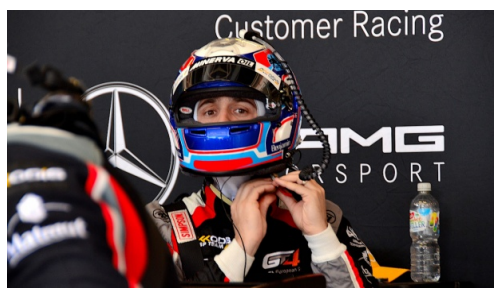


Fanatec GT2 European Series – Red Bull Ring (Austria) – First race and first victory!

28-05-2023

#News

The third season of the Fanatec GT2 European Series began for Akkodis ASP Team at the Red Bull Ring in Austria, for the second round of the championship. Jérôme Policand's team entered the brand new Mercedes-AMG GT2 for the first time. This baptism of fire allowed the father and son duo of Mauro and Benjamin Ricci, to dominate as of the first race. A success followed by a very good fourth place in the second race. For this team's familiar crew, now entered in Pro-AM, adapting to the new car went relatively quick. Mauro (AM vice-champion in the GT4 European Series) and Benjamin Ricci, sharing the cockpit of the #61, will be ones to watch at the first of the two French rounds, in Dijon, in three weeks' time (16/17 June).



A new championship, a new car and a new challenge to meet this season for Akkodis ASP Team. The Mercedes-AMG GT2 with 707 hp is the most powerful model that Mercedes-AMG has developed for their competition-client programme.

Akkodis ASP Team entered a single car for a crew familiar to the team - Mauro and Benjamin Ricci. Entered in 2022 in the GT4 European Series in the AM category, Mauro took the vice-champion title (and the crown for the Team) and Benjamin finished in the Top 5 (having missed the last three races).

In GT2, the duo was entered in Pro-AM. From the start in Austria, the crew of the #61 set the 5th best time in the very close first free practice session. The second was just as close - Mauro and Benjamin settled into the Top 5, just 0.66s from fourth.

For qualifying (two 20-minute sessions), the weather was particularly nice. As in the free practice sessions, the times were close. Ten minutes after the start of Q2, Benjamin Ricci was the first to go under 1m29s, claiming the top spot at the time. By the end, Mauro Ricci would start Race 1 from the 4th row (P7) while Benjamin would take the start for Race 2 from the 2nd row (P4).



Race 1: Strong victory for Mauro and Benjamin RICCI!

The two races of the event (50 minutes each) exceptionally took place on Saturday. For the first race, at the start of the morning, the track conditions were optimal.

Mauro Ricci took the first stint and started P7 on the grid. Having had a particularly successful start, he found himself P5 at the exit of the first corner. Precise and attentive to his adversaries' manoeuvres, he adopted a high racing pace straightaway and did not take long to claim another position (P4). Right up until the driver change, a series of good battles ensued, with attempts to overtake cleanly and effectively thwarted.

The mandatory pitstop did not allow for changing tyres, but they could refuel (25l) for cars with high fuel consumption and limited fuel tanks, which was the case for the Mercedes-AMG. The stop was perfectly executed (1m55) and Benjamin Ricci was soon in the lead after one of the leaders was penalised.

Under attack from the #15 KTM, Benjamin set a steady pace, did not let up and mastered the situation with composure.

With 8 minutes to go, the safety car entered the track, the gaps disappeared and the restart for the final lap of the race was crucial. At the green light, Benjamin was not caught out and resisted the final attempts from the #15 car to overtake, and crossed the finish line in the lead.

In their first GT2 Series race, Mauro and Benjamin Ricci scored a superb victory. In 2018, Jérôme Policand's team had already won with a Mercedes-AMG for its first attempt in GT4.



Race 2: Right next to the podium...

At the start of the afternoon, Benjamin Ricci started P4 on the grid of the second race. As of the first lap, he had to fight hard to keep his position. After a few near misses and a slight contact, Benjamin had to relinquish two places, going to P6. The fight for fourth place was tough between the #1, the #67 and the #61.

After the mandatory pitstop, Mauro Ricci rejoined the track P6 and fought lap after lap to regain positions. Ten minutes before the finish, he was P5. The last laps allowed him to take one more place and Mauro finished the second race fourth.

Despite their absence at the first round, Mauro and Benjamin Ricci are sitting in 6th place in the overall classification of the championship. In less than three weeks, the first of the two French races will take place in Dijon, at the same time as the France GT4 championship.

