

# Fanatec GT World - Endurance (Monza) - Top 10 in Pro Cup!

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#News

The 2023 Fanatec GT World Challenge Europe started last weekend at the legendary circuit of Monza. The Ascari variant, Curva, Parabolica, Curva di Lesmos... some of the many recognisable landmarks of this temple to Italian motorsport. With 55 cars entered, this first round of the Endurance Cup had the largest grid for a season opener since 2016. With a very good performance in the free practice sessions, the two Akkodis ASP Team crews, entered in Pro Cup, were running at the front until the Pre-qualifying sessions (P3 and P5 overall). But a new balance of Performance shuffled the cards for Qualifying sessions, that were also disrupted by a massive power cut. Having made it back up to P4 during the race (starting P16), the #88 Mercedes-AMG GT3 of Raffaele Marciello, Timur Boguslavskiy and Jules Gounon was forced to retire after a contact, a bit less than an hour and a half of racing. In the #87, the trio of Maximilian Götz, Thomas Drouet and Lorenzo Ferrari finished in the Pro Cup Top 10 (P13 overall). The next round of the Endurance Cup, the 1000km of the Paul Ricard Circuit, will take place from the 2nd to the 4th of June. In the meantime, the Sprint Cup will start up in three weeks time, at the Brands Hatch circuit (13/14 May).



Akkodis ASP Team had two Pro teams lined up at Monza, with Raffaele Marciello and Jules Gounon, reigning champions, who were joined in the #88 Mercedes-AMG GT3 by Timur Boguslavskiy. The sister car, the #87, was driven by Maximilian Götz (his first full season in the Endurance Cup since 2018), Thomas Drouet and Lorenzo Ferrari.

At this emblematic circuit, the battle began as of the first free practice session, dominated for the most part by the #88 thanks to Jules Gounon's time (1m46.187s). It was also a good performance for the #87, P12 overall and P6 Pro with 1m47.008s for Thomas Drouet.

In the afternoon, the Pre-qualifying session, disrupted by two red flags, a Full Course Yellow and a safety car, unfolded at a brisk pace.

Raffaele Marciello, the fastest of the drivers of the #88 finished the 90-minute session P3 overall and P2 Pro. Maximilian Götz placed the #87 P5 overall (P4 Pro).

Thanks to these excellent times, the Balance of Performance was revised ahead of the qualifying session the following day. Among the "penalised" was the Mercedes-AMG, weighted down by 15kg, while other manufacturers were "lightened".

In this context, the qualifying sessions began in a rather tense atmosphere. The setups from the previous day were affected by this weight gain and it was necessary to react to stay in the game. What's more, violent storms in the region damaged the power grid and the session started with a 45 minute delay. Another blackout happened just before Q3, creating another delay, then finally cancelled the session. The grid was made up from Q1 and Q2.

Raffaele Marciello was the first to head out in the #88, followed by Timur Boguslavskiy. In the #87, Lorenzo Ferrari started the fun, followed by Thomas Drouet. Unfortunately, Jules Gounon (#88) and Maximilian Götz (#87) didn't run. In the end, thanks to the average of the best time of each driver, the #88 was P16 (P11 Pro) and the #87 was P27 (P16 Pro).

Sunday, at 3:15pm, the lights went green for an intense three-hour race. The track was dry, the sky overcast, but not really menacing. The grid was very impressive and inevitably, with 55 cars on track, the first chicane did not go smoothly at the rear of the pack. Having started P16, Raffaele Marciello already managed to climb to P12 in the #88, and Maximilian Götz P23 in the #87 (started P27), when the safety car "already" made an appearance.



The restart, 15' later, did not create any new incidents, and the two Akkodis ASP Team drivers continued attacking. As the laps went by, the pace increased and several positions were retaken. Still on the offensive, Raffaele Marciello (#88) and Maximilian Götz (#87) were respectively P8 and P14 at 2h02 of the finish. The maximum length of a stint is 65 minutes, and various strategies were starting to appear.

Maximilian Götz was the first to head to the pits to hand the wheel of the #87 over to the local boy of the event, Lorenzo Ferrari. Raffaele Marciello (#88) made the most of his driving time, then ended taking to the pit lane. The Akkodis ASP Team mechanics executed an incredibly efficient pit stop and Timur Boguslavskiy headed back onto the track in p4, while Lorenzo Ferrari was P17.

As since the beginning of the race, the pace didn't let up and Timur found himself under attack from the competition. The laps continued and he put up a good fight, sitting at P6 overall while his young Italian teammate remained in the Pro Top 13.

With less than 1h30 to go, during an attack on the #25, Timur resisted once again, closed the door, and got hit in the rear. Instantly, the car started to smoke, signalling that the bodywork was damaged and rubbing against the tyre. In slow motion, Timur Boguslavskiy fell down the classification and finally rejoined the pits. The #88 Mercedes-AMG GT3 was forced to retire, which was a great disappointment for Jules Gounon, who was deprived of his stint, just as he had missed out on the qualifying session that morning.

With the regularity of a metronome, Lorenzo Ferrari arrived at the end of his stint without any trouble, P11 Pro Cup and P14 overall. The #87, then driven by Thomas Drouet, joined the track at the same pace. After a few laps, the Frenchman was in the Top 10 of the category, and P12 overall. With thirty minutes to go, he didn't let up on the pressure, pushed off any attempts at being overtaken by his adversaries, and held himself in the Pro Cup Top 10. A position that he would hold right until he crossed the chequered flag (P13 overall).

This first race of the season has a slight taste of unfinished business for Akkodis ASP Team, and the feeling of having missed out on scoring precious points. Nothing is lost, the season is long, and for the next round of the Endurance Cup, the 1000km at the Paul Ricard Circuit (2/4 June), the objective is to win!

