



July 2011

N24

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NÜRBURGRING

SPA 24 HOURS FT. JOE OSBORNE +
GROUP C AND MORE AT THE SILVERSTONE CLASSIC +
REPORTS ROUND UP +

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Photo: Dan Bathie

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EVENTS

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Events

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SILVERSTONE CLASSIC

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Britain's largest classic event is captured on camera by *Jake Yorath and Dan Bathie*



Photo: Jake Yorath

In
FOCUS

Silverstone Classic, Silverstone
Dan Bathie used a Nikon D300s and 70-300 F4-5.6
Sigma. Shutter speed 1/100th at F9.





In
FOCUS

Silverstone Classic, Silverstone
Dan Bathie used a Nikon D300s and 70-300 F4-5.6 Sigma. Shutter speed 1/3200th at F5.6.





In
FOCUS

Silverstone Classic, Silverstone
Guillaume Tassart used a Nikon D3 and 400 F2.8
Nikkor. Shutter speed 1/400th at F3.2.





In
FOCUS

Spa 24 Hours, Spa Francorchamps
Jake Yorath used a Nikon D200 and 300 F4 Nikkor.
Shutter speed 1/1250th at F4.





In
FOCUS

Spa 24 Hours, Spa Francorchamps
Dan Bathie used a Nikon D300s and 80-200 F2.8
Nikkor. Shutter speed 1/1000th at F2.8.







Spa 24 Hours, Spa Francorchamps
Jake Yorath used a Nikon D200 and 10-20 F4-5.6 Sigma. Shutter speed 1/10th at F7.





In
FOCUS

Spa 24 Hours, Spa Francorchamps
Dan Bathie used a Nikon D300s and 10-20 F4-5.6
Sigma. Shutter speed 1/5th at F5.6







Spa 24 Hours, Spa Francorchamps
Jake Yorath used a Nikon D200 and 80-200 F2.8
Nikkor. Shutter speed 1/8th at F22.





In
FOCUS

Spa 24 Hours, Spa Francorchamps
Jake Yorath used a Nikon D200 and 80-200 F2.8
Nikkor. Shutter speed 1/10th at F8.





In
FOCUS

Spa 24 Hours, Spa Francorchamps
Marcel Thomassen used a Canon 40D and 80-200
F2.8 Canon. Shutter speed 10 seconds at F13.







CLASSICAL MU

The Silverstone Classic featured some of the finest sports racing cars of



Photo: Jake Yorath

USIC

all time. By Jake Yorath



The Silverstone Classic is fast becoming Britain's premier historic racing event, and again provided big grids, interesting machinery and great racing over three days. Stars of the show included three Ferrari 512s, (two S and one superb M), the Group C field and the ubiquitous Jaguar E Type.

In fact, with the E Type celebrating its 50th birthday, there was cause for all types of festivity surrounding the

classic British GT car. For me, though, the quality of all the sixties GT racing was superb, and rarely do you see so many classic Ferraris in one place as were assembled here, as well as a Daytona Cobra and countless AC Cobras too. As always Lola were well represented and the Huntingdon marque's T70 shone at the head of the World Sportscar Masters field.

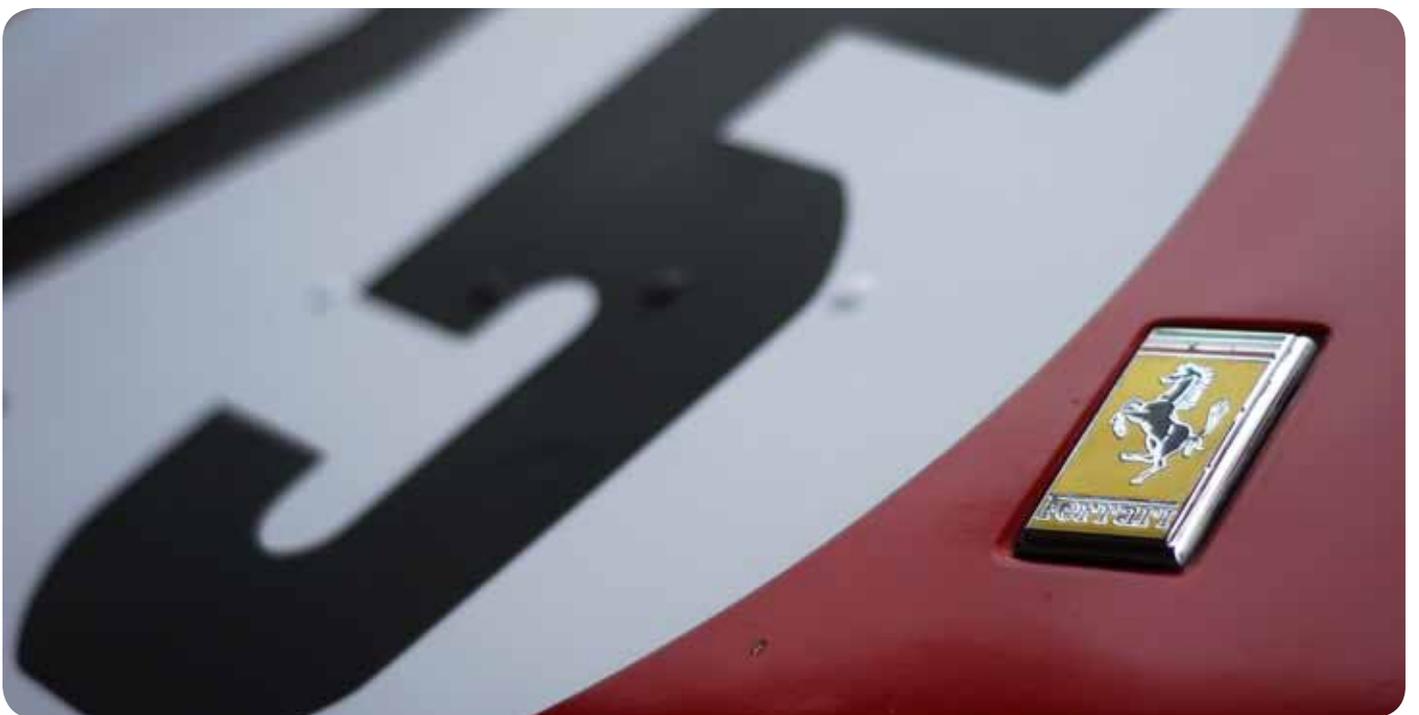
Away from the track, classic car displays covered every inch of the Silverstone infield, and

the fairground was popular as usual; though whether there was a little too much of the tacky surrounding the event is a point mooted amongst many colleagues. One went as far as to say he was a little drained. Certainly, an over saturation of races that tended to err on the short side often left the appetite whetted but not satisfied.

Still, not an event that disappointed me, just one that tired my aching bones!







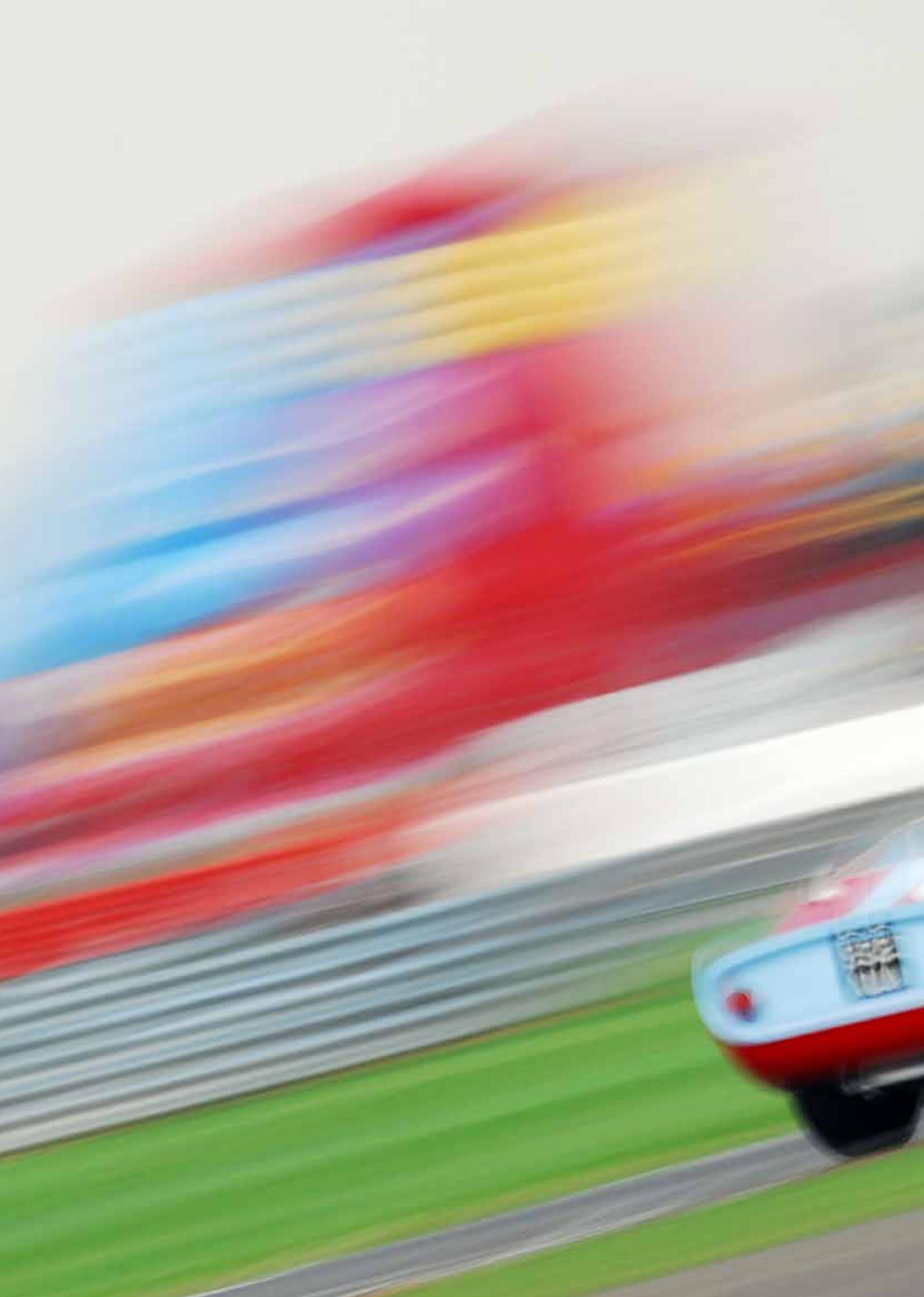


Photo: Jake Yorath

Sixties GT cars provide as much drama as their more brash modern cousins.





UNITED FRONT

United Autosports' man *Joe Osborne* talks about Spa from his view

I'm not a morning person, unless the early start involves me racing. So when the alarm went off at 4am the Thursday before this year's Spa 24 Hours, I wondered why I didn't fancy jumping out of bed. The reason? I wasn't racing. Instead I was helping out my FIA GT3 team United Autosports with their three car assault on the 63rd running of the infamous Spa 24hr. I wasn't drafted in for my amazing mechanical skill, nor my engineering prowess. As team boss Richard Dean put it, I 'like talking' so became head of guest liaison (self appointed title).

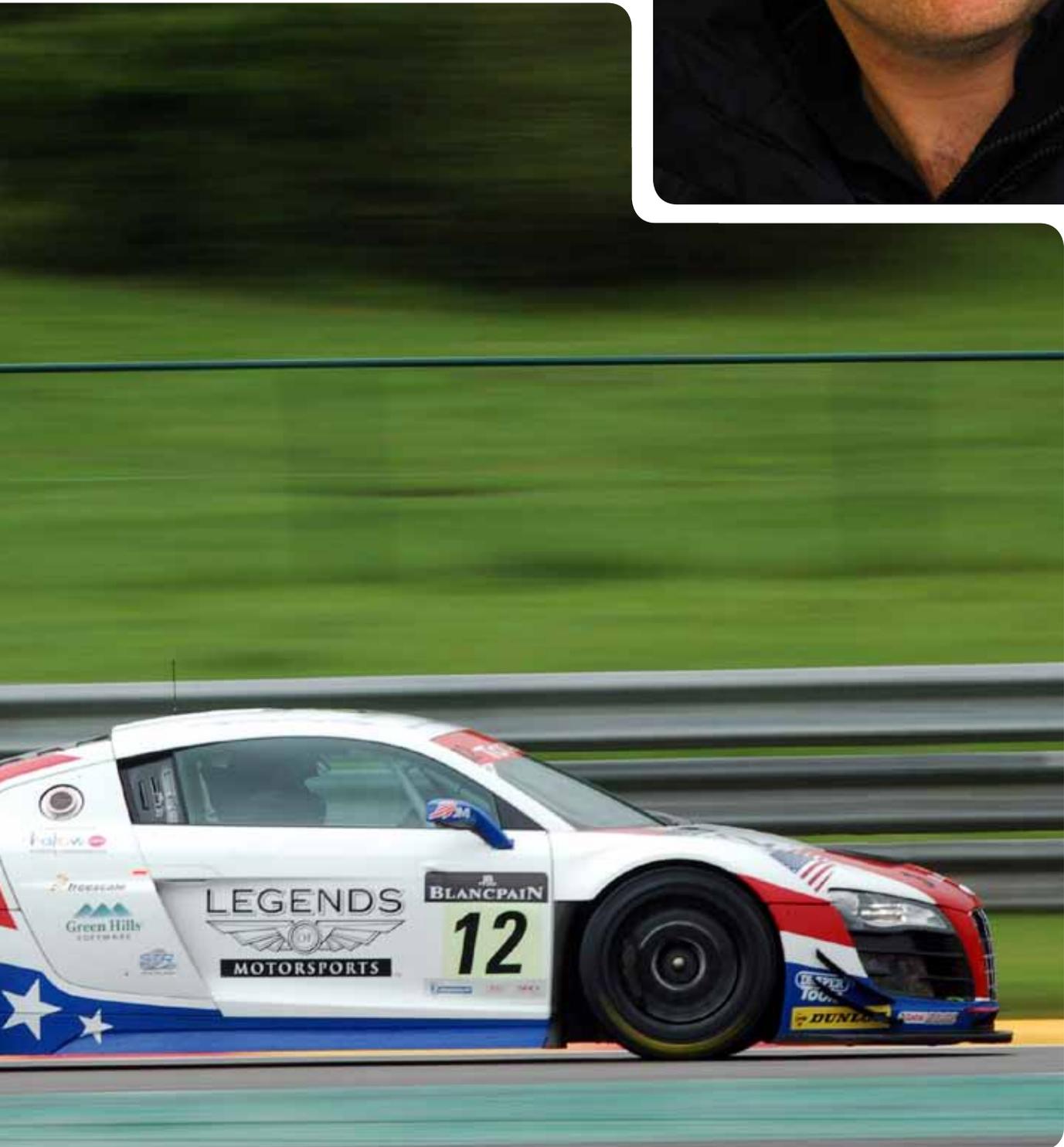
It seemed the team were so against me driving, they flew me from Heathrow to Brussels. Having hooked up with the lucky West London Audi mechanics selected to help the team out for the weekend, I was chauffeured to the circuit while being quizzed about what the weekend had in store for them. They seemed to go quiet when I said, "Don't expect to see your hotel bed from Saturday morning to Sunday night."

Once we arrived at the circuit, we made our way to the garages to meet up with the rest of the 40+ staff running the Audi R8 LMS for the long

weekend away. One thing that constantly amazes me is how people react when they can get up close and personal to any racing car; the West London Audi guys' jaws dropping lower than the front splitter that so impressed them. It's easy to forget this feeling when you are fortunate enough to see these machines regularly. It's why the annual parade into the centre of Spa is such a hit before the 24hour race. In truth if cars could give autographs I'm sure fans wouldn't care about the drivers ruining their posters with a scribble. I think the sport would do well if we could get more fans in the garages next to these inspirational cars. They're much more engaging than sterile autograph sessions.

Anyway, back to the racing. In FIA GT3 we have really struggled to achieve the success that the team was created to achieve and it's down to one element: rubber. I know it's not an element that features in the periodic table but in racing it is the only thing that connects the car to the track and even my limited knowledge of preparing a car realises this is vital. The tyre in question is the only tyre I have ever used that goes slower when it





Photos: Jake Yorath



is brand new, which is a novel idea for qualifying, but has meant a personal best position of 12th: somewhat frustrating. However, the blinding light at the end of the tunnel is the construction of the tyre being such that it could run for four hours without much performance drop off, which is perfect for endurance racing. Not that I care (all my races are a single hour) but it gave the team hope that they could try and better their mighty third position from last year's Spa 24hr.

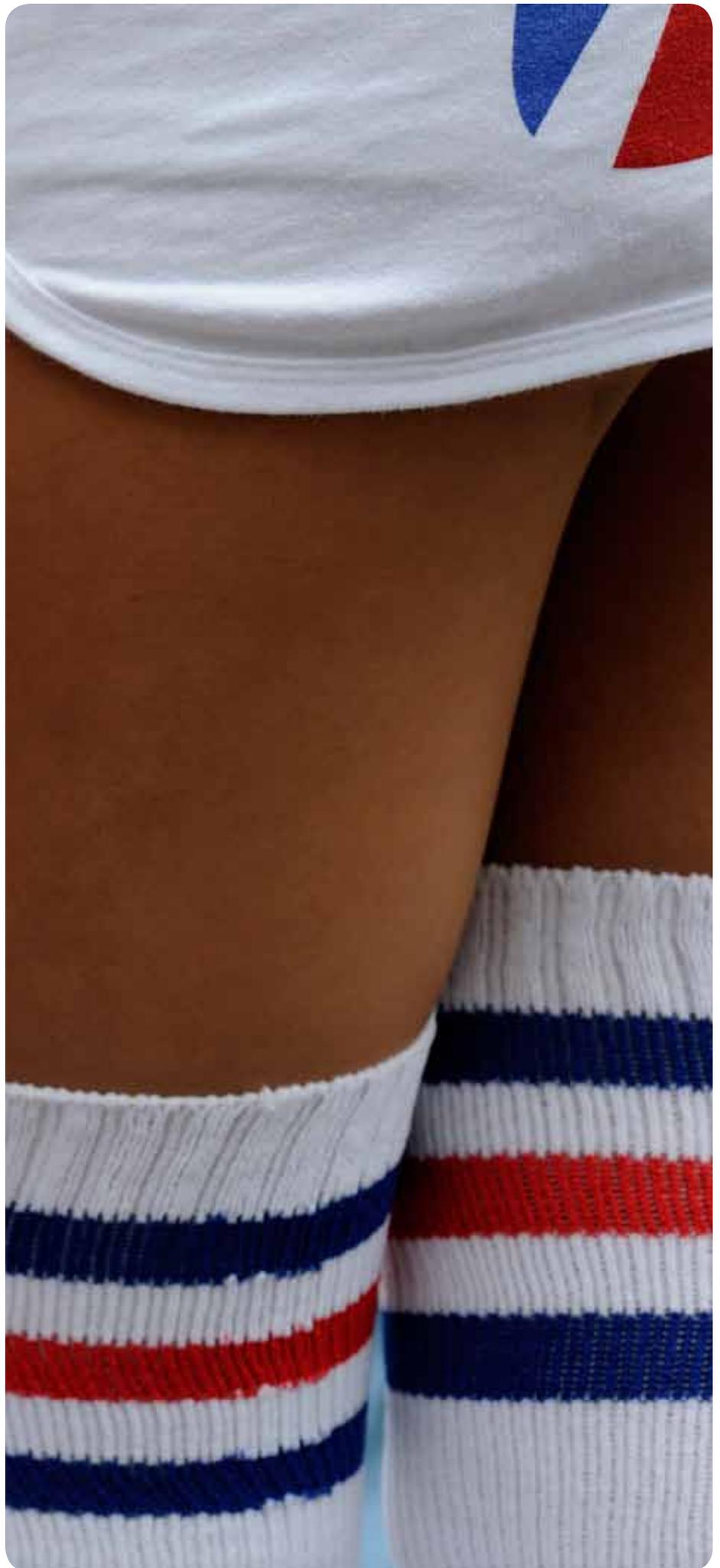
Thursday saw the cars qualify in conditions that were more suited to the aquatic sort than the antiquated F1 driver line up that United Autosports had impressively lined up. Mark Blundell and Eddie Cheever returned from last year's podium place they were supplemented with Johnny Herbert, Stefan Johansson and Indy legend Ariel Luyendyk. The last seven seats were taken up by United 24hr regulars: Alain Li, Richard Meins and Henri Ricard joined FIA GT3 reprobates Matt Bell, Mark Patterson and United Autosports' co-owners Zak Brown and Richard Dean.

During qualifying I went for a walk. Like many a motor-sport spectator, all I wanted to see was crashes so I headed to Eau Rouge. Wading through the 'red water' was worth the effort and though I didn't witness any shunts seeing Maxime Martin's raw speed/balls in the GT3 BMW Z4 was amazing. Even though I attend over 20 races a year, I rarely get time to just watch by myself without any distractions and it's something I need to start doing. With the rain now stopped it came apparent that it would all boil down to Quali 3 to sort

out the 62 cars for the start of Saturday's race. Knowing our tyre related issues we had been given a special qualifying compound to help. In fact it, compounded our problem. The 23 car ended up 28th, the 11 34th and the 12 car way down in 53rd. We always knew our race pace had to be good but in truth I can't think of a superlative that we needed the race performance to be.

After Thursday's qualifying disappointment the team headed back to the circuit Friday to start 'refreshing' the cars. Unfortunately for the mechanics, refreshing is more than some slap of aftershave in a night club toilet. It involves; Engine out, gearbox off, diff out, all 16 wishbones off, floor off. A good nose around the car, clean and put back together hoping not to have more bolts than when they started. If the guys have any doubts over any of the parts, a new one will take its place. This may seem obvious but if you are having to foot the £15,000 price tag for each gearbox you might be tempted to give it a whirl for the race, I would.

Race day. As chief guest liaison engineer I was lumbered with the task of making sure the three Czech grid girls (with a combined height of the rise of Eau Rouge) were ready to go to the grid. We fought our way through the grid, which must have had well over a thousand people on it and I stood with Richard Dean starting the 23 car in 28th place. I am always keen to learn from seasoned and experienced professionals (the term 'veteran' would earn me a P45) about how they prepare for big races, so when my chance comes I am ready







to grab it by the scuff of the neck. I think laughter seems to be the common denominator; it might be worth trying to find some funnier journos and snappers for the future to befriend and talk to on the grid. After all the pre-race shenanigans, we left to go and watch the start from the inside of Turn 1. Seeing 62 cars fire out of La Source is awesome, almost as much as the fact that they all made it round the first lap! Then the attrition started. Happy hour at the bar coincided with the big 'do nots' in racing. Ludovic-Sougnéz's assault on Prospeed Porsche team mate (and race leader) Marc Goosens was a personal highlight but number one by some distance was the #25 Reiter Lamborghini managing to roll coming into the pit lane, all by himself! Most impressive. Unfortunately for United Autosports, the happy hour hangover continued for the 11 car into the fifth hour. After a good start from young Matt Bell, gentleman pilot (again not the term I would use but fearful of losing my drive) Mark Patterson put in what turned out to be the best lap time for the 11 car: a 2:26, just four seconds off the DTM drivers in the 'works' Audi R8s.

Unfortunately this was in part due to the car expiring on Eddie Cheever, who was adamant it would not restart. He alighted from his steed and, by walking more than ten me-

tres from it, forced it out of the race. It was gutting for the team who had spent so much time and effort getting this car ready for it not to even make 25% distance. The frustration was plain to see when Cheever got back to the garage. Another good lesson learnt: don't speak to team bosses within twenty minutes of making a mistake because there will be no positives to take from the discussion...

From a team perspective the rest of the race was pretty uneventful, until with just thirty minutes remaining, Luyendyk's car was seen smoking. Data showed very high gearbox temp (£15k well spent) and the car ground to a halt in the pit entrance and was retrieved by the safety team. The crew made a scramble to retrieve it and, even after well over 30 hours since head on pillow time, they sprinted to the stricken car with mental capacity to remember only four of them could touch the car in pit lane. In prompt fashion the car was in the garage and being diagnosed by which time we had been raided by the Belgians scrutineers shouting 'don't touch the car'. They were telling us that if we did, the car would be disqualified, which seemed very forceful considering their inability to put a government together. It turned out that because the car had received outside assistance, it

could not rejoin. Great shame for the whole crew of the 12 car and we were down to one, trusty number 23 with Zak, Deany, Blundell and Johanson at the wheel. It had a few scrapes along the way and was plastered up with trusty Draper tank tape. In the end the 23 finished 13th overall/6th in class and the 12 car was classified 19th/8th respectively.

Although the results are not near to last year's achievement. I think it can be mainly accredited to the competition that the Spa 24 Hours had enticed in 2011. Four cars from the Audi factory team (rebadged as well as a BMW 'M3' in East London with a single exhaust pipe out the back), three cars for the Vitaphone (sorry, Vita4One) mafia crew, two (plus one, poorly disguised) cars from Belgium nationals Marc VDS... The list continues with massively impressive teams and some crack drivers.

All in all, our team as a unit performed like a well oiled chain and is already pumped for its next show. From this point onwards we drop the tyre manufacture that has held us back (and I've refrained from mentioning). We say Bonjour to Michelin and c'est la vie to Spa for now.

All opinions in our columnists' pieces are their own, and not necessarily shared by l'endurance.



Photo: Marcel Thomassen

NURBURGRING 24 HOURS

MAN! THEY DID IT AGAIN

Nurburgring, Germany June 23rd - 26th By Alex Roache

It's appropriate - and, in a certain way, ironic - that the date of the Nürburgring 24 hours should be dictated each year by the date of the holy day of Ascension. For many, this gruelling endurance through the Green Hell is a holy day in itself. It's a

carnival; a feast with racing cars topping the entertainment bill and Dunkel beer and Bratwürste in place of the bread and consecrated wine. Mention Le Mans and the Eifel mountains will resound with the bellow of a quarter of a million Germans scoffing at

the mere possibility of a comparison. For them, endurance racing begins and ends with the Nürburgring 24 hours.

So they probably weren't all that impressed to see a Ferrari F458 Italia GT blow a host of home-grown Mercedes, BMWs, Porsches and Audis





Photo: Marcel Thomassen



into the weeds in qualifying to clinch a convincing pole position. At least Hankook Team Farnbacher would have won one or two brownie points from the crowd for sending its German owner-driver Dominik Farnbacher out to set the pole-winning lap. The squad, whose other drivers included Danish ace Allan Simonsen, Brazilian Jaime Melo and German Marcus Seefried, brilliantly exploited Thursday's changeable conditions, bolt-

ing a set of its sticky Hankook qualifying tyres onto the #2 Ferrari at exactly the right moment to deliver a time of 8.23:764, seven seconds clear of the #22 Black Falcon SLS AMG. Impressive - but still only 0.04s per corner! So confident was Team Farnbacher that its provisional pole would not be beaten during the second night qualifying, they elected to undertake a race tyre evaluation programme rather than trying to better its lap time. It

turned out to be a shrewd decision, although their hearts would have skipped a beat at one point when the #30 Mamerow/ROWE Racing Mercedes emerged out of the darkness to post a lap just 1.9s shy and launch themselves onto the front row.

Team Black Falcon would start third, with the two Schnitzer-run BMW M3 GTs - including last year's winning combination of Jörg Müller, Augusto Farfus, Uwe Alzen and Pedro



Photo: Guillaume Tassart

BMW could not repeat last years success. A penalty cost them.



Lamy - in fourth and fifth. When Saturday afternoon arrived, the Eifel mountains weather system had already played its renowned joker card and large parts of the 14-mile Nordschleife were damp. But not all of it - and what was damp was drying quickly. This was one tough tyre call.

The Farnbacher Ferrari, with its bespoke Hankook rubber, braved the intermediate tyre for the start, while almost every other car at the sharp end went for the safe bet of wets. Those infamous armco barriers would be looking closer than ever on lap one.

At the end of the world's longest formation lap, the red lights turned to green, and the race was go. It's impossible not to catch your breath at the sight of the massive, 200-strong Nürburgring 24 hour grid charging towards the first corner, lights ablaze and a fine mist of spray being kicked up behind the

front-running cars.

And what a feeling it must be to lead that pack. It was an honour and a privilege Allan Simonsen in the Farnbacher 458 was fully intending to experience starting from pole, but the Ferrari on its inters was mugged across the slippery startline. Flanked on either side by Thomas Jäger in the #22 Black Falcon SLS and Christian Mamerow in the #30 car. A pincer movement into turn one saw the two Mercedes squeeze the polesitter out and seize first and second, and the fast-starting #32 Heico Motorsport SLS took advantage of the out-of-position Ferrari to make it a Merc 1-2-3.

Simonsen was on the back foot and under attack from Lucas Luhr in the #11 Manthey-Racing Porsche 911 GT3 R as the field funnelled down the hill towards the Dunlop hairpin. The two were side-by-side around the Ford Kurve, but as they negotiated the circuit's south-

ern-most point it was clear the track was quite a bit drier and the Ferrari suddenly came alive, shrugging off Luhr and hustling the Heico SLS through the Schumacher Esses.

The Ferrari pounced into the RTL Kurve, sailing up the inside in a clean and crucial move - Simonsen was only too aware of the importance of making as many places as possible before the track plunged into the Eifel.

And he was wasting no time in doing so. Into the left-hander where the Grand Prix circuit joins the Nordschleife, the Dane was through past Jäger and off in pursuit of Mamerow. Meantime, the works BMWs had suffered poor getaways from fourth and fifth on the grid and had slipped to 9th and 10th where they were battling with the second Team Phoenix Audi R8 LMS and the Falken Motorsports Porsche 997 GT3 RSR of Peter Dumbreck which



Photo: Guillaume Tassart

Audi R8 V10





Photo: Sören Herweg



“

A DRYING TRACK AT
THE NURBURGRING
NORDSCHLEIFE
INVARIABLY POSES A
NIGHTMARE



had made a superb start from 17th on the grid.

This BMW/Audi/Porsche scrap allowed the front eight runners to break away, and by the end of the opening lap it was Christian Mamerow with a sizeable advantage over the Heico Motorsport Merc - which had repassed Simonsen on the wetter part of the track around Wippermann - followed by the Farnbacher Ferrari, the Black Falcon SLS, Manthey-Racing's 911, the first of the Team Phoenix R8s, Need for Speed Team Schubert's BMW Z4 GT3 and - just in touch - the #16 Team Abt Sportsline R8.

A drying track at the Nürburgring Nordschleife invariably poses a nightmare for the drivers - an incorrect tyre gamble could have you slithering around on the wrong rubber for the best part of 15 minutes. One by one, however,

the teams pitted to switch to slicks, a phase of the race which shook the order around and made it nigh on impossible to follow who was where, and where they would end up once the stints had settled down again.

Somewhat unsurprisingly it was Team Farnbacher - who had been making shrewd tyre calls since the very first practice session - who emerged in the lead, Simonsen still behind the wheel. When the Dane finally handed over to Dominik Farnbacher, the Ferrari F458 had a massive two-minute lead over the two works BMWs, both of which had made significant ground during the tyre changes.

Soon after the four hour mark, however, the complexion of the race was undergoing an intriguing change as fate systematically dealt crippling blows

to the key players.

The Farnbacher Ferrari was still out in front with Jaime Melo at the helm, but an unforeseen challenge for the lead was being mounted from the acclaimed #9 Porsche 911 GT3 Hybrid R. Patrick Long had completed the opening stint for the Manthey squad's 'green' machine - which uses a Williams F1-developed flywheel KERS system to boost power on the straights - and had handed over to Marco Holzer to resume the pursuit of the lead car.

The gap was just half a minute when Melo radioed in with a critical issue - the Ferrari was limping along, a weld having failed on the rear suspension control arm. A 45-minute pit-stop later and the #2 car was back out in 72nd place and with plenty of chasing to do.

This development thrust the GT3 Hybrid R onto centre stage



Photo: Sören Herweg

at the head of the field for a good few laps, but it wasn't to last. Transmission issues forced the team to take the same bitter pill it had to swallow in last year's race when reliability issues denied it a very real shot at victory. Manthey's #9 was in the pits for an age and dropped to 23rd.

All the drama at the front end left Manthey's other 911, the #18 GT3 RSR, in the lead, albeit with Pedro Lamy in the #1 BMW M3 GT hunting it down. The Portuguese star had been plugging away and minding his own business when a backmarker - ironically enough the #217 BMW E46 325i - squeezed him onto the grass and into a spin at the famous banked Karussell. Rather than risk driving over the ridge of the banking while turning round, Lamy

chose to drive back down the circuit for a few metres to re-join the racing line where he deemed it more convenient to do so.

He may have been ten miles out in the wilderness of the Eifel mountains, but the stewards nevertheless had their beady eye on his antics, and punished him with a three-minute stop/go penalty which would drop last year's winners down to 10th.

With its rivals dropping out and tripping over themselves left, right and centre, the #18 Manthey-Racing car - piloted by Luhr, Marc Lieb, Timo Bernhard and Romain Dumas - was permitted an untroubled run through the night, its Michelin tyres working particularly well in the cooler ambient conditions brought about by the

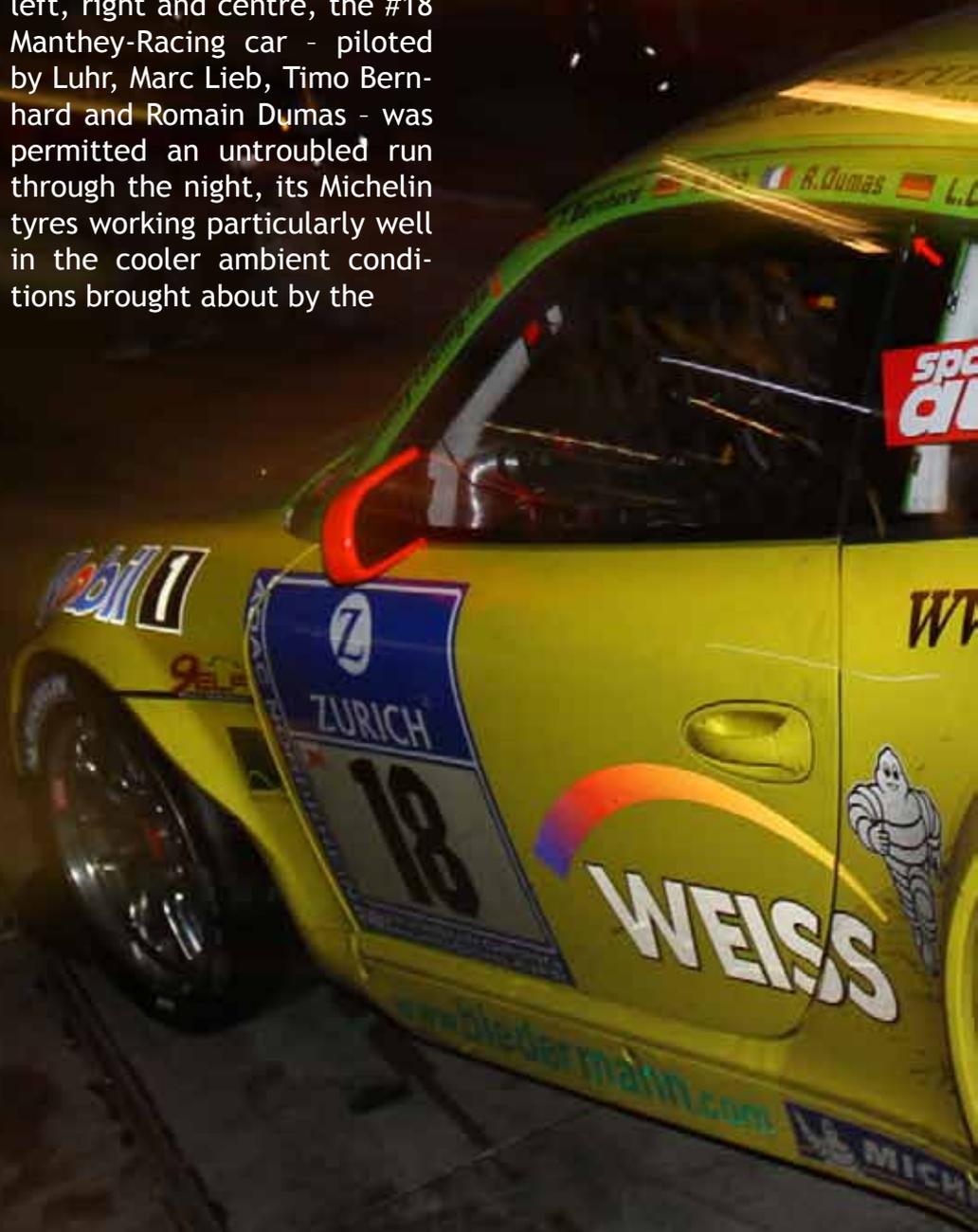




Photo: Sören Herweg

darkness. The team and retired the #11 car to focus its attention on the GT3 RSR, a decision which was vindicated by the minute.

As dawn broke, the bright yellow Porsche had a lead in excess of four minutes over the #32 Heico Motorsport Mercedes of David Lance Arnold, Alex Margaritis, Christopher Brück and Christiaan Frankenhout. The #15 Audi Sport Team Phoenix R8 was third, but being closed down rapidly by the relentless #1 BMW M3 GT on its comeback charge.

Not content with matching Le Mans for atmosphere and racing action, the Nürburgring 24 hours also had in store its fair share of horrendous shunts for various unsuspecting competitors to compete with the efforts of Allan McNish and Mike Rockenfeller at La Sarthe. In the dead of night the #76 Need For Speed Team Schubert BMW Z4 - piloted by FIA GT3 stars Claudia Hürtgen,

Edward Sandström as well as Tommy Milner and Fredrik Larsson - collided with the #24 Mercedes SLS at Pflanzgarten and sent both cars spearing off into the barriers at terrifying speed.

As if that wasn't cruel enough for the Schubert squad, the early hours of Sunday were interrupted by another horrific accident involving its sole remaining #77 car. In a shunt frighteningly similar to that of McNish shunt in the Esses at Le Mans, the BMW clipped a backmarker while lapping it and was sent smashing into - and over - the barriers, where it came to rest upside down in the shrubbery below the catch-fencing (which, at least, had done its job admirably). Nobody was hurt, but the barrier required some extensive surgery to get it fixed back up to the appropriate standard.

Heartbreak for Heico Motorsport saw the team's Mercedes

SLS drop out of third position with less than 45 minutes to go, suffering as it did a broken wheel bearing as it defended its position from the #14 Team Phoenix Audi R8. Seventh place overall was scant consolation.

There were no such hindrances, however, to the #18 Manthey-Racing Porsche's quest for the team's record-equalling fifth victory at the 'Ring - the GT3 RSR motored on through the morning to take the chequered flag at the end of a dramatic and closely-fought 24h hours. The #1 BMW put on a brilliant recovery drive to salvage second place after the kerfuffle at the Karussell, and Audi made it a trio of manufacturers in the top three by bringing home the #14 Team Phoenix car - driven by Marc Basseng, Marcel Fässler and Frank Stippler - in third.





**AS DAWN BROKE,
THE BRIGHT YELLOW
PORSCHE HAD A LEAD
IN EXCESS OF FOUR
MINUTES**



**In
DEPTH**

WIS FOR #WI

Audi finally took their coveted victory for the R8 LMS in a 24 event at

We quite often describe the Spa 24 Hours as having 'a Belgian flavour', but 2011's edition of the annual Benelux enduro was possibly the most Belgian the Ardennes have seen for many years. It is also a commonly held stereotype that people go to Belgium to have their wars: this year, it was (at least in part) civil war that gripped us.

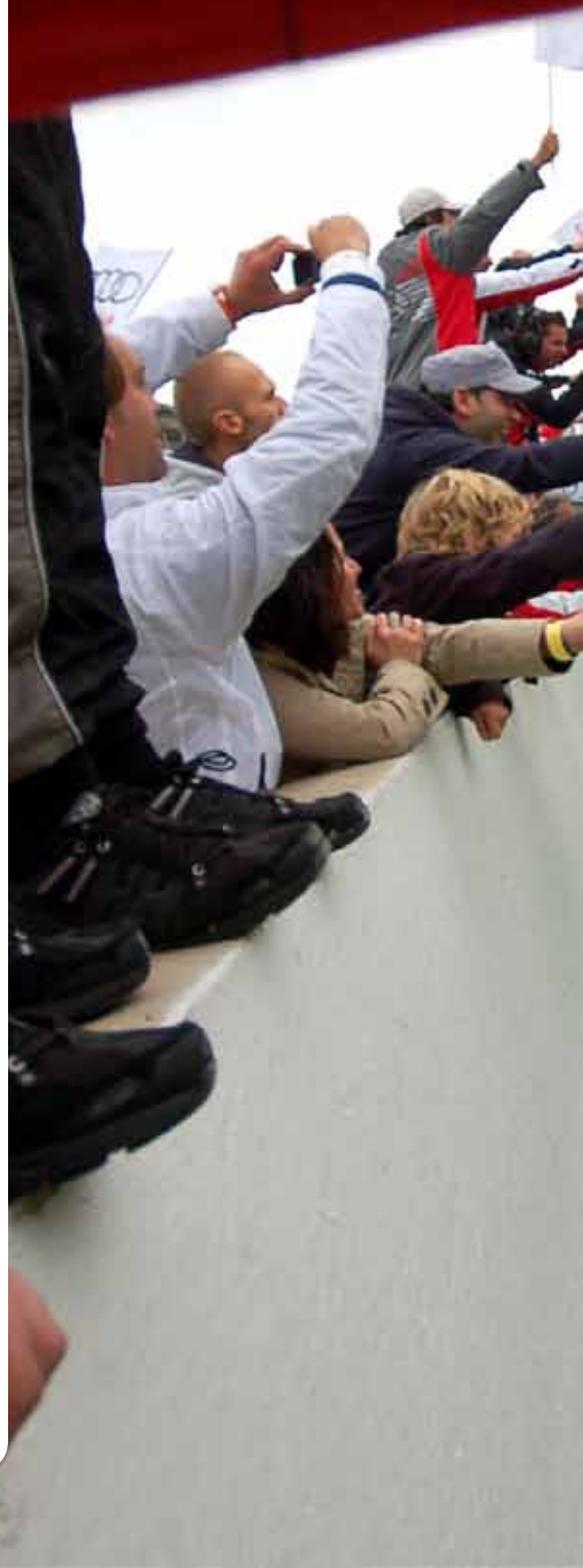
It was a momentous victory for Audi, as their first for the R8 LMS GT3; for WRT, as the biggest victory of their short life; and for Greg Franchi, Mattias Ekstrom and Timo Scheider, as the spoils of a consistent, top drawer run. The race was effectively decided long before the number 33 Audi passed the reams of Audi flag waving mechanics, close friends and hangers on at four o'clock, but in its early hours was one of the best sportscar races of the year.

On paper, the entry was large, but the strength in depth was certainly not what it had been in 2010, or previous years. Audi's two teams (we shall dispense now with the myth that Phoenix and WRT were not works teams) were the stand out favourites, with four strong line ups, two top drawer pit crews and the Audi itself. Porsche's challenge, having looked weaker than its rivals in 2010, was absent in any kind of facto-

ry sense. Top crew Manthey brought one car, the pro-am Haribo car, but with chargers Richard Westbrook and Christian Menzel supported by solid but unspectacular team mates it was unlikely to challenge for the win. The same was true of Autorlando, leading the series into this event thanks to consistency, fuel efficiency and the supremely rapid Paolo Ruberti. With cars having to pit every 65 minutes regardless of fuel, the 997's famous fuel sipping ability was not going to gain it any ground here.

Big news came in the shape of McLaren: three cars by CRS (one badged as Von Ryan) and three top line ups. Car #58 featured McLaren test driver Chris Goodwin, Rob Bell and Tim Mullen, but their Avon tyres were a handicap. All time pole position record holder in FIA GT Andrew Kirkaldy was joined by rapid Portuguese Alvaro Parente and British youngster Oliver Turvey in Michelin shod #59, with similarly rubbered #60 crewed by Roger Wills, Glynn Geddie, Phil Quaife and Adam Christodolou, one of the stronger Pro-Am line ups.

From BMW, last year's near (and arguably deserved) victor, only one works driver came, supporting Schubert Motorsports. The Need For Speed car came with not only Dirk Werner, but rapid GT3 regulars in the shape of Ger-



NNING

Spa. Jake Yorath reports.





Photo: Guillaume Tassart



man lady Claudi Huertgen and Edward Sandstroem. Also in the Z4 were Silverstone GT3 victors Faster Racing, whose talisman Nicky Catsburg was absent (budget) and replaced by gentleman drivers and fellow Dutchman Xavier Maasen.

Most interestingly, though, was the Marc VDS entry, fielded for the first time and joining Faster on the more favoured Michelin tyre (Schubert were on Dunlops, though only because of the tyre shortage). The crew for the Belgian car was not short of speed or experience, with team regulars Bas Leinders, Marc Hennerici and Maxime Martin. Though it was their first race with the car, the team were confident and with good reason: the BMW has certainly showed pace in GT3 this season. VDS also entered their (now ageing) Ford GT, and Markus Paltala (always rapid in the car), Jonathan Hirschi and Antoine Leclerc made a fairly solid line up. Their sister team, Belgian Racing, fielded the awesome new Mustang but, in its current state of development, a finish was the aim.

Ferrari's entry was led by Vita4One, born from the ashes of Vitaphone Racing and taking up where the multiple GT champions left off with victory at Navarra already under their belt in 2011. The three driving squads were mixed. Michael Bartels and Andrea Bertollini were back, joined by Niek Hommerson and Louis Machiels in the Pro-Am category in car 2 to make a line up looking more likely to head for a class win than overall success. The all Belgian crew in car 1 was another mix, with Vitaphone regular Eric Van De

Poele joined by Nico Verdonck and Jean-Karl Vernay in the Pro class. Finally, the strongest line up in the black and blue ensemble was in fact red and blue, and numbered 29. German star Frank Kechele was joined by two fast Italians: Giacomo Petrobelli and Matteo Bobbi in a car that oozed potential for a podium finish: but it was all dependent on the so far fragile 458 Italia.

Sofrev brought two cars, and some top drivers. Pescarolo's latest star Julien Jousse was joined by long term sportscar hero Olivier Pla and a third Frenchman in the shape of Patrice Goueslard in car 10, with Ludovic Badey, Jean-Luc Beaubelique, Guillaume Moreau and Franck Morel in 20. Two completely Gallic crews stacked with talent.

AF Corse's line ups were not quite as strong, but factory Ferrari man Matt Griffin did join the party in the so far thwarted number 50 car with regular team mate Jack Gerber as well as Italians Marco Cioci (GTE Am pole sitter at Le Mans) and Niki Cadei.

Finally to Mercedes, who didn't bring any works drivers and lent very little works support to their teams. GT3 outfit Graff Racing brought Nicolas Lapierre and Olivier Panis in, to join Gregoire Demoustier and Eric Debar, while ever impressive Mike Parisy and ex GT3 champion Gilles Vannelet shared the second car. They were joined by Philippe Haezebrouck and Massimo Vignali (the only non Frenchman in the line up: he's Italian), and both cars were in the am class.

Also fielding the car were

KRK Team Holland, with two cars. One featured purely amateur Benelux drivers but the other starred Anthony Kumpen and Mike Hezemans. The veteran crew were teamed with Flemish singer Koen Wauters.

There was an interesting entry for Black Falcon, liveried in a retro imitation of an earlier AMG effort. The car was crewed short of stars but with experience, with Thomas Jaeger joined by Belgian Stephane Lemeret and fellow German Kenneth Heyer. Their team mates were an all amateur affair.

The final car was for Team Preci Spark, the Jones twins bringing their British GT charger over (though a different chassis was used here), and borrowing experienced friend Mike Jordan to help them out for the weekend. They were on Avon tyres (one of very few cars to take that choice).

For Aston Martin's ageing DBRS9, two teams. French outfit Hexis Racing brought two, with star driver Fred Mako joined by another ex GT3 champion in the shape of Swiss driver Henri Moser, and GT1 race winner Stef Dusseldorp in car 4, while the 3 car featured fellow GT1 race winner Yann Clairay joined by experienced Amateur Julien Rodrigues and Pierre-Brice Mena. The other Aston Martin, badged as Ecurie Ecosse but run by experienced outfit Barwell Motorsport, featured various British drivers. In reality, the best hope for the team would be a solid run to a top ten.

Reiter entered two Lamborghinis, but the Italian cars, despite line ups featuring Peter Kox and impressive Austri-



GRE

76

III

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BLANCPAIN

ÖHLINS
DUNLOP
NEED FOR SPEED

SCHUBERT MOTORSPORT

DUNLOP
NEED FOR SPEED

ELITEPC

Photo: Guillaume Tassart





A cheap fisheye converter made for great fun on the grid. L-R top row: United Autosports, their 12 car, Ecurie Ecosse, Westbrook, grid madness, Hexis. L-R second row: Hexis garage, Joe Twyman, WRT, De Lorenzi Racing, Haribo bear meets Michelin man, Red Bull. L-R third row: Phoenix Audi, Phoenix Garage, GT4 Nissan, VDS Adventures Mustang, NFS BMW, more grid chaos. L-R final row: Pro-am McLaren, Fleurbaaij Image Bank, Vita4One.

Photos: Jake Yorath

an Niki Mayr Melnhof, were unlikely to be able to challenge over 24 hours.

The scene was set by the traditional Wednesday evening parade, which is a curious parody of the Le Mans drivers' parade. All the cars are parked in the centre of Spa and the crowd simply mingle between them: remarkably brave, in the opinion of your correspondent. Despite fairly heavy rain and the aforementioned bravery, all the cars returned to the circuit unharmed and Thursday morning's practice session could get the track action underway in

earnest.

Immediately fast (unsurprisingly) were Audi. Marc Basseng in the #99 Phoenix car set the pace in mixed conditions so typical of the Ardennes. The German was trailed by ProSpeed Porsche (the 75 car) and by the SOFREV Ferrari #20. Hexis Racing bottomed out in the times, both cars only doing minimal laps and recording slow tours.

The second session of the day was topped by McLaren, whose #59 car lapped fastest in the hands of Oliver Turvey before the deluge that all but

halted the session. Extreme wet weather left only a handful of cars tiptoeing around, with precious little data to be gained and too much risk to be taken in such monsoon like conditions. Following the McLaren were Autorlando, the series leaders' Porsche looking solid in the hands of Paolo Ruberti.

Qualifying came split into three sessions (helpfully timed differently to the timetables handed out to media), and the real action came right at the very end. With the track having been dry in Q1 and mostly



wet in Q2, it would be down to the closing moments of Q3 to decide pole position. The session started wet and there was little belief amongst the pundits that times would improve, but as soon as Eddie Cheever put slicks on his United Autosports Audi. Up until that moment, the Anglo American outfit had been mediocre at best but suddenly the ex Indy star was flying up the times, lighting up the screen with purples and forcing the other teams to get their dry tyres ready.

The session was briefly red flagged for the unfortunate

Felipe Albuquerque, whose Audi suffered a clutch problem, but when the session restarted with just over fifteen minutes left all hell broke loose. Paolo Ruberti was flying, as were Richard Westbrook and Maxime Soulet, the Porsche clearly at home in the conditions as the times tumbled. Cars were bouncing up and down the sheets like toddlers on a bouncy castle.

With five minutes to go, more drama. De Lorenzi's 997 Cup caused a red flag, but for Ruberti there would be worse news: he had broken the gear-

box on his Autorlando Porsche and was out of action for the session's climax. The restart came and yet again, greens and purples lit up the screen. Principle players were Soulet, still rapid for ProSpeed, and Maxime Martin's VDS BMW, the Belgian eventually getting one over on his fellow countryman. Both cars set purple sectors on their final laps but Soulet's just wasn't fast enough. An all Belgian team, all Belgian driver, all Maxime front row.

"I am very happy because we only received the car one month ago," enthused Martin.

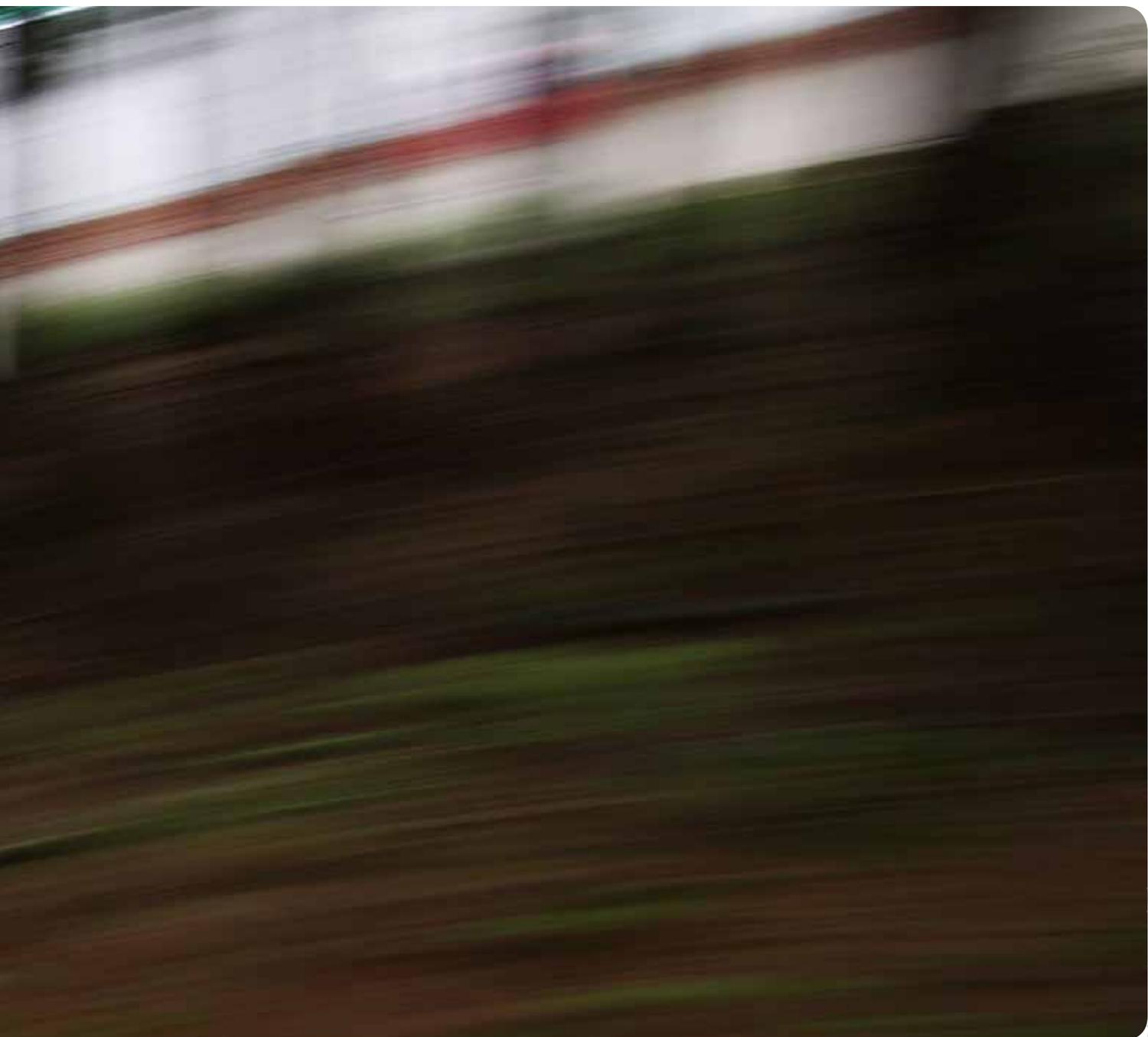


Photo: Marcel Thomassen





Photo: Dan Bathie

Still beaming, he explained his lap. “I think 25 minutes before the end of the session it was decided to move onto slick tyres. It wasn’t that much drier but the tyres were warmer so we got quicker and quicker. I am happy to have a Belgian front row. We worked hard all year to be here and it is great for everybody. I’d like to thank the whole team because we did such a great job in just one month.”

Mr Soulet, meanwhile, could barely speak. “To be on the front row of the grid at the 24 Hours of Spa is a dream come true. I am speechless! It is great for Porsche that we have two cars in the top three in Qualifying and it is a great feeling. I think that the car will be fine in the race and it is the same challenge for everybody at the weekend. The Prospeed Competition team is very happy - I’ve not seen our team principal happier!”

Third place was Ruberti, despite his gearbox problem. “For the last five minutes I was in the box with a broken gearbox; better to do it today than Saturday and Sunday,” he smiled. “The car was very fast so maybe we can fight with the other guys at the front in the race. This race is very important for the Blancpain Endurance Championship because it is double points. We need to finish the race to keep our lead.”

So after a tumultuous Thursday (all the pre race track action was packed into just a single day) the teams were greeted with a damp and grey morning warm up preceding the full race itself. With the all Belgian front row all good at the front, two of the best

entries on the grid were forced to start in the pitlane. Hexis’ Fred Mako and Vita4One’s Andrea Bertolini were attempting to scrub an extra set of tyres pre race, but were held at the end of the pits. Also in trouble before the race proper were McLaren. Car #59, of Andrew Kirkaldy, would be forced to take a five minute stop go penalty within the first three laps of the race, after an engine change in qualifying. Bad news for the orange charger.

Maxime Martin’s qualifying efforts would good for all of 50 metres, the BMW second by the time he made Eau Rouge, and even further back by the time the lap ended: the unfortunate Belgian was fifth at the end of the first lap, and sixth by the time they’d started the second. Marc Goosens was immediately charging away in the lead, with Peter Kox second, Ruberti third, Ludovic Sougnez fourth and Westbrook the man relegating Martin to sixth.

Martin’s torrid afternoon continued as he was soon passed by Timo Scheider for sixth on the way to Les Combes on the second tour, but his afternoon was not as bad as Ludovic Sougnez’s. The enthusiastic Belgian outbraking Peter Kox for second into the Bus Stop chicane and deciding, somewhat foolishly, to attempt a simultaneous pass on his unfortunate team mate, leader Marc Goosens. Goosens’ car headed straight for the box but Sougnez continued, though a punctured tyre meant damage, dragging the car an entire lap. Plenty of time to consider the mistake he’d just made.

That put Peter Kox into the lead, with Paulo Ruberti second, but the Italian was soon

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THIS YEAR'S
EDITION OF THE
ANNUAL
BENELUX
ENDURO WAS
THE MOST
BELGIAN FOR
MANY YEARS

through, leaving Kox under severe from Westbrook, whose efforts to pass the leader at Les Combes left him instead in trouble, losing a spot to Irishman Matt Griffin in the AF Corse Ferrari as the Haribo Porsche went scything across the run off at the end of Kemmel.

But the afternoon was to take a dramatic turn for all the wrong reasons after just ten minutes. Andrew Kirkaldy, having completed his penalty and starting his first flying lap, had a monster accident at La Source, ending up in the open part of the pitlane between the Endurance and F1 pits. The incident was not caught properly on any TV cameras but was likely caused by contact with the #100 BMW GT4, which was the only car in the McLaren's vicinity. Official sources also blamed 'contact with another competitor'.

Throughout the rest of the first hour, intense racing characterised the battle at the front, but it was Ireland's Matt Griffin who would emerge on top, from Ruberti and Kox. A canny stop under yellows from Westbrook, however, meant that the Haribo bear would emerge more than thirty seconds clear shortly after the turn of the hour. New regulations meant that all cars had to stop every 65 minutes (or 70 should there be a safety car), so the Porsche's normal fuel advantage was negated: but Manthey used clever strategy to their advantage, effectively stopping for free.

The Briton would lead for most of the next hour, but the stint was characterised by the most bizarre incident most of those in attendance had ever seen. Austrian Niki Mayr-Mel-

nhof, having been impressive thus far this season in the Reiter Lamborghini Gallardo, somehow contrived to put his car on its side at pit in, leaving the team (and everyone else, including himself) perplexed. He was then forced to suffer the ignominy of helping the marshals right it, leaving an enduring image of the rear wing lamely sliding off onto the floor.

"It looks like we can right this car off totally... It's bad. I don't know what to say. It's a 24 hour race and we destroy a car on pit entry," mused a clearly seething Hans Reiter to pitlane reporter Hailey Coxon.

Having sought out the driver, I asked him for his view: "I don't know what happened," he answered, seemingly as confused as me. "I can't explain it." At least he was OK, I shrugged.

It was a mixed hour for Reiter, as the safety car period elevated their surviving car to the race's lead. Dutchman Peter Kox was doing what he does best, quietly turning in fast laps on a consistent pace. He was to be overhauled when he pitted, leaving Christian Menzel for Manthey to pass the #99 Audi for the lead. Shortly afterwards Audi had the lead back with Timo Scheider, with Andrea Piccini second but soon in serious trouble. After contact from a slower car, the Italian left the pits only to suffer serious transmission trouble, leaving him stuck at the top of Eau Rouge. Though he managed to continue (by his reckoning, short of second gear) the challenge for the #98 Phoenix Audi was dead.

Also dead was the final Reiter car, and in some style. Marc Hayek, having hardly been in

the car, saw his car's engine explode in some style on the way past the Endurance pits, white smoke billowing from the V10 and leaving the Lamborghini out. Hans Reiter and his crew were left angry and frustrated by their poor start.

Trouble, too, for Haribo Manthey, Christian Menzel's car seen with engine lid up just before the three and a half hour mark. All this was playing to Audi. Phoenix's #99 led, with their similarly equipped rivals WRT (#33) in second by a lap, with the #15 Kumpen/ Hezemans/ Wouters Mercedes up to third after a solid start. Having been started by Basseng, the leading car had continued at a comfortable pace into the lead.

As dusk fell, the race had settled into a comfortable rhythm for the leading two Audis, one and two. The #32 WRT car, though, having been started by Stephane Ortelli and made stunning progress after its qualifying mishap, was delayed by a lengthy stop for suspension damage. The damage was caused by a contentious accident with Thomas Jaeger's Black Falcon Mercedes, and it would end the challenge for another quick car.

Eddie Cheever's race was done too, the American stopping at Eau Rouge, and despite the team's opinions, he walked away from the car: not a popular decision by the ex Indy star. The Herbert car was also suffering, an electrical issue causing the car to cut out repeatedly on the circuit.

Seven hours into the race and Hezemans' race was done, the veteran Dutchman clattering the barriers in his white Mercedes at Paul Frere



Photo: Jake Yorath





Photo: Jake Yorath

curve. It was more good news for Audi, who now owned the prime real estate at the top of the timesheets in comfortable fashion with a lock out of the top three. However, the ninth hour brought a return of the gearbox trouble for the #98 Audi, and the car would suffer a long stop for repairs. Schubert were promoted to the top three.

After a couple of wet night time hours, the WRT Audi of Mattias Ekstrom took the lead from their cousins at Phoenix in the tenth hour, the two Audi cars still holding sway over the Need for Speed Schubert car in third place. Major drama would follow shortly afterwards, as ex GT3 champion Christopher Haase connected heavily with the wall and the second placed car was out of the race. A familiar name benefitted, with Michael Bartels in the #2 Pro Am Ferrari into third place.

It would be five hours until sight of a change in the top three, with Hexis Aston Martin finally beginning to show a challenge. Their #4 car (Mako/ Moser/ Dusseldorp) slipped past Vita4One at the pitstops, though the pair would continue to swap in cycles. The leading pair remained static despite fluctuations in the gap, with the WRT Audi able to comfortably hold first place.

In the 19th hour, the second crazy incident of the race was observed. Louis Machiels, asked to take an innocuous drive through in the (now second placed) #2 Ferrari, ignored radio requests, pitboards and frantic hand gestures to make his stop. The Belgian passed signs from his team reading 'In In In In In' for six laps, three

laps longer than he legally was allowed, and when he finally pitted was asked to drive his car to the box and retire it.

"We had a problem with the radio system. We try to do the drive through... I hope... for something," mused a dejected Andrea Bertolini. "It would be really frustrating to get a black flag, we drove perfectly in this race. I hope somebody thinks about this. We'll keep pushing until we speak to the officials."

Stunned silence in the media room and the garage as the race ended in almost the least climatic way possible. Having been attributed the drive through for a simple pitstop misdemeanour, it was an incongruous end for such an illustrious team.

"That was the motor racing equivalent of a slow clap, wasn't it?" mused a colleague as the now disgraced Belgian sauntered, still helmeted, through a garage full of Vita4One VIPs. Very incensed people indeed.

All that drama was good news for Mercedes. Black Falcon took the third place while Team Preci Spark would leap to the front of the Pro Am class by passing the SOFREV #20 that had briefly inherited the lead. It would develop into a fascinating scrap between the French and British squads. Another car (and there were many) in trouble was the #4 Hexis Aston Martin, Stef Dusseldorp involved in a collision with 'one of the United Autosports Audis' and suffering power steering trouble, dropping the car down the order to 12th.

After earlier changing its alternator, the Haribo car finally bowed out with just over 100

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THESE GUYS
DID AN
AWESOME JOB.
STARTING FROM
THE KITCHEN,
TO THE TYRE
GUYS TO THE
MECHANICS AND
THE ENGINEERS.

TIMO SCHEIDER





Sport Garage team raised 20,000 Euro for an arthritis charity.

Photo: Jake Yorath



minutes to go, setting light as Richard Westbrook left the pits. After casually disembarking, the Briton did not seem all too disappointed to leave the troubled Porsche behind.

“I didn’t know actually, they were screaming down the radio!” smiled Westbrook. “They forgot I don’t speak German... Luckily I knew there was something wrong. That’s it, game over. We were 29 seconds from a podium in Pro Am. We felt like we deserved a result. I’m looking forward to next year, to be honest.”

At the front, though, no change in the top three. The final stop for the WRT Audi came and went without drama, and the rather relaxed atmosphere that had descended was somewhat of a relief for many of the teams, who were struggling with their various problems. Briefly, the #32 Audi had put pressure on the Black Falcon car, but it would require an extra pitstop to splash and dash and the Belgian squad would have to be content with ‘just’ the victory and not the bonus of the extra podium.

And so it was, then, that Timo Scheider, Greg Franchi and Mattias Ekstrom won the race in their WRT Audi R8 LMS. They took a two lap cushion home over Edward Sandstrom, Claudia Huertgen and Dirk Werner for Need For Speed Schubert Motorsport and BMW, with Mercedes and Black Falcon rounding out a rather Teutonic top three with Thomas Jaeger, Kenneth Heyer and Stephane Lemeret.

“I have to thank all the guys who supported us this weekend, especially the WRT team,” grinned Timo Scheider. “We came here with some ex-

pectations but we didn’t know what we could achieve. These guys did an awesome job. Starting from the kitchen, to the tyre guys to the mechanics and the engineers. We made no mistakes and the Audi R8 LMS lasted till the end which is the key to why we are sitting here today. We just changed once or twice the brakes but everything else ran smoothly. Mattias (Ekstrom) had one of the worst stints you could choose. He was out there this morning on slicks in the hard rain and he did a great job. We had some pressure and we had to survive and we did that. To win a race like this - the Spa 24 Hours of Spa - is always something special.”

In the Pro Am class, victory fell to SOFREV. Ludovic Badey, Franck Morel, Guillaume Moreau and Jean-Luc Beaubelique took their Ferrari 458 to victory ahead of the Jones twins and Mike Jordan in their Mercedes.

One McLaren finished, the #60 Pro Am car coming home 25th after some dramas, with Adam Christodolou, Phil Quaife, Glynn Geddie and Roger Wills steering the car. After #58’s crash, the #59 would retire with a fairly hefty fire before nightfall.

It was certainly an enthralling race, at times. From early evening it was largely dull as a contest, though that was obviously not something felt in the pitlane; it was more a simple feeling that no one would be willing (or able) to go all out to chase and pass the Audi challenge. But for the first few hours, it was an advert for motorsport and a simply superb contest. The Blancpain Endurance Series is thriving.



Photo: Jake Yorath

The rain in Spain was on holiday in Belgium on Thursday night: the Ardennes got very wet.





BRITISH GT BRITS ABROAD

Spa Francorchamps, Belgium, Round 4 July 8th By *Dan Bathie*

British GT's annual Belgian excursion marked the return of one of sportscar racing's most revered brands: McLaren. The British brand's new MP4-12C GT3 shone in qualifying, taking pole for the first race. McLaren chief test driver,

Chris Goodwin led the first ten laps of the race in the McLaren before losing the lead to David Ashburn in the Trackspeed Porsche. Ashburn then handed over to Richard Westbrook during a safety car period in which the majority of the field pitted. West-

brook made a great restart when the race got underway again and managed to keep the lead, even after a fraught attack by Matt Griffin in the MTech Ferrari 458 to take the victory in the first race. After a promising start the McLaren dropped back after a spin and





Photo: Marcel Thomassen

Westbrook and Ashburn were on for a double until trouble struck





eventually finished in 12th. CRS finished third with their Ferrari 458 driven by Glynn and Jim Geddie, the father and son pairing having a great drive from eighth on the grid. The GT4 class was won by the Scuderia Vittoria run Ginetta G50 of Dan Denis and David McDonald.

The second of the one hour races was another close battle, again between the MTech Ferrari and a Trackspeed Porsche. This time the Ferrari of Matt Griffin and Duncan Cameron took the chequered flag, the winning margin just 0.9 seconds as they crossed the line. Race one winner Richard Westbrook got a great start and led the pack away quickly building up a comfortable lead.

Allan Simonsen, who started alongside the Trackspeed driver didn't get away well and ended the first lap in seventh. Behind the leader there was a great scrap involving the Ferrari 458s of Glynn Geddie, Matt Griffin and Alex Mortimer with Matt Bell's Audi also getting in on the fight, it was Griffin who eventually came out on top. Lap nine saw the demise of the #1 Trackspeed Porsche driven by Westbrook, the Britain suffered a right rear puncture, handing the lead to the Mtech Ferrari of Griffin and Cameron. With pit stops completed Griffin led from Andrew Howard's Beechdean Aston Martin with Jim Geddie in third. Geddie soon lost the place to a charging Gregor Fisken in the re-

maining Trackspeed Porsche. Fisken was really flying and took second from Howard three laps later. The Scotsman whittled Cameron's comfortable lead of seven seconds down to just one second as they started the final lap, however there was just not enough time left, leaving Matt Griffin and Duncan Cameron to take their first victory of the season.

GT4 saw some great action too, but it was the Lotus of Phil Glew and Ollie Jackson which eventually became victorious. Second place went to championship leaders Marcus Clutton and Peter Belshaw, the KTM inheriting the place on the penultimate lap after the Ginetta of Denis and McDonald developed a gearbox problem.



Photos: Marcel Thomassen

LMS+ILMC 6 HOURS OF IMOLA

AWAY VICTORY AFTER HOME DEFEAT

Imola, Italy, Round 4, July 2-3rd By Dan Bathie



Photo: DPPI

AT



A consolation prize. In comparison to Le Mans, maybe it is, but Peugeot's win at Imola shouldn't be seen as that. The French manufacturer took what has to be said a dominant victory in the fourth round of the ILMC, Anthony Davidson and Sébastien Bourdais eventually claiming the victory over their French team mates.

From the beginning of the weekend it looked like it would be another close battle between Audi and Peugeot. Qualifying saw the four diesel cars interlocked at the head of the field, Davidson claiming pole, six tenths ahead of Le Mans winner Marcel Fässler. Third was Sarrazin, a further 5 tenths behind, with Allan McNish rounding up the diesels.

The start of the race was just as close as qualifying was, Fässler chased Bourdais for much of the opening stint, staying close behind the Peugeot until they pitted. Bourdais stayed out a lap longer than Fässler and re-joined back in the lead after the pit stops were completed. Fässler came out to a traffic jam that would be not out of place on the M25, this allowed Montagny, who had been running in third to close right up on the Audi. The Frenchman soon saw his opportunity to pass and took second. From here on Peugeot never looked back. On a hot track the 908 came alive; it was a pace that the R18 just couldn't live with. A small mistake from Bourdais, who missed his mark at the next round of the pit stops,

Photos:DPPI



IMSA Performance took victory in the GTE AM Class with Nicolas Armindo and Raymond Narac



HORSES FOR CORSES

GTE

Just like Le Mans, GTE Pro seemed like it was BMW's to lose and that they did. The two M3s lead the way at the start and looked to have the legs over their main rivals from Ferrari. However the #56 of Dirk Werner and Pedro Lamy would hit problems past the halfway mark, the air conditioning failed an issue that had to be fixed to keep cockpit temperatures below the maximum of 32°C as stated in the rules. It would eventually cost them 16 laps. The sister continued to lead, but the race unravelled for them when the car suffered a puncture. A loss of radio communication to the pits meant that the team weren't ready for Muller brought the car in, a lack of mechanic with fire extinguisher resulted in a one

minute stop-go penalty for the #55 BMW. This handed the lead and the win to the #71 AF Corse Ferrari of Jaime Melo and Toni Vilander with the sister #51 Ferrari 458 of Gianmaria Bruni and Giancarlo Fisichella taking second place. It could have been victory for the Italian pairing had it not been for a misfire, a problem which also cost them the win at Le Mans. The #55 BMW took an unrepresentative third place. Elsewhere in the class there were retirements for the rest of the Ferrari 458s. The #59 Luxury Racing car didn't complete a lap due to electronic troubles and the sister car didn't fare much better, retiring with broken suspension. The Hankook Farnbacher Ferrari retired after Simonsen made contact with the Jota

Aston Martin whilst JMW's effort came to end with a broken gearbox. It was a point's finish for both Porsches forth for Team Felbermayr-Proton and fifth for IMSA Performance but the machines from Stuttgart were never front runners.

In GTE Am the IMSA Performance Porsche 997 GT3 RSR of Nicolas Armindo and Raymond Narac took the victory after a close scrap with Patrick Long in the Proton Competition Porsche, however the car was later disqualified after Long had been found to have exceeded the maximum time allowed in the car in one stint. This promoted the Larbre Corvette of Gardel, Bornhauser and Canal to second and the AF Corse Ferrari of Perazzini, Cioci and Lemeret to third.





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GREAVES ON TOP AGAIN

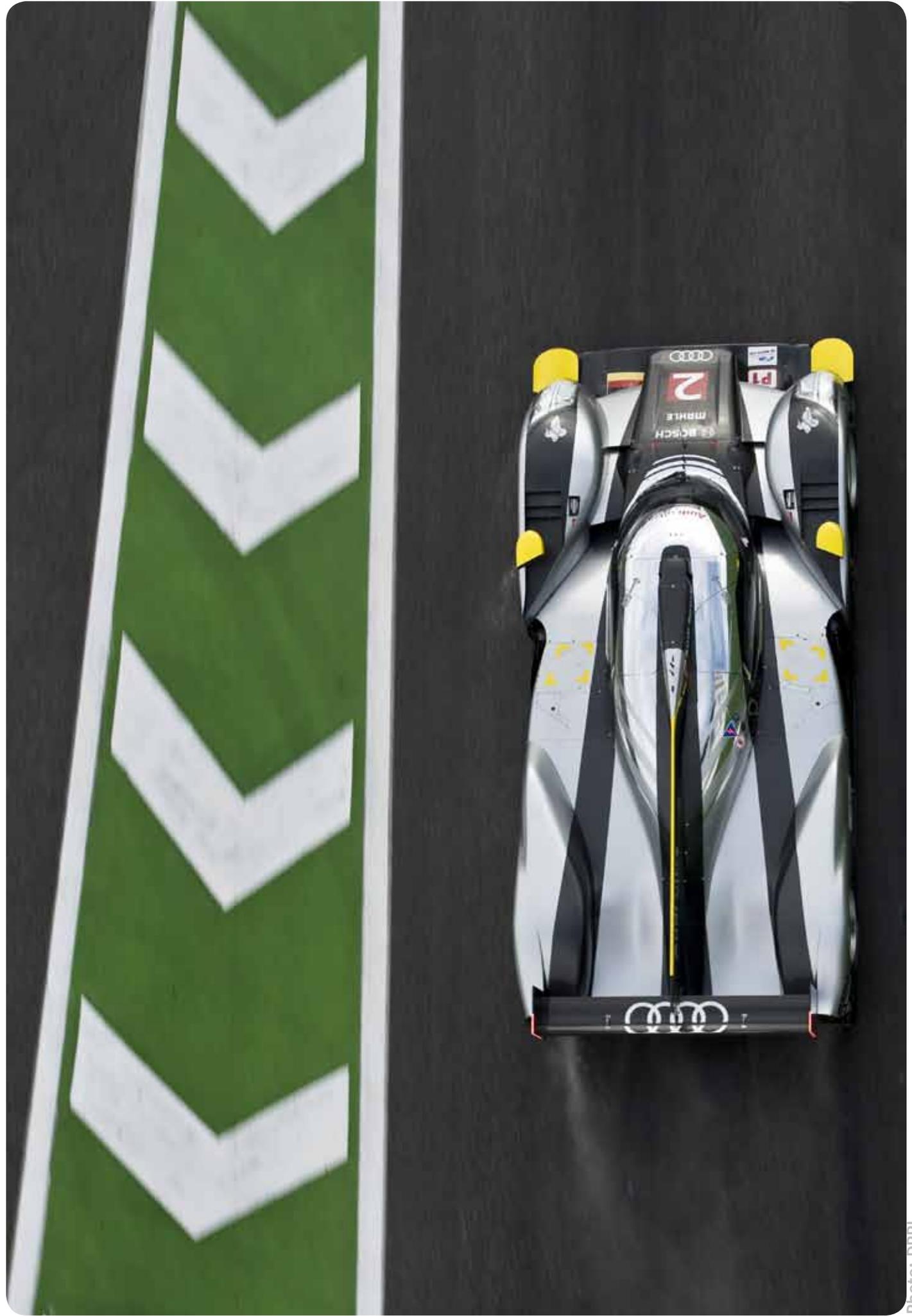
LMP 2

Le Mans winners Greaves carried on their form in Italy taking the LMP 2 victory two laps clear of the second placed car of Signatech with third going to Level 5 Motorsports, a top three which was coincidentally the same as the French classic a few weeks back. The race started with a stunning stint from Jody Firth in the TDS Racing Oreca. The Brit built up a big lead that Mathias Beche and Pierre Thiriet consolidated, only for it to all undone in the fifth hour when the car would not restart after a pitstop due to a starter mo-

tor problem. A lengthy time in the box handed the lead to the Level 5 Motorsports Lola and dropped the TDS car well down the order and out of contention.

It would only be a short stint in the lead however for the Level 5 car of Scott Tucker, Christophe Bouchut and Joao Barbosa. A gear selection issue with only 20 minutes remaining resulted in two unscheduled pitstops which dropped the Lola down to third. This left the Greaves Motorsport Zytek of Olivier Lombard, Tom Kimber-Smith and Karim Ojjeh to steal the victory af-

ter a virtually untroubled run, as team principle Tim Greaves explained “All three drivers drove brilliantly on a crowded, tight track. It was a real team effort with everyone giving 100%. The only problem that we encountered during the race was during Olivier’s stint. Concrete from the kerbs breaking up was picked up by the tyres and the noise indicated that we had a potentially serious problem. We made an extra stop and the issue was investigated and solved.”







meant the #8 Peugeot of team mates Sarrazin and Montagny took the lead. Davidson, now aboard #7 was not content playing second fiddle though, and soon closed in on the back of Sarrazin. The Britain retook the lead on lap 91 due to superb pace on the in lap before his stop.

Audi meanwhile were struggling with front brake temperatures due to the cooling ducts becoming blocked with debris. “We caught a lot of dirt in the front brake cooling system and had to clean it at each pit stop. In addition, we had to shift the brake balance to the rear. That heavily influenced the balance of the whole car.” Explained Ralf Jüttner , it was problem which cost the R18’s to lose even more pace to Peugeot and any chance of fighting for victory. At the front Davidson continued to pull out a gap to Sarrazin and handed the car over to Bourdais for the final stint with a comfortable lead. It was to be all undone though

when Bourdais suffered a puncture handing the win seemingly over to their team mates. However the same fate was to strike the French duo in #8 and the positions were restored. Bourdais taking the chequered flag just over a minute ahead of Montagny and claiming a first victory for the new pairing of Bourdais and Davidson, one which seemed to work for the Frenchman “I got on really well with Anthony, who was the quickest driver this weekend. Right from the word go, we found a set-up that worked for us both” The Audi’s a further lap behind the #1 of Fässler and Bernhard taking the final podium place. First of the regular Le Mans Series runners home were Rebellion, who also took the unofficial Petrol class victory after the works Pescarolo suffered numerous problems. In FLM JMB took the honours with Kyle Marcelli, Chapman Ducote and Nicolas Marroc behind the wheel.

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**I GOT ON REALLY WELL WITH ANTHONY,
WHO WAS THE QUICKEST DRIVER THIS
WEEKEND.**

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS

ALMS NORTHEAST GRAND PRIX

ROCK SOLID

Lime Rock Park, Round 3, July 8th -9th By Jack Evans

A lap of Lime Rock can be over in 47 seconds. With a field of over 30 cars, a prototype can expect traffic every three seconds.

With a single left turn, tires degrade quickly and unevenly, and the short pit straight allows no rest. Drivers call The Northeast Grand Prix

one of the toughest races all year; "Completely different from all others we race at," said Jaime Melo. But it's also the home race





Photo: ALMS

of Dyson Racing, and with this advantage, they took the checkered flag after rivals Muscle Milk lost the lead in a spin with a GT Challenge car. The number 56 BMW, also at home for this round, extended their championship lead by a further 33 points in their third win this season. Eric Lux and Elton Julian won in the LMP Challenge category, and Mike Piera and Dion von Moltke benefited from a last-lap battle to win in GTC. With only two teams in the LMP1 class, it was set to be a close but straightforward battle. Both Muscle Milk and Dyson Racing were competing in a Lola chassis, the former, however, powered by V12 Aston Martin engine and the latter by a four-cylinder in-line turbo-charged Mazda. 26 points separated the two teams going in, with Dyson Racing ahead due to a non-finish at Sebring for Muscle Milk, who responded by winning the next round. In an effort to wrap up the team's championship early, Dyson entered a second car, the yellow and black Oryx-sponsored number 20, that rounded out the three-entry class.

The original number 16 Lola-Mazda started with Chris Dyson at the wheel ahead of the Lola-Aston Martin piloted by the experienced Lucas Luhr, and retained the lead throughout the opening lap. Luhr then slotted in behind, exchanging lap times through the heavy traffic and making only a single pass in the early minutes, only to immediately lose it behind a GT car. After roughly half an hour, the Muscle Milk car finally got around on the temporarily empty West Bend complex. Luhr then stretched the gap and handed the car over





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BATTLE



Carnage was caused in the GTE field after the Extreme Speed Motorsports Ferrari spun (above) The #56 BMW took another victory (right)

Photos: ALMS

to teammate Klaus Graf. Just before the halfway mark, however, Graf made contact with the GMG Racing GTC Porsche. The Aston was not badly damaged and got back on track; but after Guy Smith had gone through in the Mazda, where he stayed to the end.

In LMP Challenge, Elton Julian brought his Genoa Racing Oreca in just ahead of the CORE Autosport Oreca of his 2010 teammate Gunnar Jeannette, while The Racer's Group made it a GTC 1-2 thanks to some last-lap shuffling and driver Dion von Moltke. The second Dyson entry made a good debut by avoiding two accidents directly ahead of it early on, although finishing laps down.

Every year the Northeast Grand Prix is fast, difficult, and exciting; but still, every time, "Completely different."



BMW ON TOP AGAIN

GTE

BMW Team RLL dominated qualifying 1-2 for their home race with Joey Hand and Dirk Mueller taking pole position, but the number 45 Flying Lizard car made a huge leap by setting the third best time after a rough start to the season. Patrick Long had converted the Porsche's third into a second place by the end of lap one, and remained close to the lead throughout the race. Within 20 minutes of the start, a spin by one of the Extreme

Speed Motorsports Ferraris against an LMPC entry wreaked havoc on the GT class's mid-field, damaging the 3rd place BMW, both Corvettes, and the ESM car itself. Benefitting from the pileup was the Risi Competizione Ferrari, the 04 Robertson Racing Ford, and most of all, the Team Falken Tire Porsche, working its way into the battle for first.

Many tense laps passed between the three leading GT cars, until the Falken pitted

just before the suggested minimum time, putting it in danger of running out of fuel, leaving the 45 and 56 out to race. They too pitted much later, and ended up ahead of the other Porsche, who took a second stop later in the race, dropping it out of contention. Jorg Bergmeister's Flying Lizard also came in again later, for a new left front tire, allowing Hand and Mueller a third consecutive victory and an extended points lead.



ALMS MID OHIO SPORTSCAR CHALLENGE

WOLF SHINES IN THE RAIN

Mid Ohio, Round 5, August 6th By Jack Evans

The 2011 Mid-Ohio Sports Car Challenge was all about penalties, whether they were given out or not.

The two-season-old rule that bumped “avoidable contact” penalties to a 60-second stop

and hold cost many teams their positions and was met with much controversy, especially due to the way the stewards applied it.

Just 30 minutes in, Eric Lux in the Genoa Racing LMPC car made an ambitious, slightly

off-track outside move on Ricardo Gonzales’s CORE Autosport for the class lead. Lux spun the latter and continued on unharmed; no 60-second stop and hold. But when Toni Vilander stuck the nose of his Ferrari 458 barely inside a





Photo: ALMS

slower Jaguar, put two wheels in the grass, and shoved it into a spin upon returning to the track, he did.

Without question Vilander's move was too fast, too late, and too avoidable, but under replay one notices Lux staying with the CORE car long after the opportunity had passed, and even Gonzales's attempt to leave room through the corner before moving to cover the inside of the next in the opposite direction. There was an error by Gonzales in turning for the next left-hander too quickly, but only after Lux had refused to back off until far too late. With a full minute stationary plus pit lane delta time at risk, an avoidable contact penalty would have ruined Genoa's race, but none was applied.

Just four minutes after the Ferrari/Jaguar incident, more chaos came about, this time for the BMW team. After pitting under caution from second and fifth respectively, Dirk Mueller and Bill Auberlen emerged with the American barely ahead. By turn two, Mueller attempted a pass on his teammate, but locked the front brakes and rode up the kerbs on the inside. Although Auberlen made room, he was hit sideways by the other M3 dropping hard back onto the track. Despite Mueller's mistake, it did not cost him any more time; the steward's deemed it "unavoidable." Since then, many have speculated that the call was affected by the huge Ohio fan base BMW Team RLL has at their home track. In any case, it's hard to see where the driver cannot avoid a lock-up, misplaced wheel, or early, ambitious overtake on a teammate.

"Similar incidents may not warrant the same penalties," said ALMS Race Director Beau Barfield to www.planetlemans.com. "Identical incidents do." The middle of the strange race featured numerous spins, more penalties, a hard crash by the Oryx Dyson Lola-Mazda, and a transmission failure of the Honda S2000 Safety Car, among other things. With the Honda replaced by the Porsche Cayenne ambulance, the race resumed.

Then, the rain started; lightly at first but quickly escalating into a full-scale downpour. One after one, cars slid right off corners. Klaus Graf, however, kept his Lola-Aston Martin on course for the overall victory. In GT, Patrick Long in the 45 Flying Lizard held the lead for the first green-flag lap in the heavy rain, but Wolf Henzler in the Falken Porsche had climbed into second behind him from fifth. Running the surprisingly adept Falken rain compound, "The Wolf" passed Long who then slid off track into a gravel trap behind him. The obvious treachery prompted ALMS officials to red flag the race, and wave the checkered flag to the cars parked in the pit lane.

Intersport Racing made their home event a 1-2 with the help of their rivals' errors, and TRG once again took GTC honors, this time with Duncan Ende and Spencer Pumpelly.

The 2011 Mid-Ohio Sports Car Challenge was controversial, rainy, short, and at times "unavoidably" dangerous, but because of that, it was exciting.



BMW decided to do a press shot

Photo: ALMS

Wolf Henzler gave Falken the GTE honours
Photo: ALMS



mid race





GT1 WORLD SPAIN

BULLS ON PARADE

Navarra, July 2nd - 3rd By *Dan Bathie*

Under the scorching Spanish sun of Navarra it was quite apt that the Murciélagos reigned once again. The Lamborghini, like the once infamous Navarra

fighting bull of the same name, was in a class of its own. This time the beast in anger was a V12 machine raging around the 2.4 mile circuit, dominating every ses-

sion. Once again though, it was down to All-Inkl to represent the Italian marque, the Swiss Racing Team absent for the second consecutive race due to

QUALIFYING RACE ALL-INKL DOMINATION

Photo: DPPI/GT1World.com

The qualifying race showed the Lamborghini dominance around the Navarra circuit once again, with All-Inkl converting their one - two in qualifying to a comfortable race one victory. At the start Nicky Pastorelli got the better start of the two Lamborghinis and moved ahead of team mate Marc Basseng into the first corner. Behind the leaders there was contact between the #41 Marc VDS Ford of Maxime Martin and Micheal Krumm's JRM Nissan, the Nissan fairing worse with a damaged exhaust

which dropped the German down the order. Further back in the pack Vanina Ickx spun with a hint of contact from the #47 Corvette in the first corner fight for position. During the opening laps Nico Verdonk hounded the two Lamborghinis at the front, whilst Maxime Martin passed Marc Henerichi for 5th and then three laps later took Dusseldorp for fourth. The Belgian was soon on the tail of Nico Verdonk's Corvette but the heavily restricted Ford was no match for the Corvette down the straights. The Ford, however, was superior on the

brakes and Martin eventually accomplished the pass after a display of great racing between the pair of them. At the front the Lamborghinis were still circulating together, less than a second apart. When the pit window opened it was the #38 of Marc Basseng that pitted first, handing over to Markus Winkelhock. The sister car of Pastorelli came in a lap later, handing the wheel over to Dominik Schwager. Schwager exited pit lane only to see their team mates sweep past them into the first corner to take the lead. Behind



the Lamborghinis there was an enthralling scrap for fourth place between Mike Hazemans in the Exim Bank Corvette and Clivio Piccione in the #3 Hexis Aston Martin. The pair came out of the pits side by side, Hazemans eventually getting ahead into the first corner. The dual was not finished there though, Piccione dived down the inside a few corners later and took the place, only for Hazemans to steal back the position later on in the lap. It was to end in tears however; Piccione judged his braking too late and ran into the rear

of Hazemans Corvette, resulting in bodywork damage which would later cause a puncture along with retirement. Meanwhile Piccione was given a drive-through for the incident. After a great stint, Maxime Martin finally came in to hand over to Bertrand Baguette and the Ford GT crew looked set to be right on the tail of the Lamborghinis when they re-joined. This was to be ruined when the door wouldn't close - losing them around five seconds and another place to the Hexis Aston Martin of Christian Hohenadel. Baguette gave

chase and soon caught the Aston, out braking him into Turn 15 to take the final podium spot. Hohenadel then lost another place to the Sumo Nissan of Jamie Campbell-Walter, eventually finishing in fifth place. After 36 laps, Markus Winkelhock crossed the line to take victory in the #38 All-Inkl Lamborghini, three seconds clear of the sister car and huge twenty over third placed Baguette. Darren Turner and Stefan Mucke claimed sixth after an excellent drive from the back of the grid.



On-going repairs following the damage caused at the Sachsenring. Navarra saw a new name appear in GT1, Indycar driver Bertrand Baguette filling in for Fred Makowiecki in the #41 Ford GT who was on ILMC duty. Baguette certainly didn't lack confidence when asked his feelings ahead of his debut "Romain Grosjean came from single-seater racing and was immediately fast in the Ford GT car last year, so it shouldn't be too complicated." There were a few other driver changes in Spain, former Exim Bank Corvette driver Nicky Catsburg joined Enrique Bernoldi in the #20 Sumo Power Nissan whilst Nico Verdonck paired up with veteran Mike Hazemans in the #11 Exim Bank Corvette. After top-

ping both practice sessions, qualifying was more a case of which Lamborghini would be on pole. As the session drew to a close it looked like Dominik Schwäger in the #37 would take the honours, however a fantastic final lap attempt from Markus Winkelhock meant he and Marc Basseng would start the #38 from the number one spot. The difference between the two All-Inkl Lamborghinis was just 0.004s. In third place behind the Lamborghinis it was the Exim Bank Team China Corvette of Mike Hazemans and Nico Verdonck, with championship leaders Michael Krumm and Lucas Luhr in the #23 JRM Nissan. Stefan Mucke languished way down the field after receiving a ten place grid drop for his incident

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The feature race was unsurprisingly won by a Lamborghini. Though this time it was Nicky Pastorelli and Dominik Schwager who took the honours after a late penalty for the sister All-Inkl machine cost them the victory. Despite a one - two in the qualifying race, the All-Inkl Lamborghini did not start like that on the grid. The #37 car of Pastorelli and Schwager was given a grid drop for an engine change, so started in seventh. The start saw Winkelhock make a good getaway to lead the pack into the first corner, despite being

pressured by Jamie Campbell-Walter, who had made an excellent start to clear the #41 Marc VDS Ford GT of Bertrand Baguette, which was also passed by the Nissan of Peter Dumbreck. Behind the leaders there was once again contact going into the first corner. Tomas Enge placed his DBR9 down the inside of a gap that just wasn't big enough as the cars filed through Turn 3. The Aston driver made contact with Lucas Luhr's JRM Nissan and tagged him into a spin. Luhr was left in the middle of the track as result stopped Clivio Piccione's DBR9 who

had nowhere else to go. After starting in seventh, Schwager had already made it up to fifth place after a few laps and took fourth place not long after, taking the #47 Corvette easily. Mike Hazemans was an early retirement, his Corvette losing drive ten minutes into the race. Further up the field, Bertrand Baguette was trying to make up places that he lost at the start. After a few attempts he finally passed Christian Hohenadel's Hexis Aston for sixth place, the Aston subsequently lost another place to the Belgian Ford GT of Christoffer Nygaard.









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IT FEELS GREAT TO BE
ON THE TOP STEP OF
THE PODIUM.
DOMINIK SCHWAGER

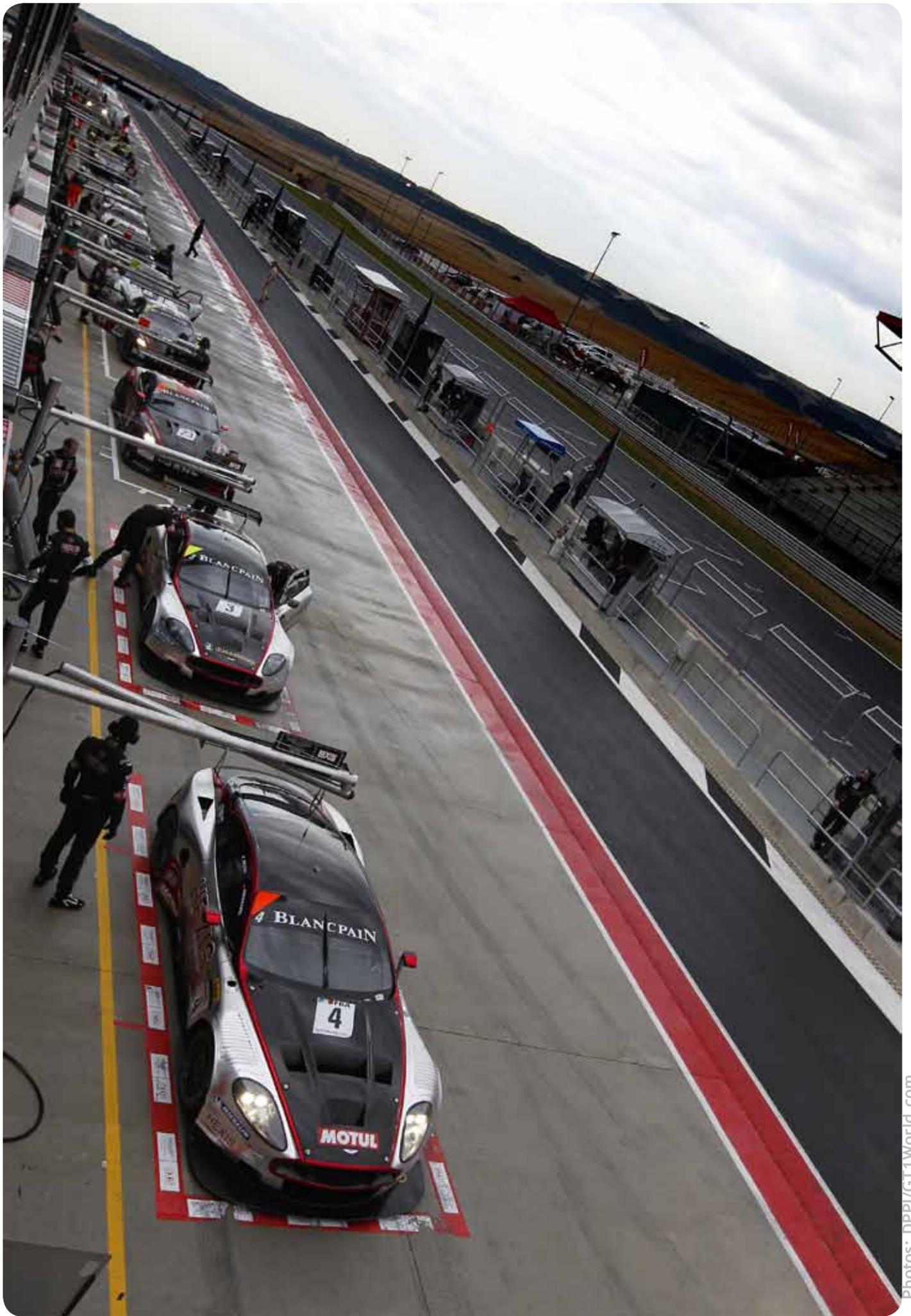
When the pit window opened there was a group of six cars who all pitted at once. It was the two Nissans running in second and third who were first to dive in followed closely by Schwager's Lamborghini. Delayed stops from JRM and Sumo (Jamie Campbell-Walter feeling the JRM team had blocked the sister Sumo car) and rapid pitwork from All-Inkl meant that the #37 Lamborghini jumped them both. Lamborghini held a one two once again. The positions would soon reverse though, thanks to a penalty for the #38 of Basseng because of a pit lane infringement. Such was the advantage that Winkelhock had pulled out, the car was able to re-join back in second. Meanwhile Maxime Martin was enjoying a scrap with Richard Westbrook for fourth place; it didn't last long due to Westbrook being called in for a drive-through penalty for an unsafe pit stop

release. From then on until the end positions stayed the same. Nicky Pastorelli crossed the line to score a first victory for him and Schwager in the championship this year. "It feels great to be on the top step of the podium. It has been a long time coming for us." A relieved Schwager said after the race. Second went to Marc Basseng and Markus Winkelhock. Basseng, despite losing out on the win was still pleased with the result "As the car went down I pushed the start button and it turned out it was a bit too early. That's racing and these things happen. In the end a one-two for the team is the maximum I can expect as a team manager."

David Brabham and Jamie Campbell-Walter matched their best result of the year with third place.

The next round is in Ordos, China on the 4th of September.







GT1 WORLD FRANCE

JRM DO THE DOUBLE

Paul Ricard, July 16th - 17th By *Jake Yorath*

JRM Nissan took a double victory at Paul Ricard, in another weekend of controversy and incident for the GT1 World Championship. Both victories went to Tourist Trophy winning German pair Lucas Luhr and Michael Krumm, despite a strong challenge from teammates Richard Westbrook and Peter Dumbreck. It was, in reality, quite a comfortable

weekend for Nissan on a circuit that was always going to suit the grunty Japanese car.

Qualifying was a scorching affair, with the teams and drivers having to suffer Mediterranean temperatures. It was the British JRM Nissan on pole position at the close of the session, with Richard Westbrook setting the final lap, a 2:03.419 enough to edge team mate Michael

Krumm on a 2:03.503 in Q3. Third place also fell to form, with Tomas Enge third on the grid for Young Driver Aston Martin. The biggest casualty were All-Inkl's Championship leading Marc Basseng and Markus Winkelhock, though the Lamborghini team were not expecting a fruitful weekend in the south of France.



QUALIFYING RACE SUN SHINES ON JRM

The Qualifying Race was run in even higher temperatures (38 degrees centigrade) and it would turn out to be a challenge for all the drivers to keep their tyres in a usable state for a stint's length. With a Nissan lock out of the front row, the two black cars thundered one and two into the first turn, but Dumbreck slid across the inside on the blue painted lines to continue in the lead. Behind them, chaos. At the first turn, almost half the field cut the first turn to avoid contact. Later round the lap, Lamborghini driver Dominick Schwager snuck across the the blue paint after contact. Contact, too, for Marc Henerici and VDS Ford. The German, having been nudged by Michael Rossi's newly repaint-

ed DKR Corvette at the start, had no rear stability and ended in a three way clash with Antoine Leclerc and Enrique Bernoldi's Sumo Nissan. Both Fords would retire as a result.

Coming to the end of the last lap, it was Dumbreck, Luhr, Mueller, Turner, a JRM one two followed by a Young Driver three four. Andy Zuber slipped into fifth with a lovely late move at the final turn on the first lap, holding the place despite pressure into the first turn. The race was under safety car after five minutes after a big accident for Stef Dusseldorp in the Hexis Aston Martin, the young Dutchman getting on the curbs onto the Mistral Straight and heading hard into the left hand barriers. 12 minutes later, the cars were free again.

Onto the Mistral, Brabham swept back past Zuber as the cars headed into the chicane, making the most of the Nissan's power and braking poise. It would not last for the SRT Corvette, which would suffer problems and make a series of pit stops. Still, the top four remained the same. As the pit window opened, the two lead cars had to continue, but the rest of the field were free to pit as they crossed the line just within the pit window. Mueller was the only car in the top four to pit. Next time round, Turner, Brabham and, most crucially, Dumbreck all pitted. Lucas Luhr's decision to stay out would pay off handsomely, as his driving partner Michael Krumm would rejoin well clear of his Nissan team mate Westbrook.



That spurred Briton Westbrook into a charge, chasing down the German Nissan and even getting alongside on the front straight, though it would not last. The British driver, forced wide by the other black car at the first turn and baulked strongly into the chicane too, would fall back. His tyres simply could not take the abuse.

Jamie Campbell Walter, having been dropped two places by Hexis (Hohenadel) and VDS (Makowiecki) in the pits, swept alongside and past the silver Aston and set about the Belgian Ford. Coming out of the chicane and towards Signes, he pulled a superb, daring move around the outside to leave the French driver stunned. Campbell-Walter, however, would be

reprimanded for washing wide over the blue lines and cutting a turn, controversially taking his drive through on the last lap. In third place, ever entertaining Czech Tomas Enge was sliding his Aston Martin like a go kart, at one point taking his hands off the wheel as the car went wildly sideways at the chicane in his pursuit of Westbrook. He was soon on the tail of the big Nissan, putting heavy pressure on, as Dumbreck admitted his partner's tyres were well worn in the heat. The two cars were fighting nose to tail for the final two laps, before Enge made a stunning move in the middle of the chicane, rolling down the inside to surprise Westbrook into the right handed section.

That helped Mucke to close

in and pass; though again not without contact, the German giving his opponent a considerable punt in the side, much to Westbrook's displeasure. The Briton simply lifted his hands in frustration alongside on the slow down lap.

Away and clear, Michael Krumm calmly crossed the line after preserving his tyres, taking a comfortable victory, their first qualifying race win of 2011. "I just hope it's not a bad omen for the Championship Race for tomorrow. I stayed behind Peter (Dumbreck) until the pit stop," warned Luhr. "I stayed out one lap longer and our boys did a good stop and Michael [Krumm] came out in front so all in all it's a good day."

Three of the same four cars, then, were on the front rows for the main race of the weekend. Their order was shuffled after the various ins and outs of the Qualifying Race, with Krumm on pole, followed by the Astons of Enge and Mucke. However, various grid penalties had been applied (controversially and much to the bemusement of many of the drivers) and so Westbrook would start sixth and Campbell-Walter well back in the pack, too. That promoted Makowiecki to fourth and Winkelhock to fifth.

At the start, Krumm made a great start, leading through the first turn, whose victim this time was Mike Hezemans, the Dutch driver a little too eager to make ground at the first turn. He got very wide, onto the blue along the straight, then heavily damaged the car on the curbs exiting the corner following a Sumo nudge. Eve-

ryone else made it through in one piece.

Again, Belgian Racing suffered first lap damage, Vanina Ickx with a puncture. There was French civil war in the midfield going onto lap two, with the Hexis Astons battling allowing Dimitri Enjalbert the space to make a sweeping move around the outside into the first corner. Also going around the outside was Richard Westbrook, The Nissan pulled a very similar move to compatriot Campbell Walter's at Signes in the previous race, on the same car. Makowiecki was down to sixth. And his Nissan driving compatriot was making ground, passing the Hexis car of Christian Hohenadel, and then Enjalbert's Corvette too. That set him up to continue his charge onto the other Hexis car of Piccione. Despite being forced wide into the chicane, he swept around and passed in the left handed part of the turn.



16:15:32



MY JOB WAS EASY... THE CAR WAS MEGA!
THERE'S NOTHING ELSE TO SAY







Photo : DPP/GT1World.com

The same four cars continued to entertain, with Enjalbert now struggling and soon passed by both Hexis cars, negating his early progress. He was helped by the battling French cars again, Hohenadel pulling a superb move at Signes, unsettling Piccione and the Monégasque pilot lost control right between his team mate and the red Corvette. He hit nothing, but would rejoin well behind. Heading into the stops, Krumm was first, with Enge second and Mucke third for Young Driver. Mucke pitted first, as Enge came under pressure from charging Markus Winkelhock. The Lamborghini driver would suffer at the stops, however, dropping right down to seventh. Hennerici was suffering too, losing three places in three turns, passed by Rossi, Dusseldorp and one of the Belgian Fords as he struggled with his tyre temperatures out of

the pits.

Luhr still comfortably led, with Turner now second, Mueller third and Dumbreck closing in fourth. Battling for eighth, Bernoldi and Basseng exchanged a series of blows as the Sumo car muscled through. One Nissan going forward, another heading for disaster. Dumbreck's race was done as the left rear suffered a failure and the car was forced to limp to the pits to retire.

For third, Makowiecki wanted by Mueller, but the Frenchman hampered himself into the chicane and allowed Brabham to sweep by before Signes. As the final lap started, Andrea Piccini wanted a piece too, the Hexis driver able to slam down the inside into the second turn and cementing his advantage over the lap. Luhr's advantage was not as big as it had been as he crossed the line, Darren Turner having closed the gap, but the

German crewed Nissan took their third Championship Race victory of the season. Turner and Mucke were second, with their team mates Mueller and Enge completing the podium. "My job was easy...the car was mega! There's nothing else to say," beamed Luhr.

"You need luck to win, and to not get punted at turn one is luck," smiled a modest Michael Krumm. As the cars are shipped away to China on the longest leg of the world tour so far, the German Nissan crew now leads the standings. Their 111 points plays against 97 for Markus Winkelhock and Marc Basseng for All-Inkl Lamborghini, who had a quiet weekend in the south of France. Piccini and Hohenadel are third for Hexis with 84 points, but it seems the World Championship will likely be decided between the top two crews now. China will certainly be interesting.





GT3 EUROPE SPAIN

WRT ON TOP IN SPAIN

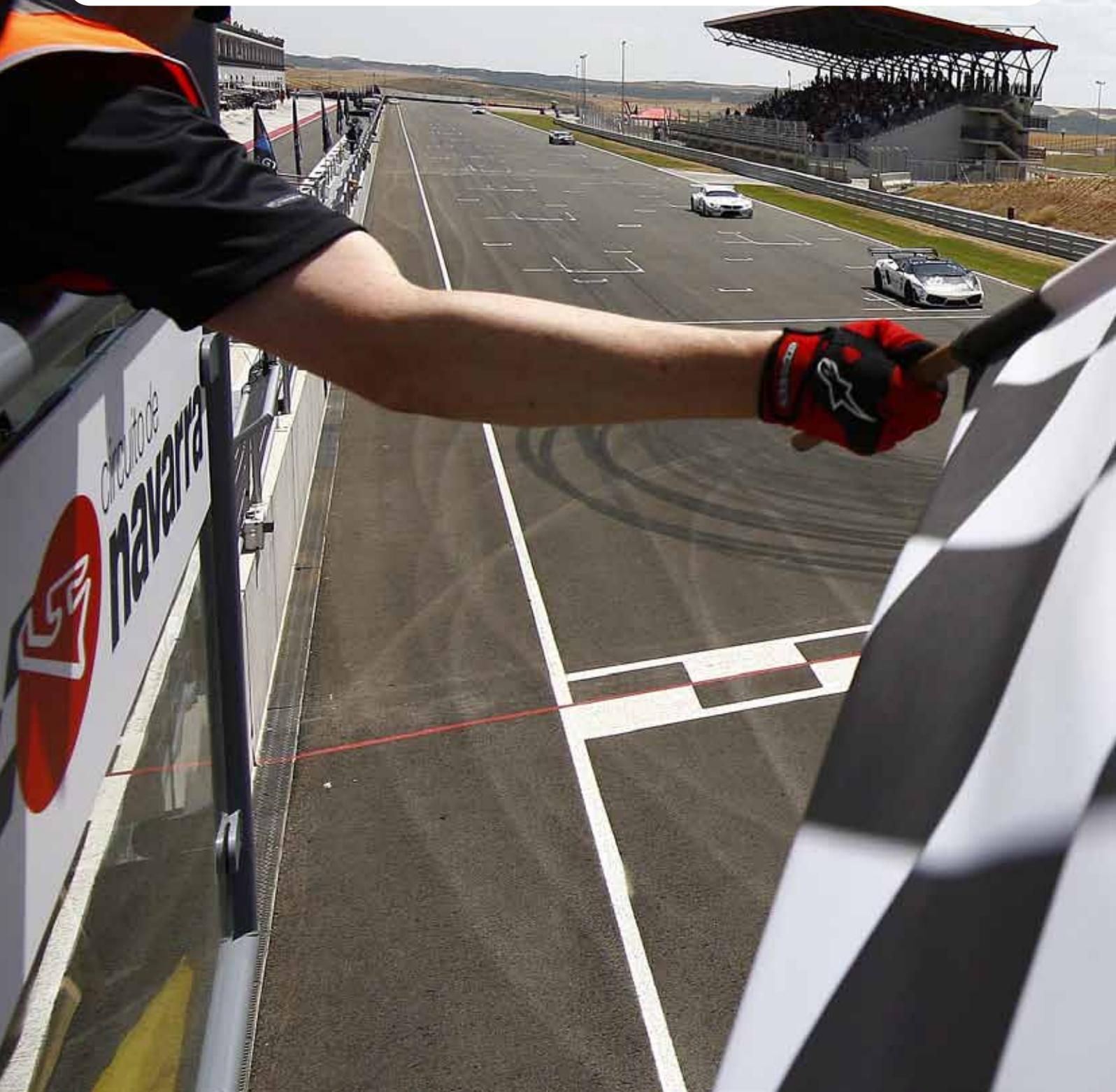
Navarra, Round 5 + 6, July 3rd By Alex Roache

The northern Spanish province of Navarre was put on the motor racing map in 2010 when the Circuito de Navarra was completed just in time to host the eighth round of the FIA GT1 World Championship.

It's certainly not the most spectacular of circuits, but it produced a decent race with the unexpectedly dominant Reiter Lamborghini of Ricardo Zonta and Frank Kechele emerging victorious. The 2.4-mile track, with its mix of medium and slow speed cor-

ners, seemed to play right to the strengths of the Murciélago's chassis and V12 engine, something of a surprise for a car considered to be more at home on the fast sweeping curves of a circuit like Spa-Francorchamps.

Even ahead of the FIA GT3





European Championship's debut around the 2.4-mile track, therefore, Reiter Engineering's Lambo Gallardo - piloted by Austrian ace Nikolaus Mayr-Melnhof and the always-entertaining Albert von Thurn und Taxis - had a weight of expectation on its shoulders. If this was a Murciélago track, it stood to reason that a Gallardo prepared by the same crew should be quick as well.

And while the first Friday practice didn't go to plan, free practice two saw the pair leap to the top of the times. That form was almost carried through to the opening qualifying session, but AF Corse's Francesco Castellacci had read the script and didn't like it - he banged in a lap just over a tenth quicker than Mayr-Melnhof's best effort (the two of them were almost a second clear of the rest), clinching pole for race one.

It was championship leaders Faster Racing, however, who once again delivered the goods in qualifying two for an all BMW Z4 GT3 front row. Nicky Catsburg would start on pole for the second race alongside teammate Jeroen den Boer, with the Dino Lunardi and Jerome Demay Audi R8 in third. Amazingly, at the start there was relatively little drama for such a huge grid funnelling down through two fast corners into a hairpin. Only Jerome Demay in the #15 Sainteloc Audi was sent spinning around, leaving him with little opportunity to repeat his heroic Silverstone performance.

Mayr-Melnhof had stormed into the lead at the start, pulling ahead of the #50 Ferrari with the sheer grunt of its V12 against the Maranello V8. Ed



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ALBERT VON THURN UND
TAXIS



Race one start (left) while Edward Sandström and Abdulaziz Al Faisal took second place in race one in their very minimal Z4 (below) Photos: DPPI/GT3



ward Sandström in the Dunlop-shod #6 Need For Speed Team Schubert BMW maintained third, but as the race settled down and the lead Gallardo started to eke out a gap to second, the Swede went on the attack.

The white-liveried Z4 hounded the Ferrari for a number of laps before the pressure became too much, and on lap eight Castellacci lost the back end into turn three. Sandström

sailed past - narrowly avoiding a shunt with the #50 car - and Castellacci rejoined just ahead of Faster Racing's Hoevert Vos. Meanwhile, Giacomo Petrobelli was attracting attention for all the wrong reasons with his antics in the #38 Scuderia Vittoria Ferrari. Having punted fellow Ferrari driver Dan Brown into a spin at the final corner, several laps later he broke the golden rule of wheel to wheel combat by blocking twice as

Philippe Giauque nosed up the inside at the end of the back straight. Caught unawares, the #3 Graff Racing SLS went fish-tailing off the track - thankfully onto a tarmac run-off from which he could recover with ease. Petrobelli would escape unpunished.

For the remainder of the race the focus was very much on the battle for the lead between the #24 Lamborghini and the Need for Speed BMW. Mayr-



Race two was a close affair.

Photo: DPPI/GT3

Melnhof and Sandström had delivered fine opening stints, the Austrian handing teammate Albert von Thurn und Taxis a six-second lead in the pitstops and the Swede having kept in touch with the Reiter Engineering Gallardo despite battling past Castellacci. Abdulaziz Al Faisal took the reins of the #6 Z4 GT3 and soon closed the gap, the BMW's Dunlop tyres working well in the Navarra heat. With a handful

of laps to go we were met with the fascinating prospect of a head to head between royalty - Prince Al Faisal of Saudi Arabia hunting down Germany's 12th Prince of Thurn und Taxis. Despite Al Faisal's best efforts, however, this particular regal duel amounted to little more than a close-run final lap, and the Reiter Engineering squad was able to celebrate its first victory on 2011 ahead of the Need for Speed Team Schubert

car. Faster Racing came home third with Vos and den Boer. Thurn und Taxis was elated as he clambered from the Gallardo: "Niki really left me the car with a fantastic gap, and he really laid down a pace that was impossible to follow for the rest, and it proved once more to others, but not to me, that he is an incredibly fast driver. I hope now that we can maintain a good fight." They would be hard-pressed to



Photo: DPPI/GT3Europe.com

do so from seventh on the grid, which is where the pair would start race two after a disappointing second qualifying. Faster Racing had locked out the front row with the #36 car of Dutch ace Nicky Catsburg on pole, and Belgian Audi Club Team WRT had impressed when Dino Lunardi qualified third ahead of MTECH's Matt Griffin in the #21 Ferrari.

The half-wet, half-dry circuit conditions on Sunday morning posed a risk of chaos the stewards were not willing to run, so the race was, rather disappointingly, started behind the safety car. The entire field went for slicks which, despite being the only sensible option on a track that was drying quickly in the sunshine, would make each and every car a real handful during the first laps of racing.

As the safety car pulled in, the lead trio got the jump on Griffin's Ferrari, but as the field piled down into turns two and three the pack bunched up again and there was nothing to separate the top ten over the first lap.

As the race settled down and a dry line started to appear, Catsburg started edging out a gap which his teammate den Boer could not pull back. It was not through lack of effort, as demonstrated by den Boer a

few laps late when he dropped it in the final corner and spun around. Desperate to recover without losing too much time, the Dutchman spun his car around in the middle of the track - Lewis Hamilton style - a transgression which would earn him a drive through penalty and destroy the #35 car's afternoon.

There were no such issues for the #36 car as it pitted for the driver change - it was Harrie Kolen in for Nicky Catsburg, and despite an added 10 second penalty for their Silverstone success, the BMW emerged a good few seconds clear of the battle for second between two Audis. Jerome Demay in the Sainteloc R8 was unable to repeat his defensive driving heroics from Silverstone and Enzo Ide made short work of passing him to move up to second in the Team WRT car and set about casing Kolen.

He didn't have to chase for long. As in Silverstone, Kolen's pace was so far off that of his teammate Catsburg that the Ide/Franchi Audi was right on his tail with only a handful of laps left. Third place was all but set - the Graff Racing Mercedes of Philippe Giaque and Mike Parisy having made superb progress from ninth on the grid - but entering the last lap, it was anyone's guess who

would win.

And unfortunately for Faster Racing's Harrie Kolen, fate was to deal him another eleventh hour blow as he was once again passed for the lead with just a few corners remaining. This time, he couldn't even console himself with the fact it was his teammate snatching victory from the jaws of defeat - this was a whole different car; a whole different team.

For a bronze-rated driver, Enzo Ide had once again driven a skilled and mature race to complement teammate Greg Franchi's strong opening stint. The pair had claimed their second win of the year, and were clearly satisfied with the result.

"It was very nice, but it was really tight," commented Ide. "I had to make the move at that corner, or it would not have been possible. I was behind him for a few laps, and tried to see where his weak points were, and I think this was one of them, so I had to do it there, it was the last lap. I just went for it, and passed."

The win bolsters their championship challenge, as the duo now sit just four points shy of points leaders Castellacci and Leo in the AF Corse Ferrari 458 as the FIA GT3 circus heads to Paul Ricard.



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GT3 EUROPE FRANCE

RISING TAXIS

Paul Ricard, July 16th - 17th By *GT3 Europe*

Round 5 winners Albert von Thurn und Taxis and Nikolaus Mayr-Melnhof scored their second win of the 2011 season in emphatic style with a lights

to flag victory in Round 7 at Paul Ricard. Von Thurn und Taxis, starting from Pole Position in the nr24 Reiter Engineering Lamborghini Gallardo, led the 28 car grid into

the first corner and opened up a 10 second gap to the following cars by the time the pitstop window opened. The nr24 Lamborghini was the last to pit and Mayr-Melnhof took





LANCPAIN BLANCPAIN



over the driving duties and he held the lead until the chequered flag.

Second place went to the nr50 AF Corse Ferrari 458 of Federico Leo and Francesco Castellacci after Leo made up two places at the first corner from 4th on the grid. Despite pressure from the nr1 Prospeed Porsche of Paul van Splunteren Leo handed over the car in 2nd place, with Castellacci bringing the car home for their third

podium finish and the lead of the FIA GT3 Drivers Championship.

The final podium place went to the nr15 Sainteloc Racing Audi R8 LMS of Dino Lunardi and Jerome Demay. Demay made up seven places on the opening lap from 13th on the grid and handed the Audi to Lunardi in 4th place. A penalty for the nr1 Porsche for a pitstop infringement gave Lunardi the final podium position.



17:43:29



2010 FIA GT3 Team Champions Prospeed Competition returned to the top step of the podium in Round 8 of the FIA GT3 European Championship at Paul Ricard in France. Maxime Soulet, starting from 4th on the grid, got a good start and handed over the Porsche in 2nd place to Paul Van Splunteren. The Dutch driver caught and passed the leading LMP Motorsport Aston Martin DBRS9 of Gael Lesoudier to

take the teams first podium finish in 2011. Maxime Martin and Gael Lesoudier scored their third podium finish of the season after leading for most of the 27 lap race. The nr33 Belgian Audi Club Team WRT Audi R8 of Greg Franchi and Enzo Ide was a distant 3rd after Franchi sliced through the field at the start after qualifying in 14th place. Ide took control of the Audi and brought the car home for the

third podium finish of the season.

Francesco Castellacci, started in a lowly 12th place on the grid and he and Federico Leo fought their way up to a creditable 4th place in the AF Corse Ferrari 458 Italia to leave Paul Ricard with a four point advantage in the Driver's Championship over Enzo Ide and Greg Franchi.





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