

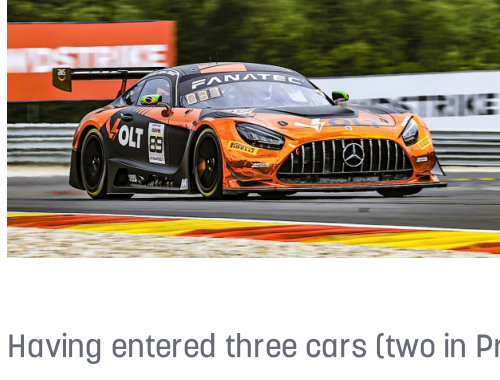
Fanatec GT World - 24 Hours of Spa - on the second step of the podium!

03-07-2023

#News

Suspense right up until the chequered flag, Akkodis ASP Team finishes on the second step of the podium

The 75th edition of the 24 Hours of Spa maintained a high level of suspense right up until the chequered flag, paced by Full Course Yellow and safety car sessions. From the 23rd place on the grid up until 2nd place, the #88 Mercedes-AMG GT3 of Raffaele Marciello, Timur Boguslavskiy and Jules Gounon, title holders, proved their combativity until the end. With a staggered strategy, the #88 optimised their classification at the 6 and 12 hour marks of the race, getting a lot of points for the championship. Despite a good pace and a great climb from P38 to P12, Thomas Drouet, Lorenzo Ferrari and Maximilian Götz and their #87 had to retire with 8h30 to go, having suffered a contact that irreparably damaged the radiator. One hour later, the #89 entered in the Bronze Cup, of Adalberto, Bruno and Rodrigo Baptista, associated with Alan Hellmeister, also through in the towel due to a broken engine. Although they were spared the weather, the Belgian Endurance Classic, as demanding as ever, really decimated the field that had 70 cars at the start and 44 classified. The next round of the Endurance Cup will be at the Nürburgring on the 29th and 30th of July. But in less than two weeks, the competitors of the Sprint Cup will find themselves in Misano (Italy) for the fifth round of the Fanatec GT World.



Having entered three cars (two in Pro and one in Bronze Cup), the Akkodis ASP Team, winner of the 2022 24 Hours of Spa was awaited in the Belgian Ardennes.

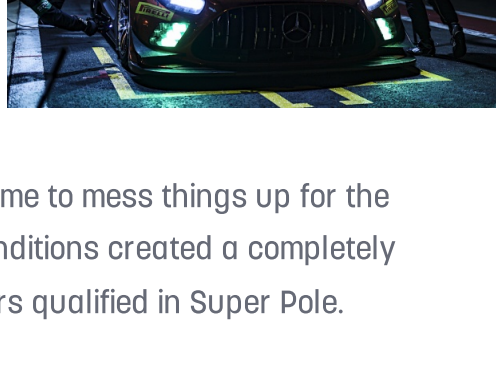
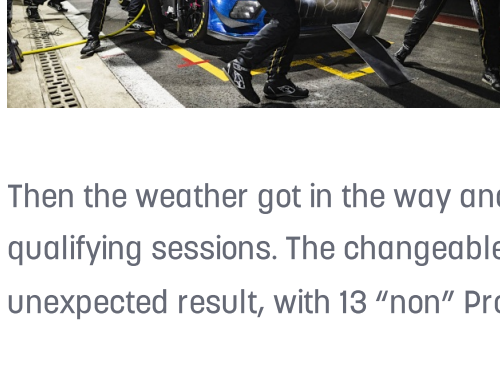
For the crews, nothing new in the Pro cars with the usual championship trios entered, so Raffaele Marciello, Timur Boguslavskiy and Jules Gounon in the #88 and Thomas Drouet, Lorenzo Ferrari and Maximilian Götz (who won in 2013) in the #87. The car entered in Bronze Cup (#89) has four drivers - the Baptista trio of Adalberto, Bruno and Rodrigo, who were joined by Alan Hellmeister for the event.

This year, the grid was made up of 71 GT3 cars, which offered an unequalled level of competition, while the legendary event was celebrating its 75th edition. The traditional parade from the circuit to the centre of Spa (this year with more than 200 cars) proved the appeal of this race, attracting thousands of fans.



The free practice sessions allowed the teams to get their marks on the circuit but didn't really let them gauge the competition. On the 7km track, Lello Marciello placed the #88 in P11, Maximilian Götz was P27 (#87) and Rodrigo Baptista was P41 (#89).

At pre-qualifying, the competition showed itself a bit more and it was clear that the Mercedes-AMG GT3 was not the most performant, Raffaele Marciello (#88) was P19, Thomas Drouet (#87) P21 and Bruno Baptista (#89) P50.

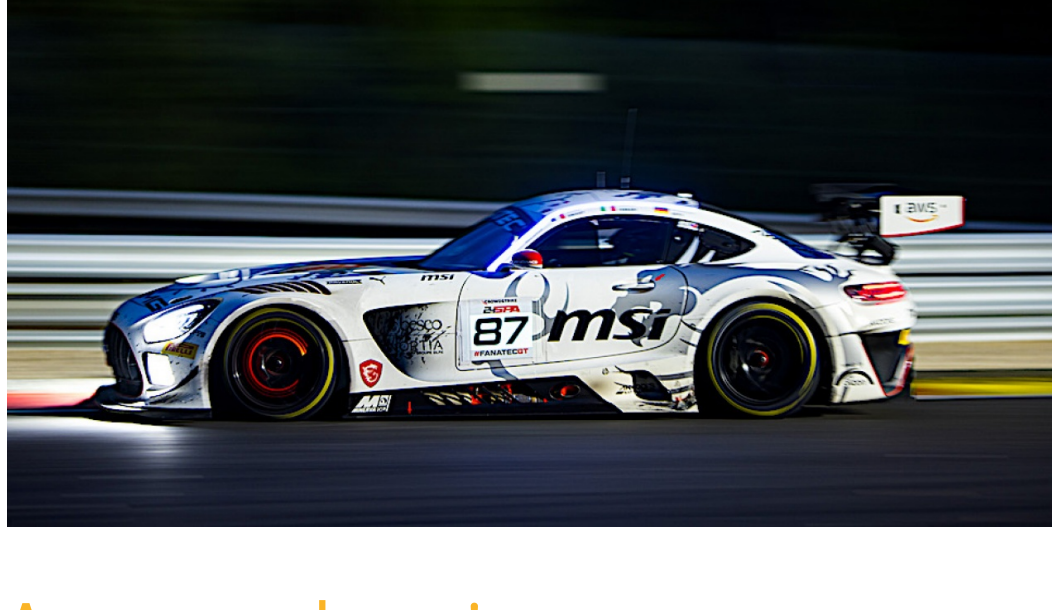


Then the weather got in the way and came to mess things up for the qualifying sessions. The changeable conditions created a completely unexpected result, with 13 "non" Pro cars qualified in Super Pole.

The first session, reserved for the nr 4 drivers (for crews with 4 drivers), took place in the dry, then the rain appeared and intensified during the final two sessions, to become torrential when the chequered flag fell. Thus, the crews with four drivers were privileged for the calculation of the average that would set the positions on the starting grid. For the very first time, none of the Akkodis ASP Team cars took part in the Super Pole. The #88 was P23, the #87 P38 and the #89 P42 (P13 Bronze).

The weather was so bad that the night practice session that had been planned after qualifying were cancelled.

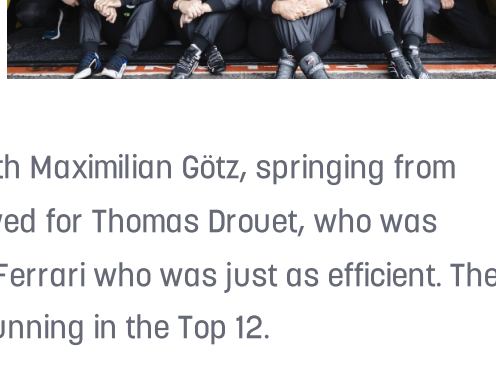
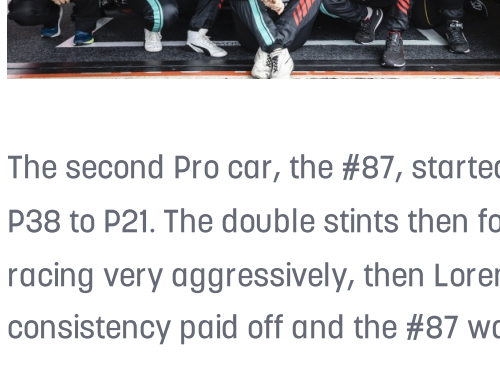
The following day, during warm-up, Raffaele Marciello (#88) was P6, the #89 was P25 with Bruno Baptista, and the #87 with Maximilian Götz was P27.



A very good race!

Saturday, after a relatively humid morning and afternoon, the weather calmed down. Meanwhile, the track was still wet and the start was given behind the safety car. After 25 minutes, the flag finally went green, freeing the 70 competitors for the 75th edition of the 24 Hours of Spa.

In the #88, Raffaele Marciello started with an incredible double stint by going from 23rd on the grid to 7th place after two hours of racing. Timur Boguslavskiy followed at a very good pace, and went into P5 before Jules Gounon took the wheel and kept the position. The race unfolded at a very fast pace and none of the three drivers held back.



The second Pro car, the #87, started with Maximilian Götz, springing from P38 to P21. The double stints then followed for Thomas Drouet, who was racing very aggressively, then Lorenzo Ferrari who was just as efficient. The consistency paid off and the #87 was running in the Top 12.

In the #89, entered in the Bronze Cup, Rodrigo Baptista was the first to run, quickly gaining 6 places. Adalberto then Bruno Baptista followed each other just before Alan Hellmeister. The competition was fierce in the category with 21 cars entered but the Brazilian car kept up the pace.

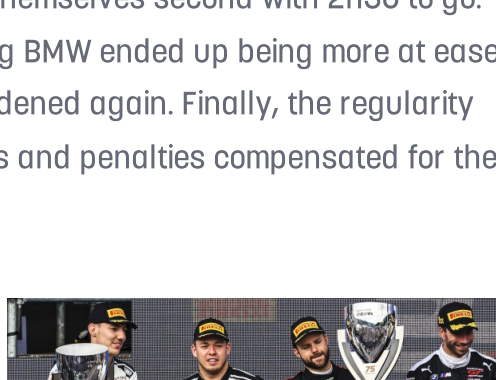
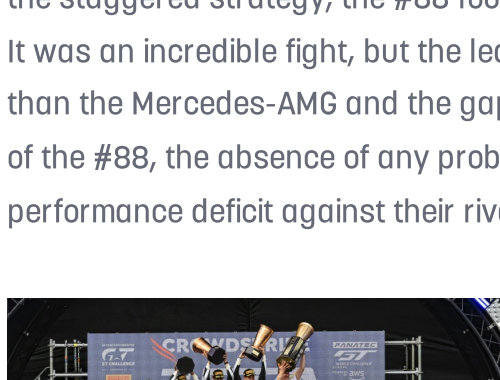
The night brought its lot of incidents, contacts, Full Course Yellow and safety-car sessions. Managing to avoid these traps, Team Akkodis ASP's three cars were still on track in the morning. The #88 was P5, the #87 was P14 and the #89 was sitting P47.



But the tide was about to turn for the French team. After 14h30 of racing and just after a safety-car period, Maximilian Götz on board the #87 was victim of a contact with the #30 BMW. The Mercedes-AMG went into a spin but managed to stay on track. The German driver headed back to the pits but the radiator was too damaged and the #87 had to retire. It was a great disappointment as the team had been running regularly and efficiently.

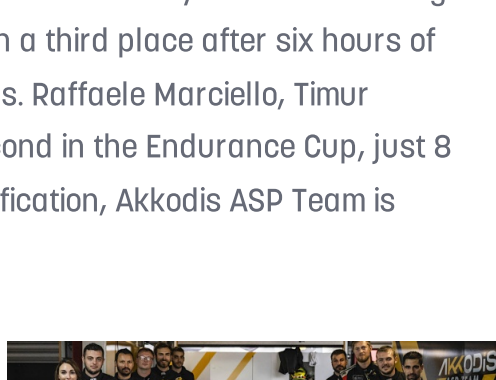
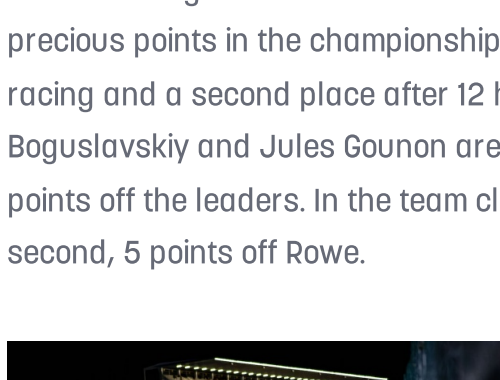
One hour later, the #89 had to throw in the towel. Just before the driver change, Alan Hellmeister was P15 in the Bronze Cup (P45 overall), a position that Rodrigo Baptista managed to hold onto until the engine gave signs of weakness. But with 7 hours to go, the engine gave up and they had to withdraw.

The #88 Mercedes-AMG was then the only car left on track for the team. The final four hours of the race were under green flag, nothing disturbed the race. Having been in the Top 5 for several hours, lap by lap, Raffaele Marciello and Jules Gounon gave it all to get close to the leader. Thanks to the staggered strategy, the #88 found themselves second with 2h30 to go. It was an incredible fight, but the leading BMW ended up being more at ease than the Mercedes-AMG and the gap widened again. Finally, the regularity of the #88, the absence of any problems and penalties compensated for the performance deficit against their rival.



During the end of the race, Jules Gounon was under pressure from the #17 Audi that was putting more and more pressure on him. It was a duel that allowed the #92 Porsche to catch back up to the group and ended up putting pressure on the Audi themselves. Jules managed to get away and get a bit of breathing room. The #98 BMW crossed the finish line followed by the #88, 11 seconds behind...

The battle raged until the end. The team's consistency allowed them to gain precious points in the championship with a third place after six hours of racing and a second place after 12 hours. Raffaele Marciello, Timur Boguslavskiy and Jules Gounon are second in the Endurance Cup, just 8 points off the leaders. In the team classification, Akkodis ASP Team is second, 5 points off Rowe.



Meanwhile, in the Fanatec GT World (Endurance + Sprint) overall classification, Raffaele Marciello and Timur Boguslavskiy are still on top (with a 14 point lead), as is Akkodis ASP Team.

See you on the 29th and 30th of July at the Nürburgring for the Endurance Cup, and in less than two weeks in Misano (15 and 16 July) for the Sprint Cup.