Jess, Alice, Emily and (though extremely fleetingly) Brooke, it was nice to meet you all. I'd appreciate less photos of my backside in future though, thanks.

To all those who helped guide me around or shuttle me about (particularly Brecht, Tim and Ronald), I'm eternally grateful. To all the guys in the media centre for being funny and putting up with my constant yaddering, I appreciate your patience too. Thanks to Ronald for the firesuit and various other things, and to Sam and Lawrence for being extremely entertaining people to sit alongside. Thanks must also go to Marcel Ten Caat, who is an absolute legend in that media centre and has the patience of a saint.

To Tim, Marcel and Dan: thanks for sticking around. You're a good bunch to travel and camp with!

Let's hope Le Mans 2012 is just as good as this year was... Despite my nerves, I had an absolute blast.



LET'S HOPE LE MANS 2012 IS JUST AS GOOD AS THIS YEAR.
I HAD AN ABSOLUTE BLAST.



Photo : Jake Yorath

ROU

Photo: Jake Yorath



ND UP

ILMC LEMANS

Page 68

Audi took a memorable win at the French classic, despite losing two cars to heavy crashes.

GT1 World SILVERSTONE

Page 40

JRM Nissan took the Tourist Trophy, with Michael Krumm and Lucas Luhr holding on despite a late challenge.

World ROUND UP

Page 78

All the reports from around the world this month including British GT, GT3 Europe and regional championships.

ILMC LE MANS 24 HOURS

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

Circuit de la Sarthe, Round 3, June 11th - 12th

Marcel Fassler, Benoit Treluyer and Andre Lotterer took victory for Audi after 24 hard fought, classic racing hours at La Sarthe. *By Dan Bathie*





QUALIFYING TRELUYER TAKES POLE

The track action kicked off on Wednesday afternoon for the first practice session. Surprising the first hour was topped by the Oreca Peugeot, but that was not to last for long. The factory diesels turned the wick up and as a result times dropped dramatically as the session progressed, Simon Pagenaud the first man to get under the 3:30 barrier. At this point Peugeot held all the top four positions. Nicolas Miniasian and Anthony Davidson then took turns at the top.

During the final half hour Audi started to show their true pace, Andre Lotterer going to the top of the time sheets with a time four tenths quicker than Davidson had managed. Audi were not done though, Mike Rockenfeller dipping into the 3:27s right at the end of the session to claim first bragging rights. It was clear however that Audi and Peugeot were very close on pace.

In LMP 2 Strakka topped the class, followed by the Team Oreca Nissan. GTE Pro was dominated by BMW, the two M3s were the only cars to get below the four minute mark and were over a second quicker than the #74 Corvette in third. GTE Am saw a surprising car at the top. The Gulf AMR Middle East Aston Martin lapped 1.5 seconds quicker than the second placed Flying Lizard Porsche.

The first qualifying session got underway and immediately Audi carried on from where they left off in the practice session. Rockenfeller lapping the #1 Audi in a 3:27.9, just over a second clear of his team mate McNish. Wurz looked like he would take top spot from Audi but a disappointing final sector meant he had to settle for second at this point. Just around the first hour mark, Romain Dumas (who had taken over the #1 car) hit trouble. As he approached Mulsanne corner he found the Gulf AMR

Middle East Aston in his path and could do nothing to avoid hitting the Aston Martin in the door. Both cars would be out for the rest of the session. When the session got under way again Stephane Sarrazin put the all French line up Peugeot on top with a 3:37.0, which is where he would stay until the end, followed by a trio of R18s.

LMP 2 was once again led by Strakka Racing, however it wasn't all celebrations for the British team. With only a minute left of the session Nick Leventis put the HPD into the wall at the Dunlop Chicane causing heavy damage to the car. Three Nissan powered cars followed, Signatech beating Oreca and Greaves.

BMW led the field again in the GTE Pro category, Andy Priaulx setting a time of 3:58.4 in the #56 car. Gimmi Bruni prevented a 1-2 for the Bavarian make, the Italian taking his Ferrari around in a time which was five tenths



Signatech took pole in LMP 2



BMW set the pace in GTE Pro



Cioci was fastest in GTE Am

shy from Priaulx's.

Larbre Competition took provisional Am pole in their Porsche, with Flying Lizard and AMR Middle East filling the top three positions.

The Second Qualifying got off to a slow start with only a few cars improving their times. One of the improvements was the #007 Aston Martin AMR One, Darren Turner shaving eight seconds from the previous night's time, however with a time of 3:48 the car was still way off the pace. With only 20 minutes Peugeot came out and took the fight to Audi, first Sarrazin put the #8 car on pole with a time of 3:26.3, only for his team mate Gene to take it away with a 3:26.2. Sarrazin went again, retaking pole by a tenth. Seconds later and the Frenchman was once again demoted, this time by Marcel Fassler in the #2 Audi, who was the first man in the 3:25s this weekend.

Soheil Ayari took top spot for Signatech in LMP 2 fol-

lowed by the factory Oreca Nissan. Third was the #39 Pecom Racing Lola Judd.

GTE Pro had a new car in top spot, Bruni took the #51 AF Corse 458 around in a 3:58.0 to move ahead of the BMW, while in GTE Am Marco Cioci put the #61 AF Corse Ferrari 430 on top.

The final qualifying session is always one to look forward to, and this year was no exception. Right from the green there were improvements. Tom Kristensen moved up to fourth but it was Romain Dumas who was really flying. The Frenchman piloting his Audi around the La Sarthe circuit in a 3:25.7 to take top spot. As the session drew to a close Benoit Treluyer produced an incredible lap to eclipse his team mate by less than a tenth. Kristensen and Pagenaud were both on it too, on his first lap Kristensen took fourth, his next lap looked on target for pole but traffic towards the end meant he stayed fourth. Pagenaud

took third, a faster time was on the cards but a slow final sector meant he stayed third. Meanwhile Kristensen was on another flyer, however as he turned into Tetre Rouge the Dane put two wheels on the kerb and lost the rear of the car sending him into the tyres. This ended the session meaning the #2 Audi sat on pole, with last years' winners in second. Third place on the grid went to the #9 Peugeot followed closely by the all French line up in #8.

Signatech claimed pole in LMP 2, a full second clear of Strakka Racing in second with the Team Oreca Nissan in third.

BMW edged AF Corse for GTE Pro honours, Augusto Farfus setting the time in the #55 BMW. Third place went to the sister BMW.

Marco Cioci held onto pole for AF Corse in GTE AM, second was the #63 Felbermayr Porsche and third the Flying Lizards entry.



ROLEX

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CORVETTE

CORVETTE

DAE - 1000 PAK

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If the 79th edition of the Le Mans 24 Hours was a feature film, the words, “Thrilling, entertaining throughout, five stars” would no doubt be on the poster.

Yes Audi claimed another victory at La Sarthe (their tenth in fact) but even then it was the less fancied of the trios. Benoit Treluyer, Marcel Fassler and Andre Lotterer all drove a superb race to earn a place on a list of greats for the first time. The race was always going to be close and as qualifying showed it looked like we would have the closest battle for years. We did. However right from wave of the tricolore the Audi R18 showed it had an advantage in pace. It was not just a pace advantage, with the Audis showing their deft touch on tyres, managing five stints on one

set of Michelins in the night (a first) while Peugeot could manage only three. And though the French cars were lasting longer on fuel, saving two stops over the course of the race, it was not enough to prevent defeat to the Ingolstadt chargers.

The race however provided more drama than who could run their tyres longest. It didn't take long for the drama to unfold: as the first hour came to an end, Allan McNish (starting Audi #3) got a run on team mate Timo Bernhard as they crested the Dunlop chicane and briefly took the lead of the race. It was brief thanks to his ambitious attempt to pass Anthony Beltoise's Luxury Ferrari, who turned in unsighted. Both cars hit the gravel, with spectacular results as the Audi skated across and barrel rolled

onto the tyre wall, scattering a large number of assembled photographers and ending on its roof. Remarkably, McNish suffered nothing but bruises and no one was seriously hurt, a testament both to the Audi's strength and the reactions of the media behind the barrier. McNish was very thankful “ I have to say a huge thank you to the Audi designers because they have produced a car that could survive an enormous impact “

It would not be the last time the R18's safety measures would be tested during the race.

After a safety car period of over an hour the race finally resumed with Treluyer leading from Timo Bernhard. The #1 Audi lost second to Wurz later on in the hour after suffering



Photo: Bröcht-Decancq

some damage to the front end. Other casualties early on were both Aston Martin AMR Ones, the Prodrive run cars suffered identical alternator failures on lap three. Fernandez in #009 retired out on track while Darren Turner in #007 managed to get back to the pits. The car returned to circuit, only for the team to find the engine had been damaged.

For the next hours, the diesels battled hard into the night. Though the order remained fairly static, the atmosphere was tense. With the race wearing on, it became ever more clear that Audi had a tyre advantage, though as the temperatures dropped Peugeot switched to the soft Michelin tyre and started to match the pace of the R18s. Audi on the other hand, couldn't find the right balance on the soft compound and soon switched back to the medium.

As darkness engulfed Le Mans the safety car came out again. Again, Audi were the victim of a massive accident, but this time it was car #1 and Mike Rockenfeller suffering. Once again it was contact with a Ferrari that was the cause, this time rookie Robert Kaufmann. The AF Corse driver strayed into Rockenfeller's line as they rounded the second kink on the run from Mulsanne corner to Indianapolis, the contact sending Rockenfeller onto the grass and then spearing him into the opposite guard rail. The R18 was destroyed but the driver cell remained intact enabling Rockenfeller to walk free. After a safety car period of almost two and half hours while safety crew replaced 60 meters of Armco barriers, the race finally got back underway.

The race was now one Audi vs three Peugeots, but crucially the remaining R18 still held an advantage of over 2 minutes ahead the Peugeots. With Peugeot using the softer compound Bourdais was able to close on Treluyer for the lead bringing it down to less than two minutes. Treluyer responded though and kept the gap stable. Only seven seconds behind Pagenaud (who had taken over from Bourdais) was the #7 Peugeot of Wurz, while Sarrazin in fourth remained on the lead lap. Behind the factory diesels, ORECA had been running fifth in their 908. However just after the half way mark, Loic Duval went off at the first chicane on the Mulsanne losing 15 minutes as a result.

Pagenaud began to reel in the #2 Audi as the race entered into its 13th hour. The Frenchman brought the gap down to 40 seconds to Marcel Fassler who was now in the #2 car. Third place was Anthony Davidson who was now installed in #7 Peugeot, the Brit flying and soon into a battle with Fassler after the Swiss had pitted, passing the #2 Audi on the Mulsanne straight. The race then went under caution for the third time. This time it was Jean-Christophe Boullion who went off at the Porsche Curves while running in eighth.

The race restarted with Fassler, Pagenaud and Davidson all together. Pagenaud pitted just as the green flag flew handing over to Bourdais, with Davidson in for more fuel not long afterwards. Fassler stayed out for four more laps before pitting and he came out just ahead of the Briton aboard the blue car. The enthralling battle then continued. Davidson

“
THE DIESELS
BATTLED INTO
THE NIGHT... THE
ATMOSPHERE
WAS TENSE



DUNLOP
DUNLOP



PlayStation®

SORI

collard

1

Photo: Brecht Decancq

Collard was unlucky to crash his Pescarolo in the morning: they were on for a strong finish.





Photo: Jake Yorath



following the Audi for two laps before making his move down into Indianapolis. Fassler however wasn't going to give up the place that easily and was right on Davidson's tail, eventually pushing the Brit into a mistake. Davidson locked his brakes and missed the first chicane on the Mulsanne. After this Davidson dropped back, flat spotted tyres the possible cause. The lead continued to change with different pit stop strategies but the lone Audi still held the advantage when

the pit stops sorted themselves out. Another safety car period again brought the lead cars close together and at the end of hour 18 the gap between the #2 Audi and #9 Peugeot was just 13 seconds. As the race approached its 20th hour the #7 Peugeot hit trouble. Alex Wurz went wide on the exit of Indianapolis and clipped the tyre wall, the Peugeot was quickly dragged out of the gravel and Wurz limped it back to the pit. The car re-joined four laps later and now



seemingly well out of contention. The #7 car still had a part to play in the race however, Davidson being very aggressive in defending from Treluyer while the Audi was trying to lap him. It wouldn't be the first time Peugeot made it difficult for the Audi to pass.

As the morning progressed the rain that had threatened weather forecasts finally came, initially lightly and then heavily at some parts of the eight mile circuit. The slippery surface claimed an unfortunate victim; Emmanuel Collard lost control of his Pescarolo and hit the wall at the Porsche curves, much to the French support-

ers' dismay.

As the race came to a conclusion only the remaining Audi and the #9 Peugeot were on the lead lap, but you only need two cars to have a race. Both cars needed to stop again, Lotterer was the first to come in, and surprisingly he opted for tyres while the splash of fuel was going in. Pagenaud pitted soon after and only took on fuel, he rejoined just seven seconds behind Lotterer with just over half an hour remaining. Pagenaud immediately put his foot down and closed to within 6 seconds; Lotterer with his new rubber had a response and gradually pulled his

lead out. The German crossing the line just 13.4 seconds ahead after 24 hours of racing. A delighted Treluyer knew how much of team effort it was "We've won an incredible race. A fantastic feeling! That was clearly a team victory. We only did the driving." A trio of factory Peugeots followed the Audi home, #8 finishing in third, two laps down and #7 a further two. After many issues the ORECA Peugeot finished in fifth. The unofficial petrol class was taken by the #12 Rebellion; ten laps clear of the Kronos entered, Marc VDS run Lola Aston Martin with its wonderful V12 howl.



Photo: Marcel Thomassen

Rebellion took best petrol honours

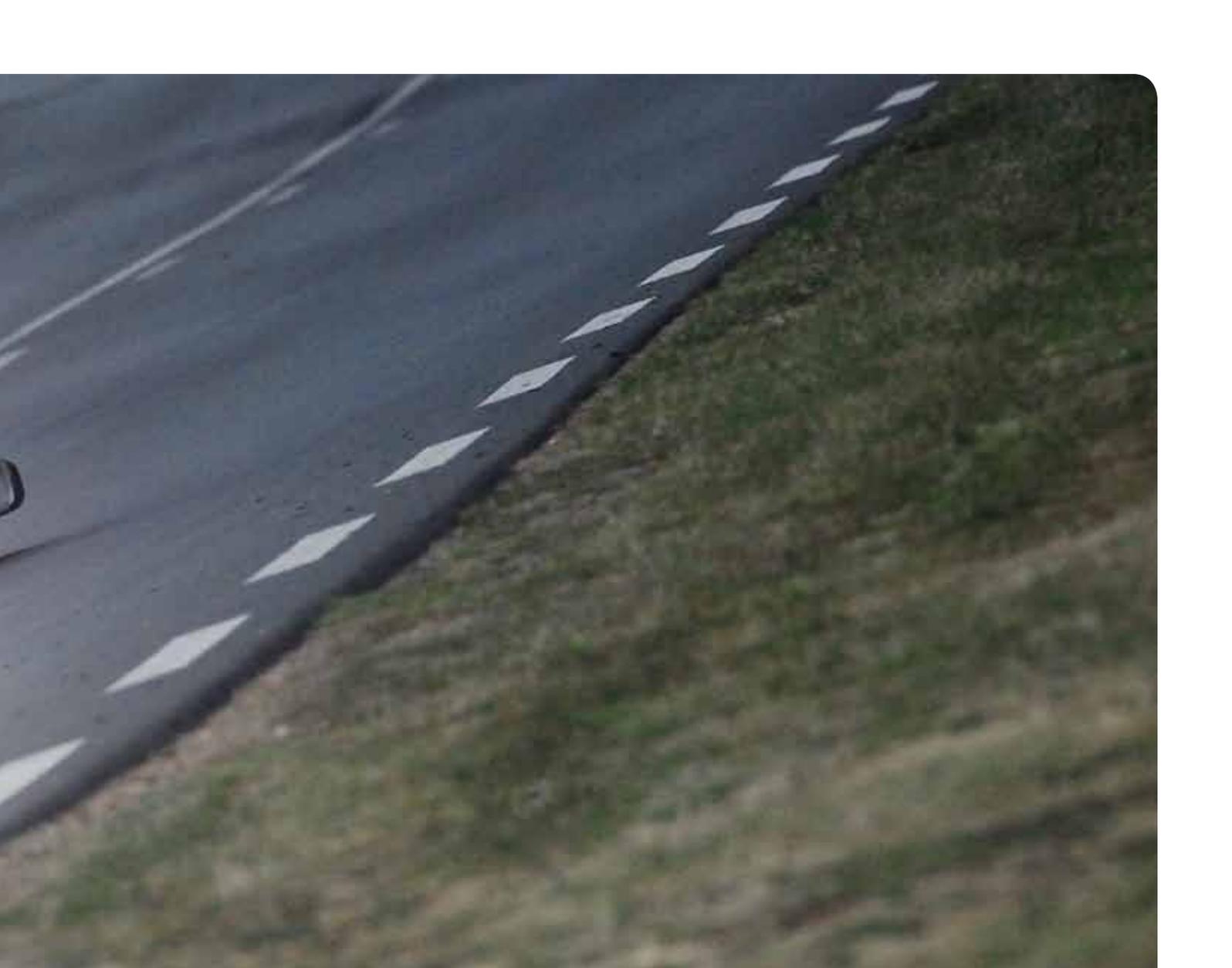


Photo: Marcel Thomassen





Photo: Jake Yorath



LMP 2 GREAVES TAKE A SOLID WIN

Greaves Motorsport took a richly deserved LMP2 victory, avoiding the trouble that befell many of its more fancied competitors to steer the Zytek Nissan to first place. The British team couldn't match the ORECA Nissans in terms of pace, but it did have a clean run, a must for a Le Mans victory. A new star was seemingly found during the race, Olivier Lombard had only had 15 laps in the Zytek before coming to Le Mans, yet he was able to run laps as quick as his more experienced team mate Tom

Kimber-Smith and greatly impressed the team. The leader for the half of the race was the factory ORECA Nissan however, the car lost some time with electrical troubles but was still in contention when David Hallyday went off behind the safety car. The other ORECA Nissan of the Signatech team fared better, finishing second all be it six laps down on the winner. The car was struck with numerous punctures, one which left the car stranded out on track after the engine overheated, but a quick ECU reset and Mail-

leux made it back to the pits. A slight surprise in third place was the Level 5 Motorsports HPD-Lola. The American team largely kept out of trouble, the major trouble coming when Barbosa spun losing two laps. Favourites going into the race, Strakka Racing retired at the half way mark. Danny Watts crawling to a stop on the Mulsanne with a loss of oil pressure which had manifested itself after Watts ran wide at Tetre Rouge and launched the car over the kerbs.



GTE PRO STARS AHEAD AT THE STRIPE

The GTE Pro class was always going to be a close one, but in the end it came down to attrition and a clean run for the #73 Corvette of Antonio Garcia, Olivier Beretta and Tommy Milner earned them victory. For much of the race it looked like their team-mates in the #74 Corvette would be victorious. Oliver Gavin caught an early break when the safety car came out for McNish's accident, the Brit had already made his first pit stop, and so Gavin found himself behind a different safety car to the rest

of the GT field after they had all pitted. The advantage was over half a minute. The trio of Gavin, Westbrook and Jan Magnussen kept the lead for much of the race.

It tumbled down in the 18th hour; Magnussen came up behind the #63 Porsche of Horst Felbermayr Sr, the Dane appeared to lose the rear end of the Corvette as he rounded the curve and smashed into the side of the Porsche. The impact sent both cars into the inside wall and then the outside, putting both out on the spot. Magnussen recalled

the incident. "I went in there, he turned in on me, and instead of just hitting him I tried to take some of the curb and straightline the grass. The curb just kicked the rear out and I went into a huge tank-slapper, hit him, and then hit the wall." That left a straight fight between the remaining Corvette and the #51 AF Corse, the Ferrari holding a lap lead and looking set for victory. However, not for the first time, Italian electrics proved to be an issue. The problem caused the engine to lose power, and the Corvette pounced and took a



lead it would hold until the finish. It was not all smooth sailing for the winning car though. During the morning Berreta became ill after inhaling fumes during a safety car period, eventually deciding to sit out the rest of the race.

Slight favourites BMW were mega quick over a single lap but they couldn't buy any luck. The #55 car was running in the top three when a puncture in the fourth hour dropped them back. Numerous other punctures and then a radiator problem dropped the car right down the order. A driveshaft failure

while running in fifth just after the 21st hour eventually put the car out. The sister M3 had a slightly more trouble free run on the way to third. A misfire was their biggest woe, costing the car almost ten minutes.

Elsewhere in the class, the strong Porsche squads of Flying Lizard, Felbermayr IMSA and Prospeed couldn't match the pace of the newer GT cars. The #77 Felbermayr of Wolf Henzler, Marc Lieb and Richard Lietz eventually finished fourth but were never really in contention. Its sister car impressed, Nick Tandy running in

second place at one point, but his co drivers though couldn't match his pace and the car eventually retired after Al Faisal went off. Fifth place went to the IMSA Porsche, with a solid if unspectacular run. They finished just ahead of the Flying Lizard team, whose torrid luck at Le Mans continued, an injector problem delaying the car. One car that was greatly received at the finish was the JetAlliance run Lotus Evora. The car was never going to be challenging the front but a finish was well deserved.



Photo: Jake Yorath





GTE AM LARBRE MAKE IT A 'VETTE DOUBLE

The GTE Am class really was a race of attrition, only four cars crossing the finish line.

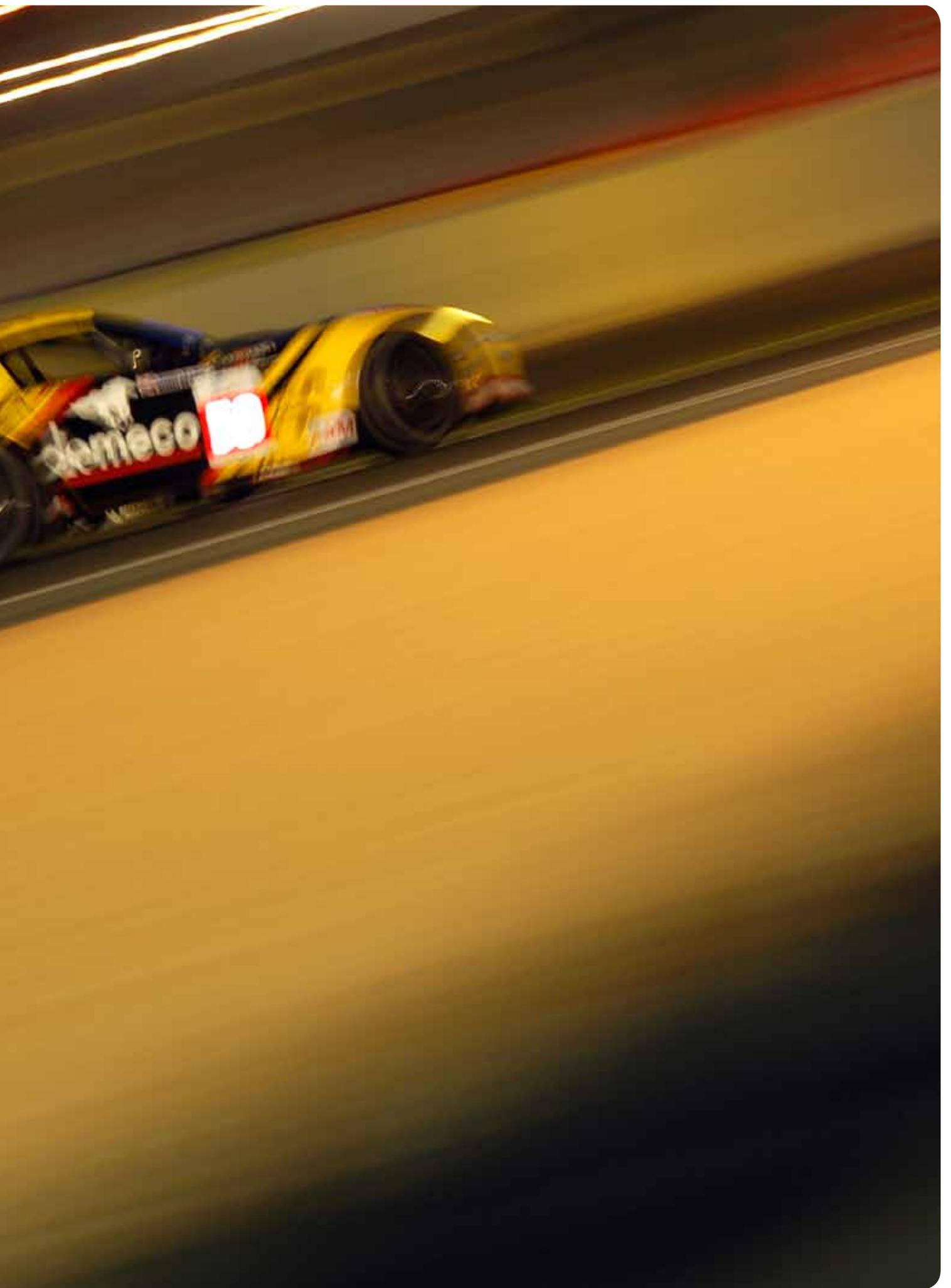
Of the four that finished the cars that took the first two steps on the podium were both entered by Larbre Competition. It was the #50 Corvette of Gabriele Gardel, Julien Canel and Patrick Bornhauser that took the honours in the end, a lap ahead of the

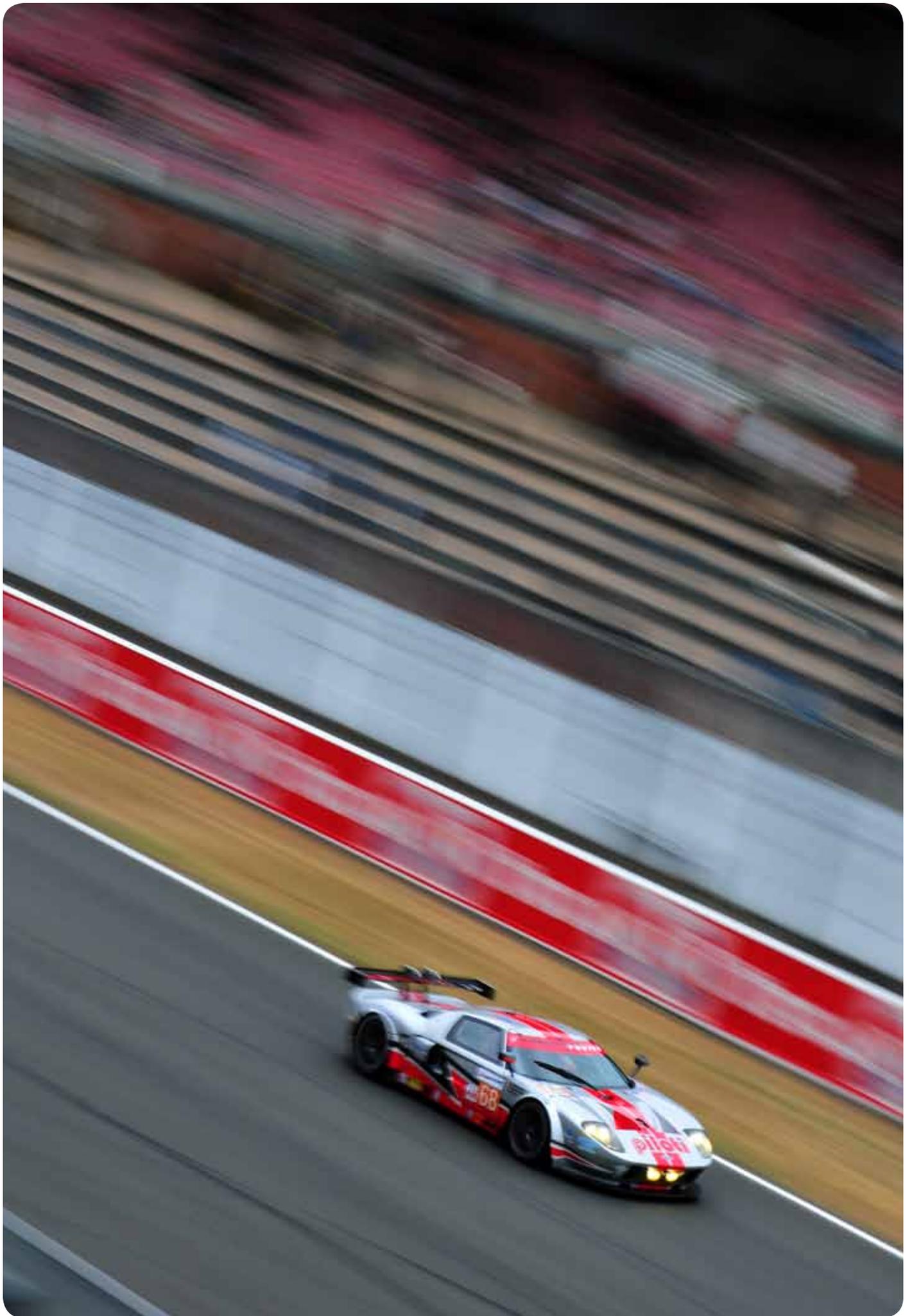
Porsche that was also entered by the French team. Both cars had pretty faultless runs, the Porsche had a few offs and a cooling leak but kept running unlike most of the class.

The American Robertson Racing squad running a Ford GT claimed a surprising, but very much applauded third place. The Ford was never on the pace and had a few issues, including having to re-

vert to a sequential gearshift during the race.

The early stages were led by the Gulf AMR Middle East Aston Martin and the #61 AF Corse Ferrari F430 of polesitter Marco Ciocci, but both cars would retire due to accidents. Michael Wainwright hitting the wall heavily at the Porsche Curves, the Briton suffering broken ribs and a punctured lung.





LMP1

Laps: 335
Overall: 1st



Audi Sport Team Joest Audi R18 TDI

LMP2

Laps: 326
Overall: 8th



Greaves Motorsport Zytek-Nissan

GTE PRO

Laps: 314
Overall: 11th



Corvette Racing (Pratt & Miller) Corvette C6.R

GTE AM

Laps: 302
Overall: 20th



Larbre Competition Corvette C6.R

All artwork thanks to Andy Blackmore Design
www.andyblackmoredesign.com



GT3 EUROPE GREAT BRITAIN FASTER IS THE WAY TO GO

Silverstone, Rounds 3 + 4, June 5 By Alex Roache

Back in May in the Portimão sunshine the opening round of the 2011 FIA GT3 European championship delivered all the excitement, drama and paint-trading action we've come to expect of the series since its inception in 2006. There were first-time winners in both races, and it wasn't an uncommon sight at any one time to see a BMW, a Mercedes, an Aston Martin, a Ferrari and an Audi battling over the same piece of tarmac at the head of the field.

Few international motor-sport series can offer that kind of competitive racing between such a variety of prestigious marques - albeit, lest we for-

get, the result of some not altogether popular (with some teams) equalization measures imposed by the FIA. Performance balancing aside, though, the championship was already on a roll after two great races in the Algarve, and Silverstone - with its popular Arena configuration lending itself so well to wheel-to-wheel action - promised more of the same.

Seldom do cars and on-track events have to compete for attention with a building, but there was no denying as the contenders fired up in the garages and cruised down the pitlane for first practice that Silverstone's magnificent new 'Wing' facility was proving a bit of a show-stealer - at least

for an hour or two.

It was a Godsend for photographers, from whom you'd usually hear a collective groan as they're reminded upon arrival at the Northamptonshire venue what a featureless landscape they're up against. A fresh perspective and different backdrop is always welcome, and the Wing's sharp angles and quirky roofline has at last brought some much needed character to the trackside.

Not that AF Corse's Frederico Leo was paying much attention - the Italian was busy sticking his new jet black-liveried Ferrari 458 on pole for the first race ahead of an impressive Markus Palttala in the #13 Fischer Racing Ford GT. It wasn't a great



EVERYTHING IS PERFECT HERE!

HOEVERT VOS

surprise - the Ferrari looked immense through Silverstone's high-speed sections, and Leo and his teammate Francesco Castellacci had been threatening to top the times throughout Friday, pipped only by Nicky Catsburg's #36 Faster Racing BMW Z4 GT3 in the first free practice session and the #9 Team LMP Aston Martin of Maxime Martin in the second.

Indeed, it was those two GT1 stars - Catsburg and Martin - who locked out the front row in race two, denying the #50 AF Corse Ferrari a double pole and demonstrating that while the 458 Italia might have the edge in the corners, there was something to be said for the BMW's all-round performance and the DBRS9's sheer grunt down the straights.

Following a couple of untidy rolling starts in the Algarve and some throttle-happy antics from several of the GT1 drivers in recent races, the race directors had laid down the law during the drivers' briefing and there would be no excuse for not observing strict formation over the line during the Silverstone weekend.

Easier said than done when the adrenaline is pumping, of course, but, to the drivers' credit, as Leo streaked away from Palttala and a fast-starting Edward Sandström at the front, it was all well-behaved over the line.

The #6 Need For Speed Team Schubert BMW fancied a look down the inside of the two leaders at Abbey, but the door was firmly shut and Sandström's lost momentum allowed Mayr-Melnhof's Reiter Lamborghini up into third.

Leo's Ferrari led from Palttala's Ford GT, and after a

good deal of jostling for position throughout the pack over the opening lap, the race quickly settled down and the field became uncharacteristically spread out. The Belgian Audi Club R8s provided some inter-team tussling as a battle for 12th formed between Enzo Ide, Didier Andre and the #3 Graff Racing Mercedes of Swiss Philippe Giaque, but at the front the black AF Corse Ferrari was setting a fearsome pace and evidently suffering none of the same tyre issues with which the 458 struggled in Portimão.

Ten laps in and the only competitor looking strong enough

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IT WAS VERY
EXCITING! THE
CAR WAS VERY
FAST. I NEED TO
SAY THANK YOU
TO THE TEAM.

FREDERICO LEO

to challenge Leo was dealt a cruel blow. The luckless Marcus Palttala was suddenly limping along with a right-rear puncture on his Ford GT, his chances of a podium shattered. The Finn had been well clear of Mayr-Melnhof, who'd been coming under increasing pressure from Sandström ahead of the pitstops.

Misfortune lay in store, too,

for the Reiter Lamborghini, which had been promoted to second after the #13 Fischer Racing Ford GT's demise. What looked like a textbook pitstop and driver change - with Albert von Thurn und Taxis getting behind the wheel - seemed to upset Mayr-Melnhof, who stormed over to the pitwall looking agitated. It later emerged that the team's timing equipment had failed and forced the crew to guess how long they'd been stationary - valuable time was lost in the quest for a podium finish, and Reiter Engineering was left wondering why they hadn't allowed room in the racing budget for a spare stopwatch.

The remainder of the race saw some sensational charges through the field from the likes of Max Martin, Abdulaziz Al Faisal and Mike Parisy, the Frenchman doing a magnificent job to haul the #3 Graff Racing Mercedes into contention. So relentless was his progress, in fact, that he managed to snatch the final podium place in the last few corners from the Need For Speed Team Schubert car of Al Faisal, which itself was setting a solid pace.

Ahead of them Francesco Castellacci, who had continued teammate Leo's faultless drive at the front, took the chequered flag ahead of the Max Martin and Gael Lesoudier Team LMP Aston, but the Italians would have kept a wary eye on the #36 Faster Racing by DB Motorsport BMW which had sliced through the pack from 17th to 7th in a blistering final stint with Nicky Catsburg at the helm. The Dutchman would be starting from pole in race two, and at that rate, they wouldn't see which way



he went.

“It was my first start from the front row in GT,” said Leo afterwards. “It was exciting! It’s the first victory for AF Corse in FIA GT3, and for the new car. The car was very fast. I need to say thank you to the team.”

The start of race two on Sunday was a rather more chaotic affair, with the lights changing to green early and the field immediately fanning out across the new start/finish straight to try and out-drag their rivals

down to Abbey.

Patrick Hirsch in the second of the Heico Motorsport Mercs was squeezed within millimetres the new pitwall, but a few car lengths ahead the sister car of Brice Bosi speared dramatically right and smashed head first into the inside barrier at terrifying speed. With no run-off to speak of, the only place for the battered SLS to go was careering straight back into the pack where a dreadfully unlucky Gregory Franchi,

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THE FERRARI
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SECTIONS



Photo: Alex Roache

innocently negotiating his way around the outside of the first corner, was t-boned at maximum velocity and spat into the gravel along with Bosi and the #8 Aston Martin of Dimitri Enjalbert who was also caught up in the carnage. Despite several massive impacts, nobody was hurt, and Enjalbert was even able to limp back to the pits to retire the car.

It wasn't all bad news for Team LMP Motorsport, however. While all eyes were on

the midfield destruction derby into turn one, Martin in the #9 Aston had snuck past Catsburg and into the lead. The two GT1 stars were ahead of Brit Matt Griffin in the #21 MTECH Motorsport Ferrari, which had passed the race one-winning AF Corse 458 of Castellacci on the run down to the Arena section.

The race was neutralised while the mess was cleared up at Abbey, and when it got underway again it was Aston from

BMW from Ferrari from Audi. Martin and Catsburg made a break, the Z4 GT3 shadowing the DBRS9 through the slow sections and even through Maggots and Becketts, but not able to eek enough performance from its 480bhp V8 powerplant to match the Aston's V12 torque on the straights.

Catsburg, though, was waiting for his moment, and on lap seven he took advantage of his BMW's stronger traction out of the Loop to draw up the inside

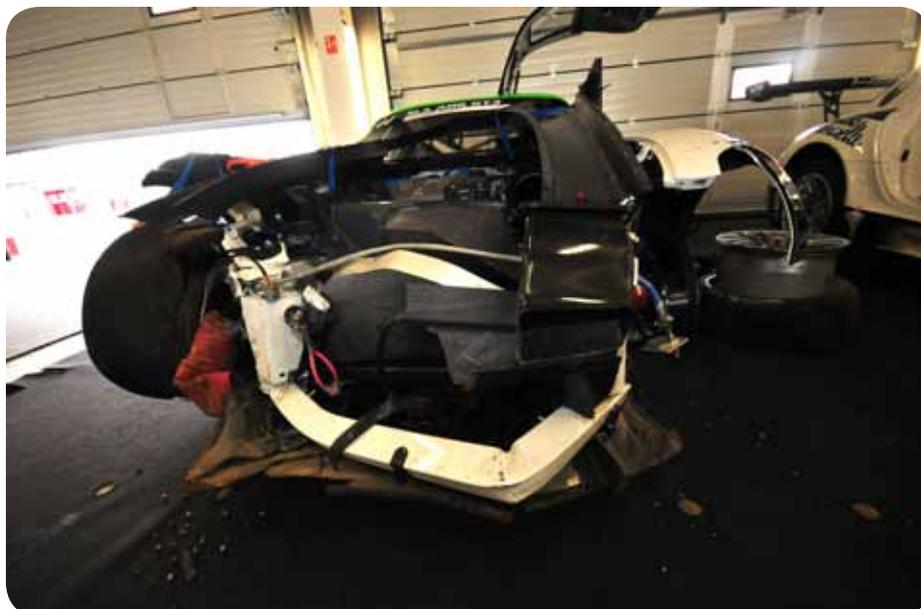


into Aintree and into the lead. The battle lost the pair a little time and put Griffin onto the tail of the Aston where, like Catsburg, he would spend a few laps planning his attack.

Meanwhile, as the pit window approached, a small train of cars was stacking up behind fourth-placed Dino Lunardi in the #15 Sainteloc Racing Audi R8. Faster Racing's Jeroen den Boer was piling the pressure on the Frenchman but was coming under attack himself from the two AF Corse Ferraris of Francesco Castellacci and Glynn Geddie. The four-way scrap was quickly losing touch with the battle for second, and the duelling Graff Racing AMGs of Mike Parisy and Gary Hirsch were closing in fast to make it a six car dogfight.

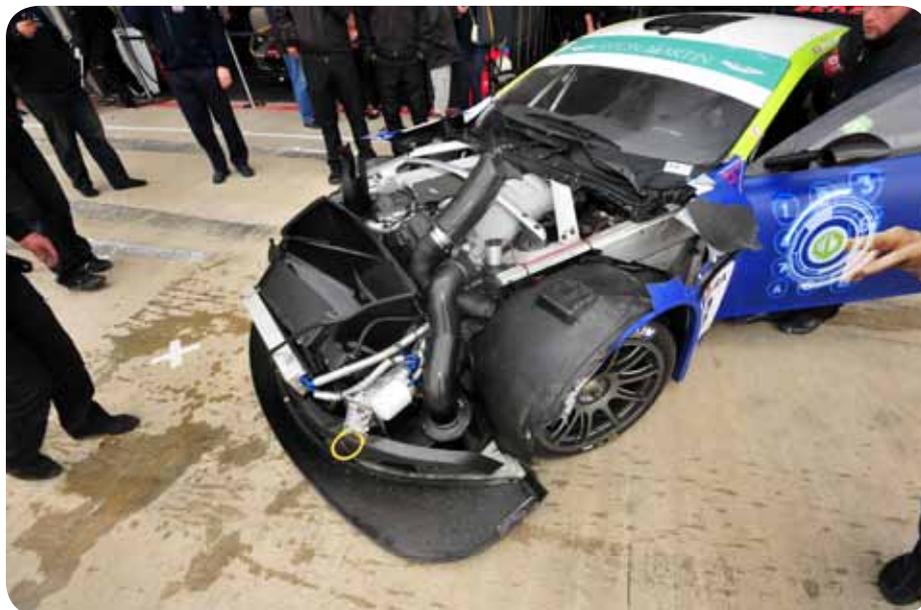
On lap 13 Matt Griffin launched his Ferrari up the inside on Martin's Aston at Club. The Belgian held the outside line but Griffin hung him out to dry on the exit kerb, sweeping through into second in a brave move that was a long time coming. Too long, perhaps - Catsburg was already seven seconds up the road.

Race one winner Castellacci was the first to pit dead on half race distance and he handed over to teammate Frederico Leo. It was a sensible move given the extra 15 second pitstop time the #50 car had to serve as a 'success penalty' for victory on Saturday, taking it out of the scrap for fourth and into some clear air - the race would come back to them. A flurry of pitstops followed, and with a number of other front-running machines carrying similar time penalties it was impossible to predict how the order would shuffle.



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THE START OF RACE TWO ON SUNDAY
WAS A RATHER CHAOTIC AFFAIR... BUT
DESPITE SEVERAL MASSIVE IMPACTS,
NOBODY WAS HURT

There were huge hits for Heico (above) and Team LMP (below)



Photos: Jake Yorath

MTECH Motorsport certainly wouldn't have predicted the disaster which was about to befall them as Matt Griffin dived in with seconds to spare in the pit window. In race one a starter motor issue on the AF Corse Ferrari 458 of Dan Brown and Glynn Geddie had ruined the duo's afternoon, and the same problem struck Griffin's teammate Duncan Cameron as he tried to pull out of the pits. A cheeky push from the crew - illegal according to the regulations - got the Brit going, but the stewards barely had time to investigate the incident before a spin out on track saw the hapless Cameron beached permanently.

When the order finally shook out it was Harrie Kolen leading by a huge margin in the #36 Faster Racing BMW, with Jerome Demay in the Sainte-loc Racing Audi under intense pressure from Gael Lesoudier and Hoevert Vos. The R8 was no match for the Aston and the BMW, both of whom quickly got past and set off in pursuit of the leader - but Demay's starring role was yet to come, and the FIA GT3 European Championship was about to demonstrate why it's the most exciting and competitive tin top series in the world.

Demay, whose Audi had decent traction and strong brakes but couldn't maintain the mid-corner speed of its rivals, immediately had his mirrors full of Dan Brown in the red AF Corse Ferrari and a rapidly closing pair of Graff Racing Mercedes.

The quartet blasted down Hangar Straight, Dan Brown sticking the nose of his 458 up the inside of the Audi into Stowe and powering past on the

exit. It looked like the move was a done deal, but Demay had other ideas. The Frenchman already had Joakim Lambotte alongside him through Vale, but he jinked to the left on the approach to Club and lunged back up the inside of Brown with some demon braking.

It could have ended in tears, but classy drivers make for classy racing, and Brown - with a sensible head on him for a 19-year-old - left Demay room at the apex. But it was too much room, and Lambotte wasted no time pouncing on the gap. Demay's late braking had left him exposed on the exit of Club, and the Graf Racing Mercedes could draw alongside on the outside of the final right hander and across the line.

They were still side by side into Abbey, but Demay hung onto the inside line and kept a slight advantage on the run down to the Arena section. Lambotte was close again as they swept through the flat out Aintree curve, but the Mercedes snapped sideways in a heart-stopping moment at 120mph. Incredibly the Swiss driver gathered it all together, but Brown now had an excellent toe, challenging around the outside into Brooklands and braving the long way round in a sensational passing move.

By the time the cars flew down Hangar Straight it was status quo again: Demay (Audi), Brown (Ferrari), Lambotte (Mercedes), Philippe Giauque (Mercedes), but now Csaba Walter in the #7 BMW had joined the dogfight and - sure enough - Frederico Leo was looming ominously in the background in the jet black

458.

Brown was on the Audi's gearbox again next time through Club, and like Lambotte a lap earlier managed to get alongside through the final kink and across the startline. This time it was Demay on the outside, shoved wide onto the tarmac run-off and looking like his fight to keep fourth place was over.

As ever, though, Demay's exemplary racecraft allowed him one last heroic stand, and in a brilliant piece of defensive driving the Frenchman, hounded by a blood-thirsty gaggle of cars going four abreast across the line, kept his momentum going and squeezed Brown to the inside into Abbey, forcing the Ferrari to lift off and concede the corner.

But not for long. Brown was through again at Village and this time Demay had no answer. With only a handful of laps left the Audi's tyres were shot and it was a sitting duck for the cars behind. Leo - having despatched Walter, Giauque and Lambotte - scythed through in pursuit of the sister AF Corse car, and the intense battle for fourth was laid to rest.

In all the excitement you would have been forgiven for missing Hoevert Vos passing Gael Lesoudier for second and absolutely annihilating the 14 second gap to teammate Harrie Kolen out in front. The flying Dutchman had reeled in his compatriot at over three seconds a lap, so while the Faster Racing squad looked sure to score a tremendous and dominant 1-2 finish, it wasn't clear which of their driver pairings would be on the top step of the podium.

The race was decided at Ab-

bey on the final lap, with Vos sailing through up the inside of rather surprised Kolen. It had been a determined charge from Vos, who took the chequered flag for a well-deserved victory ahead of Kolen and his disappointed-looking teammate Catsburg, who could only watch from the pitwall as his sterling work in the early stages came undone.

A diplomatic Catsburg said afterwards: "Harrie did a really good job in only his second race at this level. For the team, P1 and P2 is amazing because we're quite inexperienced."

Hovert Vos, quite possibly the happiest man in the world as he stepped from his race-winning machine, was beaming: "Seven minutes before the end, my team manager said that the gap was 13 seconds, and I knew that I was quicker around the track, so I kept on pushing. When I caught up to [Kolen], I wasn't thinking about it, and in the first corner, I just went, and came out ahead. Everything is perfect here!"

Gael Lesoudier brought home the Team LMP Motorsport Aston Martin in third for yet another podium, and Dan Brown survived his numerous tussles for a solid fourth place.

The result puts Hovert Vos and his teammate Jeroen den Boer five points clear of Sandström and Al Faisal at the top of the drivers' standings, and means the Faster Racing by DB Motorsport outfit has closed the gap to the Need for Speed Schubert squad to just 8 points in the teams' championship.

Navarra in Spain plays host to the next two rounds of the FIA GT3 European Championship on July 2nd and 3rd.



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THE FERRARI
LOOKED
IMMENSE
THROUGH
SILVERSTONE'S
HIGH SPEED
SECTIONS





Glynn Geddie and Dan Brown performed well for AF Corse (below) while Jerome Demay (left) starred in the Sainteloc Audi. Photos: Alex Roache



GT1 WORLD ROYAL AUTOMOBILE CLUB TOURIST TROPHY TOURISTS TAKE HOME THE TROPHY

Silverstone, Rounds 5, June 5 By Jake Yorath

Michael Krumm and Lucas Luhr took victory in a fantastically hard fought Tourist Trophy, in a race sadly overshadowed by controversy. Their JRM Nissan team mate Richard Westbrook suffered a clash with Young Driver Aston Martin's Stefan Mücke that has since seen hours of debate.

Under a typically grey Silverstone sky, the racing was again close and exciting from start to finish, with battles all down the slimmed field. The slimming was thanks to a rather destructive Sachsenring event. Neither Swiss Lamborghini was in attendance at the British round of the series, both still being repaired after heavy contact in Germany. There continued to

be just two Corvettes (one for Exim Bank China and one for DKR) but, despite rumours that they would be withdrawn, Belgian Racing did field their two Ford GTs alongside the Marc VDS cars despite using up a considerable amount of spares in the early part of the season, often of no fault of their own.

From the outset, Mike Hezemans and new partner Andy Zuber (who had impressed in brief showings with Phoenix in 2010) showed well for Exim Bank China with third in both Friday sessions. The Corvette clearly suited the Silverstone circuit better than it had some of the tighter layouts so far. The same was true of Nissan, whose sheer grunt put the Westbrook and Peter Dumbreck car to the top of the first

Friday practice session ahead of their German team mates, before the order was switched for pre qualifying in the afternoon.

The Corvette showed its one lap speed again on Saturday, topping the time sheets in the final two sessions of qualifying to take pole position in the hands of Hezemans. He was pleased, though cautious for the race ahead, mentioning that his tyres were likely to last only one lap at the kind of pace that put him on pole. Second place was the German crewed Nissan, with fellow countryman Alex Müller (sharing with Tomas Enge) third. The biggest surprise, perhaps, was Richard Westbrook's disappointing fifth place: he was not satisfied with that at all.



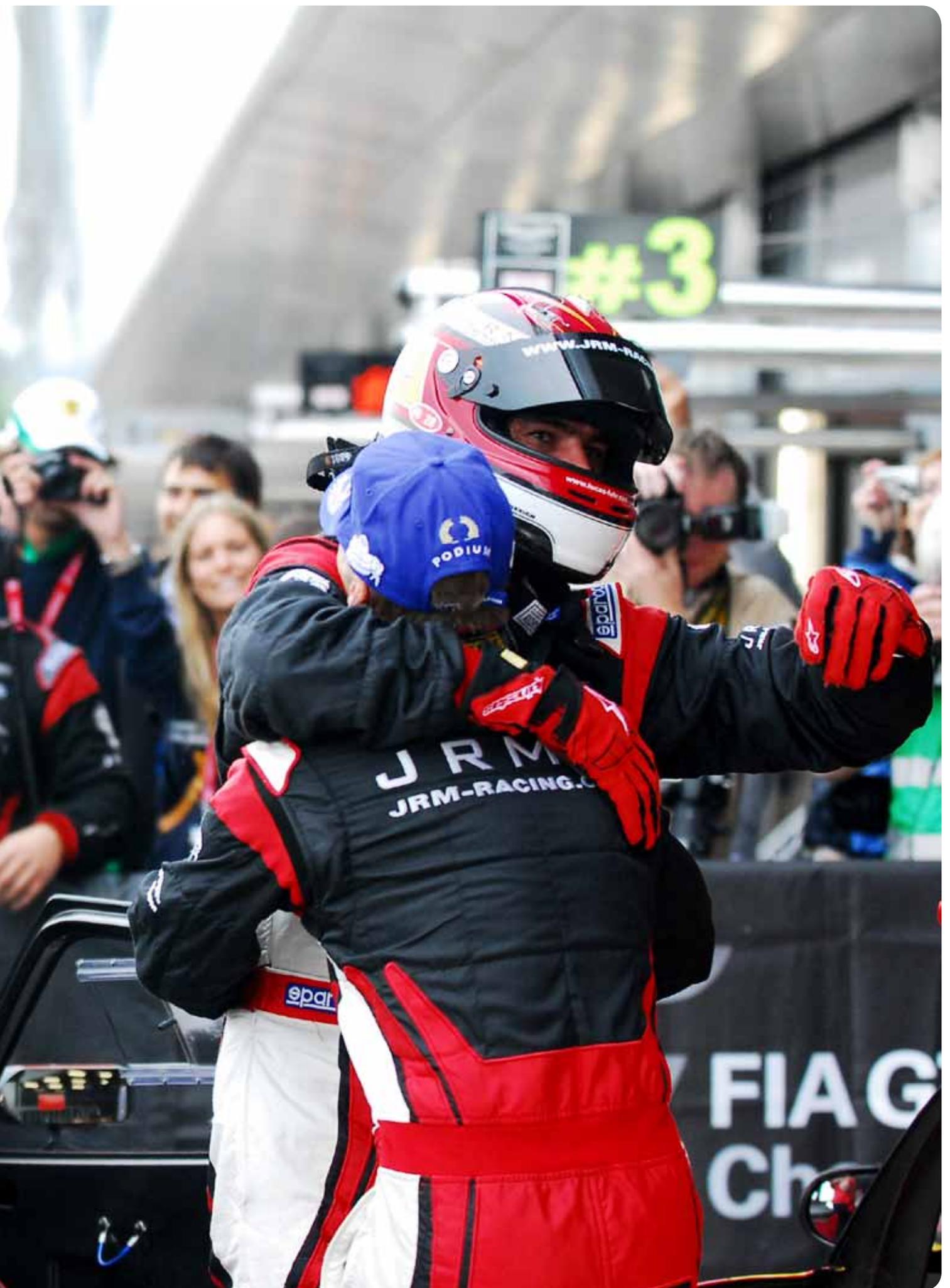


Photo: Jake Yorath

QUALIFYING RACE

ASTON MADE TO EARN THE SPOILS

At the start of Saturday's Qualifying Race, Andy Zuber got an absolute mugging from both sides as he dipped into Abbey, Luhr flying round the outside and Müller down the inside, with Darren Turner also broadsiding the Corvette.

The red car would emerge third, while Turner began falling down the pack, before being whacked into a spin at the new complex by an ambitious David Brabham. He was collected by Peter Dumbreck and all three cars were out, despite Brabham making it back to the pitlane. "This reminds me of going to the dodgems in Bangor when I was a kid!" exclaimed John Watson, and his reference would probably not be lost on those who did not survive the lap. Also spinning, at Abbey, was Clivio Piccione, but the Hexis man rejoined unscathed.

"It's pretty poor driving," lamented a clearly frustrated Darren Turner.

At the front, the top three were pulling away, with Alex Müller looking very interested in the gaps around the sides of Lucas Luhr's Nissan as the race wore on and the tyres wore a little. Luhr, however, had every move his compatriot could muster covered.

Andrea Piccini was the next casualty, limping his Hexis Aston Martin into the pits with a smoking front tyre, but he was able to rejoin. Similarly, Zuber managed a total 360 behind the leaders and pitted that lap, immediately handing to Dutch master Mike Hezemans. Müller pitted too, handing to Enge and the Czech went charging after Luhr, whpitted for Michael Krumm. Enge swept passed the Nissan, after Luhr had received a mixed message and pitted a lap later than would

have been tactically perfect.

Marc Hennerici was another driver unimpressed with driving standards. "Every race we see a crash, and maybe people should think about what they are doing...it is not really professional what we see here," mused the German after his door was damaged by an errant Aston.

Enge was soon falling back, saving his tyres according to his driving partner, but he was safe. He had backed off by quite a margin by the finish but his gap was comfortable enough to mean that he was under very little pressure from the Nissan at the finish.

The #7 Aston crossed the line first, with the #23 German crewed JRM Nissan second. The final podium place fell to pole sitters Hezemans and Zuber, with Hughes and Bernoldi fourth for Sumo and Dusseldorp and Piccione fifth.





Photo: Jake Yorath

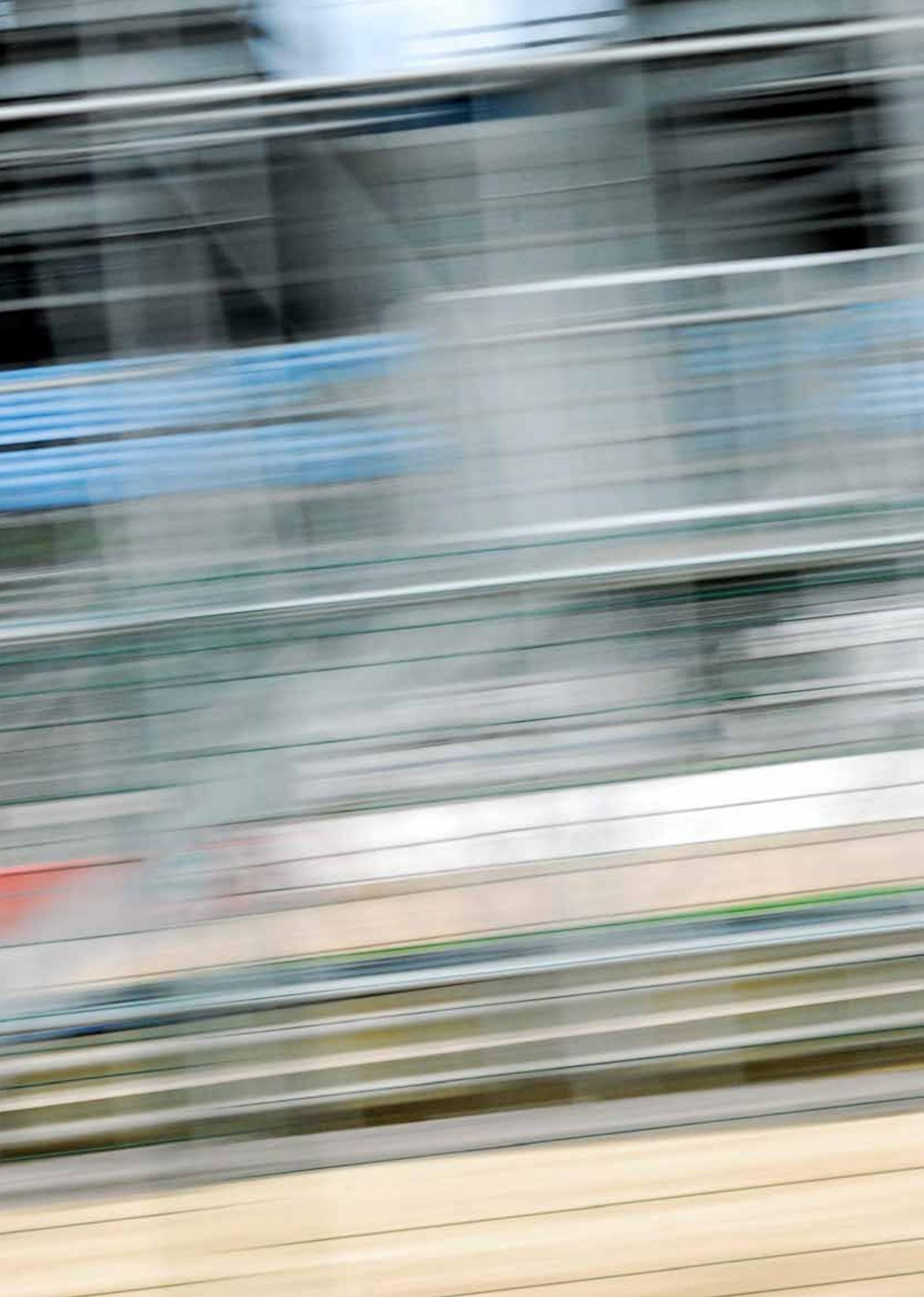


Photo: Jake Yorath

Bernoldi and Hughes performed solidly in the first race but Sumo were outpaced by JRM.



Sunday's race saw all sixteen cars lined up for the start, with Enge and Krumm sharing the front row, while Hughes and Hezemans locked out the second. The top three remained the same but a wild lock up for Hughes dropped him right into the pack as he exited turn one.

Moving up immediately was Marc Basseng, starting well down but soon passing his team mate for sixth place while behind, Antoine Leclerc was tapped into a spin at Brooklands, the unfortunate Ford falling to the tail of the field.

At the end of lap one, Enge led Krumm, led Hezemans.

Slight spots of rain were seen but it was largely inconsequential. Richard Westbrook was starting to get frustrated behind Leinders' Ford, the Belgian able to defend stoutly and hold the grunty Nissan behind. There was a train of cars ahead, and from the middle of it suddenly dropped Championship leader Christian Hohenadel, passed by both VDS Fords and Westbrook too.

Westbrook took advantage of the chaos to sneak past the Ford a lap later, and was swiftly all over Makowiecki too, trying hard at Copse only for the Frenchman to slam the door shut. The Briton went by at Vale, though.

His passes on the two Fords were clean but Westbrook was distinctly less gentlemanly to Stefan Mücke, and carnage ensued. Spotting the smallest of gaps on the inside at Becketts, he squeezed his Nissan onto the curb but succeeded only in assaulting the Aston, which spun to the outside but was able to continue. Westbrook suffered the damage though, forced to crawl down the Hangar Straight.

What happened next defied both sense and the belief of everyone inside the Silverstone circuit. Mücke, in a fit of rage, charged back onto the track and alongside Westbrook, waving his fist at the Nissan before



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I THINK I'M
OLDER, FIVE
YEARS!
LUCAS LUHR

losing control and firing across the front of the black machine. He impacted the concrete with heavy force, ripping the front of his DBR9 to pieces and leaving a dumbstruck JRM driver to pull over to the other side of the track and consider just what had happened. All he could do was wag a finger at the antics of his German sparring partner. It was not just clumsy but outright dangerous from a man with a huge amount of experience in this sport.

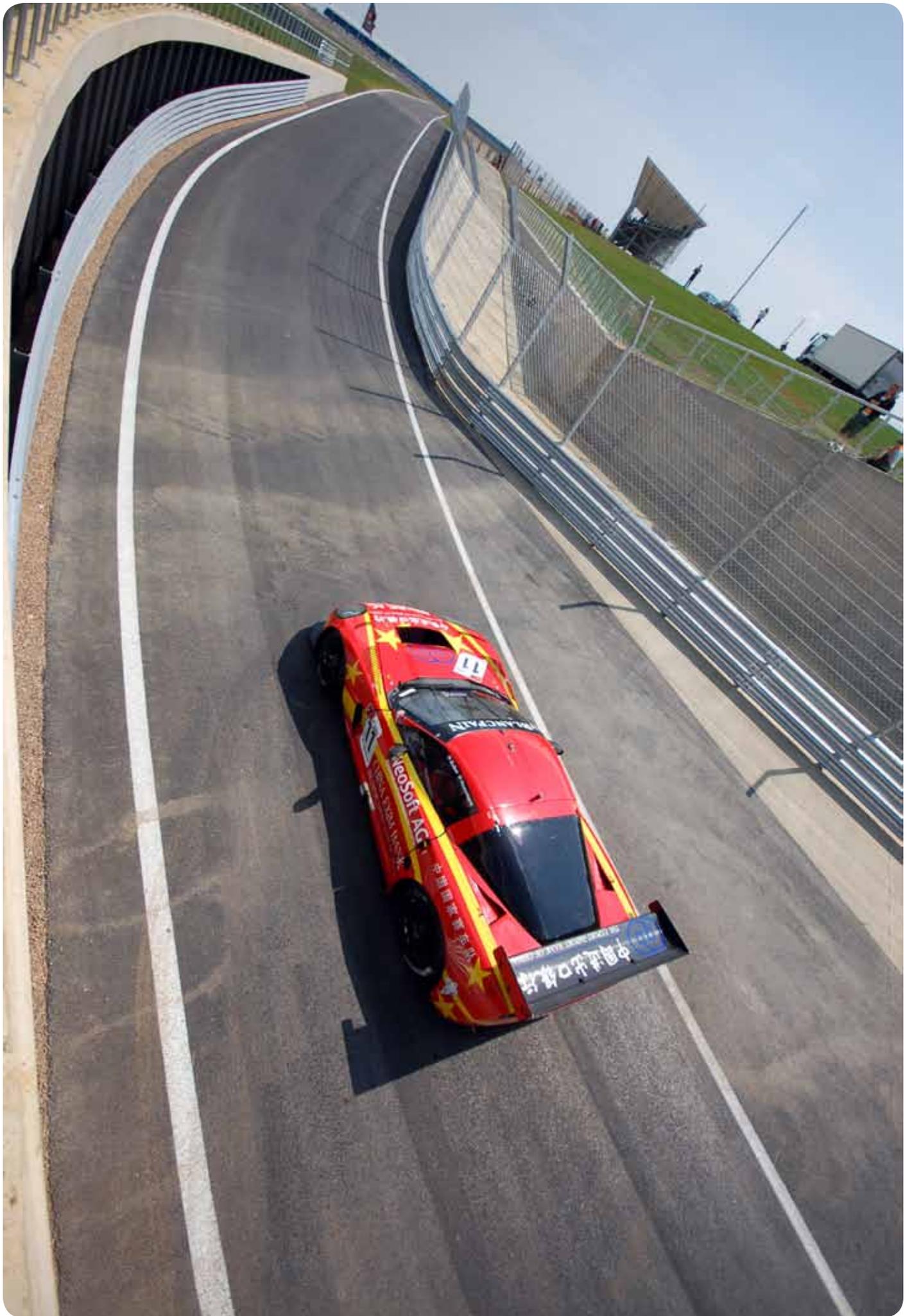
That brought out an inevitable safety car just in time for the Belgian Racing cars to make their stops immediately and jump right into the top six. Everyone else had passed the

pits before the pitlane opened and so the next time round, the entire pack pitted. JRM worked magic to put there man ahead of the Young Driver Aston Martin.

As soon as the race was green again, with just under 25 minutes to go, Müller made his move for the lead. Heading into the complex for the first time, he dived down the inside of Luhr and the stunned Nissan had to regroup straight away, taking a nudge from Piccione from third. Luhr was second for just a couple of corners before retaking the lead at Brooklands.

With there being no crashing under the safety car, there





Photos: Jake Yorath

was time to be made up for and at Luffield, Enrique Bernoldi's Sumo Nissan shot sideways out of the pack, Andrea Piccini went wildly spinning at Michael Rossi's Corvette suffered heavy frontal damage. The black car's bonnet flew up onto the screen and left the Frenchman all but blind. The #41 Ford of Maxime Martin also suffered contact and retired with left front damage.

Ahead of that, the top three were nose to tail and just like in Saturday's race, Müller was all over the Nissan like a hot rash. However hot the rash may be, it certainly was not as hot as Markus Winkelhock's Lamborghini, which blew up in a very smoky manner and was parked on the inside of turn one.

Hot and hotter though, at the head of the field. Time after time Luhr locked a brake and lost momentum and time after time Müller simply couldn't find a way to pass the big, brutish Nissan. That was until, on the final lap, the Aston squeezed down the inside into Farm. The two cars were side by side but Luhr was just able to hold onto the outside of the right hander and thus the inside for the left handed hairpin and though Müller briefly got the Aston badge in front, it was not to be. Zuber looked interested, too, around the outside, but he could find no way through and was forced to back out.

There would not be a better opportunity for a change of lead, and the German crew would take the Tourist Trophy for JR Motorsports and Nissan. In second place after a valiant effort were Tomas Enge and Alex Müller for Young Driver



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IT WAS HOTTER
AND HOTTER AT
THE HEAD OF THE
FIELD



Bernoldi and Hughes performed solidly in the first race but Sumo were outpaced by JRM.



Aston Martin. Commentator David Croft pointed to their battle as a possible example for their less fortunate team mates and there is certainly a case to say that the two teams suffered both extremes of racing tactics in just an hour of track time. The battle for the lead was tremendous and cleanly fought, pointing to how GT1 could be if the accidents could be cut down just a little.

“I think I’m older, by five years,” panted Luhr after the finish. “Can you see the wrinkles? The boys in the pits, they did just an amazing job.”

“The race was too long, they should’ve shortened it!” joked Krumm. “It was horrible for me to watch, I don’t want to see it again.”

Third place, after a fairly

quiet race, fell to the Exim Bank China team, Mike Hezemans and Andy Zuber mirroring their performance from the previous day with a solid drive.

“I was hoping the guys in front of me might crash a little bit,” sighed Zuber after the race. “I tried everything, but our top speed is not good enough.”

Fourth, despite briefly holding third, were Hexis drivers Clivio Piccione and Stef Dusseldorp with fifth place (and welcome points) falling to Marc Basseng and Markus Winkelhock after their Sachsenring disappointment. Bas Leinders and Marc Hennerici rounded out the top six for VDS Ford.

The next round at Navarra, where Lamborghini dominated in 2010, on July 3rd.

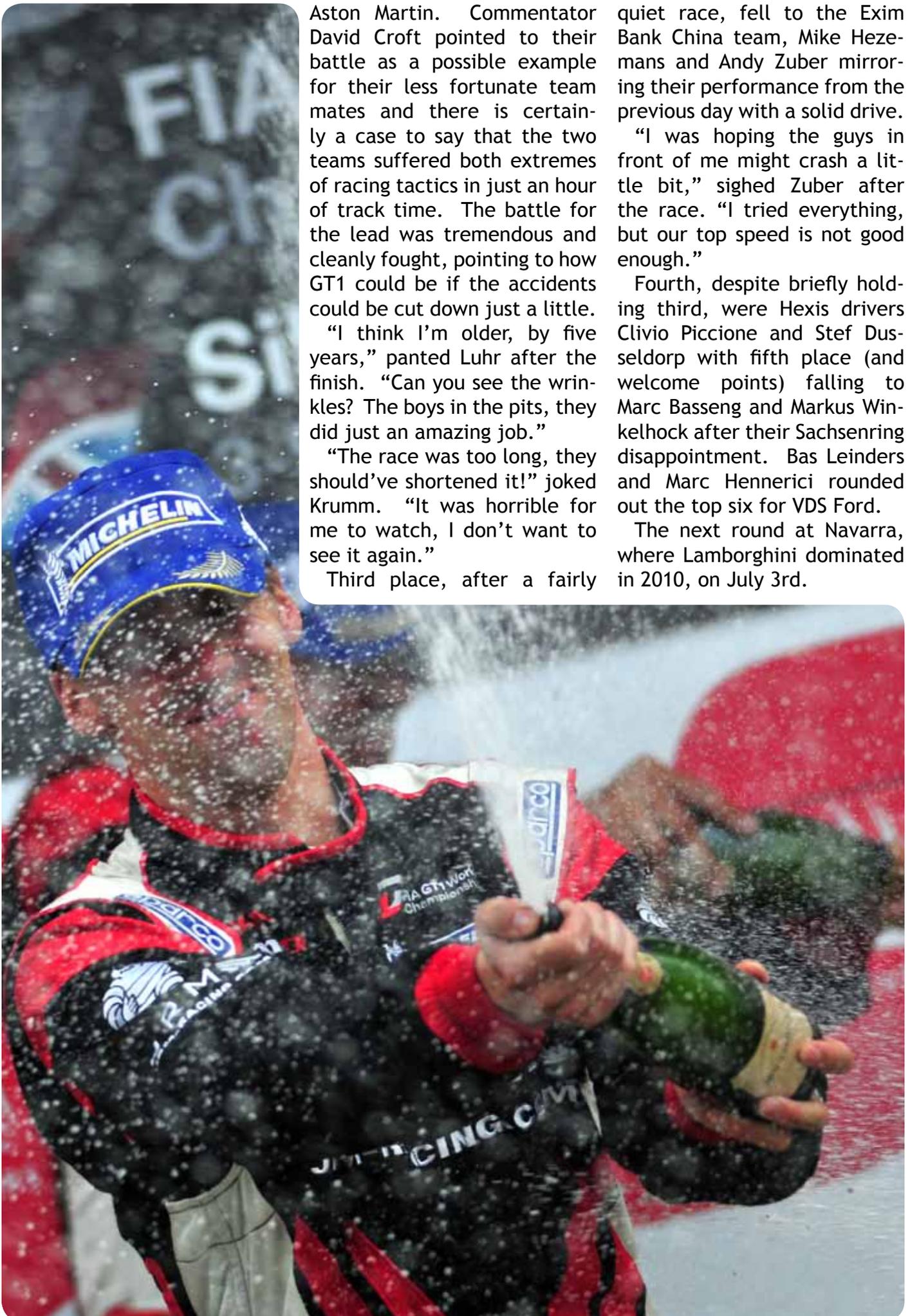


Photo: Jake Yorath

CHAMPIONSHIP RACE

WINNERS

LUCAS LUHR (GER)
MICHAEL KRUMM (GER)
JR MOTORSPORTS NISSAN GT-R



THIRD

ALEX MULLER (DEU)
TOMAS ENGE (CZE)
YOUNG DRIVER ASTON MARTIN DBR9



THIRD

MIKE HEZEMANS (NED)
ANDREAS ZUBER (GER)
EXIM BANK CHINA CHEVROLET CORVETTE Z06



QUALIFYING RACE WINNERS

ALEX MULLER (DEU)
TOMAS ENGE (CZE)
YOUNG DRIVER ASTON MARTIN DBR9

DRIVERS' STANDINGS

1st:

Krumm/ Luhr 70

2nd:

Basseng/ Winkelhock 67

3rd:

Piccini/ Hohenadel 61

TEAMS' STANDINGS

1st:

Hexis AMR 69

2nd:

All-Inkl.com 50

3rd:

Young Driver AMR 47

NEXT ROUND

Spain

Navarra, July 3



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www.andyblackmoredesign.com



Photo: Dan Bathie



AVON TYRES BRITISH GT CHAMPIONSHIP TRACKSPEED WIN

Brands Hatch, United Kingdom, Round 4 June 19th By *Dan Bathie*

The fourth round of the GT Championship at Brands Hatch produced some exciting racing, culminating in a well deserved win for the Trackspeed Porsche of Tim Bridgeman and Gregor Fisken, having survived

a late challenge from Matt Griffin in the MTech Ferrari.

The weather was to play a significant role in the action with the grid forming on a damp circuit following two downpours around lunchtime. Slicks, however, were the tyres of choice.

The race ended before it had begun for the Vantage racing Aston Martin of Black and Bonner who took a detour into the gravel at Clearways as the lights turned to green. Cameron held his lead from pole as far as Hailwood Hill but was to be passed at Gra-



Lyons struggled to get heat into his tyres





ham Hill Bend by Fisker. Cameron then regained his position by the start of the second lap. More mayhem followed as a result of the wet conditions, with spins for Dhillon's Mtech Ferrari and Howard's Beachdean Aston. These both recovered, unlike Iain Dockerill in his Chad Ferrari Scuderia and Mike Guasch who collided with the barrier at Druids.

Cameron had now settled into the lead, followed by Fisker, in turn followed by David Ashburn in the second Porsche. By lap 12 however the lead of the front runners had been eroded and the Scuderia Vittoria 458 of Charles Bateman had caught Ashburn and a further two laps saw him make his way up to second. The lead of over 6 seconds Cameron had created was now also being eaten away by the ever charging Bateman. A downpour shortly afterwards helped Bateman on

his way and he took over the lead on lap 25. A safety car period was to follow due to an off for the Team RPM Ford GT of Peter Bamforde, extended further due to a tour into the Clearways gravel for Andrew Howard.

Lap 31 saw the runners begin their stops and it wasn't until lap 40 that an order seemed to become established with Lyons leading, followed by Bridgeman. Lyons however struggled to get heat into the new slicks as rain returned and Bridgeman closed him down ready to seize the advantage at Paddock. Lyons was eventually pushed down to fifth by the end. Griffin now second in the Mtech Ferrari was closing on Bridgeman as the race neared its conclusion, however trouble getting past the remaining United Autosports Audi R8 meant Griffin ran out of laps to challenge for the victory. Third

place went to Jim and Glynn Geddie in their 458. Glynn enjoying a great battle with Allan Simonsen in the second half of the race, the Scotsman eventually winning the scrap.

In GT4 Marcus Clutton and Peter Belshaw took another victory. However as they started the final lap it looked like the Ginetta G50 of Dan Denis and David would be heading to a certain GT4 victory after a strong run by both drivers. But Marcus Clutton in the ABG X-Bow was rapid in the closing stages and a 15 second deficit became just two by the start of the final lap. It still seemed unlikely that there would be enough time to attempt a lead change, but McDonald succumbed to the intense pressure and slid off at Clearways within sight of the flag to hand victory to the KTM.

The next round sees the series visit Spa on July 10th.





VODKA 0 AUSTRALIAN GT CHAMPIONSHIP CRICK AND WALL SHARE SPOILS

Eastern Creek, Australia, Round 3, May 28-29th By Sam Tickell

The Vodka 0 Australian GT Championship round three was held at the Eastern Creek circuit in Sydney and it proved to be a controversial, but entertaining affair.

Defending Champ, David Wall was back for a one off appearance in a Michelin backed Porsche Cup S and Peter Hackett's chrome Mercedes SLS GT3 made its debut. Like Mark Eddy's Audi R8 LMS, the Mercedes is the only example to make it to the southern hemisphere. The controversy was off track and was based around parity. Making sure the field could be competitive with the new Mercedes and getting to grips with benchmark times after resurfacing work changed the track grip.

Dane Allan Simonsen drove a variety of cars before and throughout the weekend to determine their actual pace. As a result the Mercedes was given

an extra weight and the benchmark lap time - which is not to be broken was set. The problem was the pre-race notes stated the old time - the new time being faster.

This was to have a massive effect on race 1 - which almost didn't happen.

Three drivers went too fast in qualifying with Kevin Weeks scoring his first pole, followed by Greg Crick (Jeep Dodge Viper GT3) and David Wall.

Those three broke the old benchmark time, something with five nameless drivers protested and threatened to pull out of the race.

After much too-ing and throwing, the race was started - with the fastest three starting at the back and 30 minutes late. It didn't seem to matter though. The race was 1 hour and the fastest people were still fast. Tony Quinn (VIP Mosler MT900) and Klark Quinn (Aston Martin

DBRS9) along with Eddy and Hackett were dicing closely with the fastest trio through the race but Klark was stopped with mechanical issues. The race proceeded through past dusk and it soon emerged that it was a two horse race with Crick and Wall battling for the lead. Crick would eventually take race 1 from Wall.

In another post-script, Hackett's Mercedes was disqualified for being underweight, promoting Eddy to third.

Peter Boylan won the Challenge class in a Porsche 997 Cup Car.

Race 2 took place the next day and the Championship drivers, teams and management had worked out the differences from race 1. Race 2 started in damp conditions. It was again Wall and Crick who battled for the lead never more than a second or two apart for the first quarter of the race.

Crick though suffered a delamination of the front splitter, which saw his race destroyed, and he crawled home in seventh. Wall won the second race from Peter Hackett and Damien Flack. Flack driving a Challenge class Porsche 997 Cup Car ran the fastest laps in the rain, showing up far more expensive cars in the Championship class. "It was fantastic to get a

race win with this car and with Jeep," Crick said after the race weekend "Jeep are really enthusiastic to build their brand and a great supporter to have on board.

"The car was the nicest race car I have driven for a long time and I really have to thank my team."

In a post script to the weekend the Championship was sold

to Tony Quinn and rule changes were announced for 2012. The Championship will more closely mirror the GT3 European Championship with pro drivers and newer cars being encouraged. Weeks pole sitting car was also put up for sale after the event with Weeks looking to purchase something a little newer.

VDEV

IMSA VICTORIOUS IN SPAIN

Aragon, Spain, Round 3, May 28-29th By *Sam Tickell*

The VdeV Championship visited Aragon for the third round of the GT/Touring Endurance Challenge and the Proto Endurance Challenge. Each category ran six-hour races and the GT race was a very one-sided affair. Raymond Narac and Anthony Pons won by two laps in the IMSA Performance Matmut Porsche. The race for second however was more exciting with Xavier Pompidou making up a 90 second gap to

Jean-Bernard Bouvet's Ferrari, snatching second in the final minutes of the race. The race for victory could have been more of interesting affair should Anthony Beltoise not been disqualified for ignoring a black flag. The Frenchman driving an 1997 Porsche 993 Bi-Turbo qualified on the front row but gained an advantage in the race by running off the track. Radio issues ensured he did not know he was penalised until it was

too late.

If the GT race was too one sided the Prototype race gave no pleasure to the teams that weren't Palymr Norma - who won by three laps. David Zollinger led from the front and was a lap ahead by the time he handed the car to teammate - Phillipe Mondelot. The Norma of LD Autosport finished second with Pegasus Racing's Ligier completing the podium.

GRAND AM

ACTION EXPRESS DEFEAT GANASSI

Virginia International Raceway, USA, May 13-14 By *Sam Tickell*

This year in Grand Am has been a tail of two halves. The Ganassi squad who took out the first three races dominated the first quarter of the season.

The defending Champs seemed unstoppable until the Bosch Engineering 250. It was at VIR that Action Express Racing

halted their winning run. In the two rounds since, the Suntrust team have taken victory, although Ganassi still looks good for the title.

In the GT ranks, the teams there were having a similar issue with the Turner BMW M3. They had won a couple of races in a row but VIR was to be their

down fall too as Autohaus Motorsports won in their Camaro. Stevenson and Brumos took out Lime Rock and Watkins Glen respectively. The three teams (excluding Stevenson) are just a handful of points apart after six rounds with Autohaus holding a slender advantage.



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GT4 EUROPEAN CUP HONOURS SHARED AT SILVERSTONE

Silverstone, Great Britain, Rounds 4,5 and 6, June 4-5th By *Alex Roache*

An impressive entry for the first round of the 2011 GT4 European Cup at Zandvoort was followed up at Silverstone by a similarly strong field, including a one-off appearance by British squad RJN Motorsport's Nissan 370Z with Alex Buncombe and couch-to-cockpit GT Academy star Jordan Tresson behind the wheel. Off the back of an impressive podium in the recent Blancpain Endurance Series race at Navarra, the squad was hoping to upstage

championship leader Stefano D'Aste in his Scuderia Giudici Lotus Evora - and they certainly set about it the right way in qualifying, Buncombe sticking the 370Z on the front row for race one alongside Ricardo van der Ende in the Ekris Motorsport BMW M3. Duncan Huisman made it a double pole for Ekris with the fastest time in qualifying two, pipping D'Aste by less than a tenth of a second. Tresson would start third. Race one saw the top three on the grid in a different class

from the rest. Van der Ende (BMW), Buncombe (Nissan) and D'Aste (Lotus) - in that order to begin with - broke away in a titanic tussle for the lead which saw positions swapped every lap in Silverstone's Arena section. Were it not for a collision on the opening lap, James Appleby in the Generation AMR Aston Martin would probably have made it a four-way scrap - his pace saw him claw his way from the back to seventh. Eventually Buncombe passed



Photo: Alex Roache

Nissan took victory in a close race one.

van der Ende for the lead and took a superb first win for the 370Z, but D'Aste - with 50kg success ballast from Zandvoort - could only settle for third. Duncan Huisman drove faultlessly in race two with a lights-to-flag victory for Ekris, but he was pressured all the way by D'Aste and took the chequered flag less than a second ahead of the Lotus. Tresson ensured another few thousand sales of Gran Turismo 5 with a solid drive to the final podium spot in the Nissan, and Stew-

art Hall impressed in the Lotus UK Evora with some excellent overtakes and fastest lap.

Race three, the 50-minute enduro with a driver change, was shaping up to be a blinder between polesitters Huisman / van der Ende and Stefano D'Aste (who was doing the full race), but a disastrous pitstop saw the Lotus fall down the field and allow Ekris Motorsport an easy victory. D'Aste nevertheless mounted a spirited comeback, passing both the Generation AMR and the Rhe-

sus Racing Astons - who were busy battling each other - before catching and dispatching (with satisfaction, no doubt) the works-backed Evora of Ollie Jackson and Stewart Hall.

A podium for the Rhesus Racing Aston ensured Jan Joris Verheul remained third in the drivers' standings, but D'Aste and Scuderia Giudici continue to lead the drivers' and teams' championships respectively, with van de Ende and Ekris Motorsport second. Next stop: the Ardennes, and Spa.

12 HOURS OF HUNGARORING VDS HUNGARY FOR VICTORY

Hungaroring, Hungary, May 21 -22nd By *Sam Tickell*

VDS Racing Adventures took a convincing victory in an undersubscribed 12 Hours of Hungaroring. The Belgian team of van der Straten, Schroyen and Bailly in their Ford Mustang GT3 beat fellow

Belgian outfit Speedlover in their Porsche 997. Third place went to Monlau Competicion in an Seat Leon Supercopa. Promoters, CREVENTIC also announced that they will assist in promoting the Bathurst 12

Hour race from 2012, offering a travel package. They hope that this venture will yield better results than Hungary with the VDS Racing Adventures and Red Camel Racing committed to the event.

VLN HISTORIC HYBRID WIN

Nurburgring, Germany, Round 4, May 28th By *VLN*

At the fourth round of the VLN Langstreckenmeisterschaft Nürburgring, Porsche celebrated a victory which will go down in the history of motor sports. Marco Holzer (Lochau/ Germany), Patrick Long (USA) and Richard Lietz (Austria) took the chequered flag in their Porsche 911 GT3 R Hybrid entered by the Porsche Team Manthey in the lead after a race time of 4:03:46.969 hours and scored the first win for a Hybrid race car at the

Nordschleife. This was furthermore the first victory of a Porsche race car in the current season. With BMW, Mercedes-Benz and Ferrari, three different manufacturers had been on top of the podium at the three previous races in the 'Green Hell'. With a gap of only 7.063 seconds behind the winning trio, the Porsche 911 GT3 RSR driven by Roman Dumas, Lucas Luhr (both from Switzerland) and Marc Lieb (Ludwigsburg/ German)

came in second. This second Manthey Porsche finished with a razor thin advance of 0.635 seconds ahead of Marc Basseng (Leutenbach/ Germany), Marcel Fässler und Mike Rockenfeller (both fro Switzerland) in the Audi R8 LMS of the team Phoenix-Racing. Three further GT3 sports cars from the Ingolstadt plant, amongst others with the two DTM stars Mattias Ekström (Sweden) and Timo Scheider (Austria), finished into positions four to six

VLN FIFTH ROUND GOES TO PHOENIX

Nurburgring, Germany, Round 5, June 11th By *VLN*

The fifth round of the VLN Langstreckenmeisterschaft Nürburgring will go down in history. The victories gained in the race of the first half of the season are split up amongst teams driving race cars from five different car manufacturers. In the 35 years of history of this most popular endurance racing championship in Europe there had never been such a great diversity in the top teams and the winners as this year. The 51st ADAC Reinoldus-

Langstreckenrennen was won by Mattias Ekström (Sweden), Timo Scheider (Austria) and Frank Stippler (Bad Münstereifel/ Germany) in their Audi R8 LMS entered by Phoenix-Racing. At the first four races of the season, models of the makes BMW, Mercedes-Benz, Ferrari and Porsche had been on top of the podium. The winners of the fifth round took the chequered flag with an advance of 1:31.954 minutes ahead of second placed

Sabine Schmitz and Klaus Abbelen (both from Barweiler/ Germany) in a Porsche 911 GT3 R. The top three were completed by the team of Wolfgang Kohler (Aldingen/ Germany), Frank Kräling (Winterberg/ Germany) and Christian Menzel (Kelberg/ Germany) in the Porsche 911 GT3 Cup entered by Manthey-Racing. The race would end early due to rain and hail at Flugplatz, the race was stopped with twelve minutes left on the clock.



Photo: Jurek Biegus

BRITCAR

STRATA 21 MOSLER TAKES THRUXTON WIN

Thruxton Great Britain, Round 4, June 12th By Jurek Biegus

Wet and miserable conditions greeted the competitors at round 4 of the Britcar MSA British Endurance Racing Championship at Thruxton. Saturdays qualifying session had been dry and for the fourth time in succession the Azteca Mosler of Javier Morcillo and Manuel Cintrano took pole position of what was the smallest entry list so far this year. In torrential rain and in order to get acquainted with the conditions the field completed 2 laps behind the safety car but in the first corner the pole sitting Azteca Mosler with Cintrano behind the wheel managed to spin off the track. With slight damage to the front of the car Cintrano rejoined the track over 12 seconds adrift at the back of

the field. Also at the back of the field was the Strata Racing Mosler of Calum Lockie and Paul White after problems on Saturday meant they failed to post a qualifying time but at the end of the first racing lap they had passed over half of the field and were up to tenth place. Less fortunate was the MacG Racing Ultima GTR which failed to even complete a lap before being forced to stop with electrical problems. With more cars leaving the track a second safety car period ensued which lasted until lap 7 which saw the Aquila CR1 leading with the Eclipse Ferrari in 2nd place and the Ferrari of Bailey and Schulz in third. By lap 9 Calum Lockie had remarkably worked his way to the front and was now

leading. As the rain fell and track conditions continued to deteriorate and it seemed only Calum Lockie was enjoying the conditions as he had stretched his lead to 18 seconds until the safety car came out for another stint. At lap 36 and only 1 hour and 6 minutes into the 2 hour race it was decided to call a halt much to the relief of every driver out on circuit at the time. Calum Lockie took the win with co-driver Paul White like many other second drivers, not getting an opportunity in the car. Second place overall and first place in class 3 went to the Ferrari of Bailey and Schulz with third place going to the Marcos Mantis of O'Neil and Harrison.



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