

Fanatec GT World - Sprint (Brands Hatch) - Pole and victory at the season opener!

14-05-2023

#News

The start of the 2023 Fanatec GT Sprint Cup went pretty well for the Akkodis ASP Team who, as of the first race, managed to get a full house, claiming pole, victory and the best lap time with their only car entered, the #88 Mercedes-AMG GT3, driven by Raffaele Marciello and Timur Boguslavskiy. The second race resulted with a 6th place (after starting P19) which allowed the team to place themselves in a provisional second place in the championship (6,5 points off the leaders). The next round of the Sprint Cup will be held on the Adriatic coast at the Misano circuit (15/16 July). Then there will be a long break while the Endurance Cup will be busy with the 1000 km at the Paul Ricard Circuit (2/4 June) and especially the legendary 24 Hours of Spa (29 June/2 July).



For this first round of the season (as well as the finale in Zandvoort in October), the Bronze Cup category was absent. This meant that there was only one car on track for Akkodis ASP Team, the #88 (PRO) with Raffaele Marciello and Timur Boguslavskiy, while Eric Debard and Jim Pla will start in the #87 in Misano in July (with a record grid of 40 cars).

Having won 12 months ago at Brands Hatch, the crew of the #88 was determined to rise to the challenge for the 2023 title by starting here with another victory. As of the free practice sessions, the best time was set by Lello Marciello with a lap of 1m22.51s, almost seven tenths quicker than the #27 Audi. The driver and his car seemed to be very at ease on the 3.916km hilly British track.



The 29 cars entered then went into the pre-qualifying session. The #88 was in the Top 5 (P3 Pro) in the slightly shortened session due to a red flag.

The qualifying sessions were very competitive and gripping right up until the end, especially the first session. The first part of Q1 was dominated by the Ferraris, while Lello was P4. During the second half of the session, the tension did not let up and a red flag was waved with three minutes to go. When the track went green, Lello left the pits second, but quickly overtook the #32 BMW. The Swiss-Italian driver then gave an extraordinary demonstration. With a time of 1m22.25s, he took pole, his 13th in Sprint Cup, a record! Q2 was a little less tense, but was also interrupted by a red flag. Stuck in traffic and, by his own admission, not at his best since Monza, Timur Boguslavskiy finished P19 overall (P12 Pro).



RACE 1 - Sixth victory as a pair for Raffaele Marciello and Timur Boguslavskiy, and the thirteenth for Lello!

At the end of Sunday morning, with clement weather (19°C) and in the presence of many spectators, the 2023 season got underway. The 2022 Sprint vice-champion (and Endurance Champion), Lello Marciello, was on pole position.

As of the start, the Swiss-Italian driver was on the attack, determined to create a decent gap when it would be time to hand over to his teammate. Doing a lot of work in the management of the race, Lello managed lap after lap to put space between him and his adversaries, setting the best lap at the same time. When the pit window opened, he had made up a capital of more than 15 seconds. Akkodis ASP Team had a quick pitstop of 42.1s, and then Timur Boguslavskiy went on track.

Timur had a 15s lead, but saw his capital melt away following difficulties with traffic and not having the most regular pace. The #40 Audi of Ricardo Feller made the most of it to close the gap. With 8' to go, the gap was down to 5 seconds.

By the end of the race, the atmospheric temperature had gone up by 5°C, but it was much hotter under their helmets. The last two laps were scorching and the traffic dense. In the final passage, the #40 was right up against the #88 and as they crossed the finish flag, there was only 0.6s separating the two cars. But Timur managed to resist and crossed the finish line first. A win on the wire, but one that allowed the team to score a maximum of points.



RACE 2 - A fantastic ride!

The skies were blue for the second race of the weekend, with an even bigger crowd. At this track where overtaking is a true challenge, the start is paramount. Starting from the 10th row, Timur Boguslavskiy's task proved to be complex. P19 on the grid after a qualifying session that didn't satisfy him (a competitor was sanctioned for having gotten in his way), Timur was more than eager to succeed his start.

There were a few contacts in the peloton, but the driver of the #88 did not get caught up in them and even won a position after a few minutes. Keeping a steady pace, the gaps faded with a Full Course Yellow followed by a safety car after fewer than 20 minutes of racing. The pit-stop window was pushed back by 2 minutes to avoid any traffic jams, and just as it opened, Timur (P17) headed to the pits. The Akkodis ASP Team mechanics achieved quite a feat by completing the stop in 40.7s (including coming into the pits, the driver change, changing the tyres and leaving again). This superb time allowed Kevin Fernandes and Dorian Henry to win the pit-stop challenge!

Raffaele Marciello went on track in Full Attack mode and started his climb. With 23' to go, he was P8, 7s from the leader. Performing an extraordinary double overtake, Lello jumped into P6. During the final 10 minutes, he was right up behind the #11 Audi of Lucas Légeret (who raced in Jérôme Policand's team in 2020). After several very incisive attempts at overtaking, and a strong resistance from the Audi driver, Raffaele Marciello secured the points they had rather than risk it all. The #88 Mercedes-AMG crossed the line in P6 and claimed the second place in the Sprint Cup provisional classification with 22 points (6.5 points off the leader).



The Sprint Cup will take a long break before the second round, held at Misano on the 15th and 16th of July (with the Bronze Cup). But our next meeting will be for the Endurance Cup in three weeks' time, at the Paul Ricard Circuit for the 1000km (2-4 June).