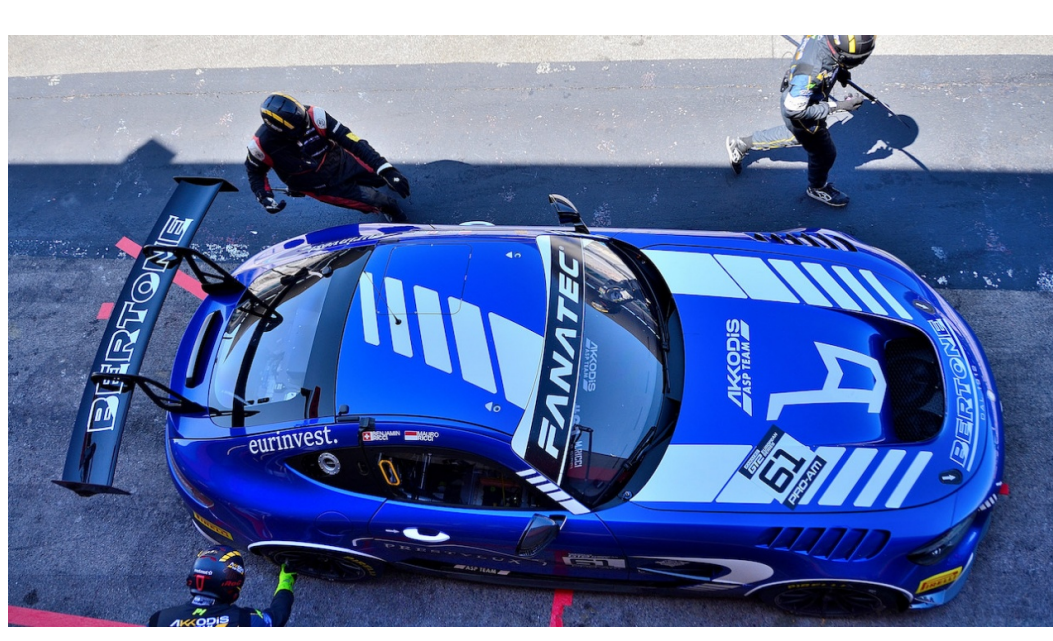


Fanatec GT2 European Series Portimao (Portugal) - Two AM podiums!

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#News

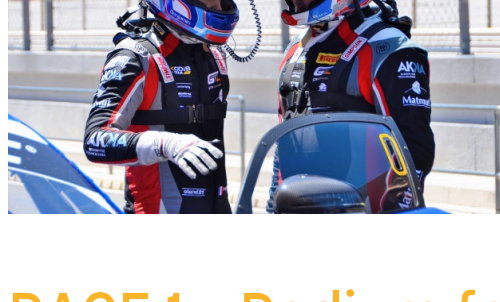
After Dijon (France), the Fanatec GT2 European Series headed off to Portugal for the summer, to the Portimão circuit, for its fourth round. In the Akkodis ASP Team clan, Mauro and Benjamin Ricci (with one victory at the Red Bull Ring) entered in the #61 Mercedes-AMG GT2 (Pro-AM) were joined in the AM category by Jean-Luc Beaubelique (2022 GT4 European Series Pro-AM Champion) and Christophe Bourret in the #87. The latter did not miss a beat by finishing third place in both races of the event. Despite some very good performances, the crew of the #61 narrowly missed out on the Race 1 podium. In the championship, in the Pro-AM category, Mauro and Benjamin Ricci are 4 points off the Top 5, while the duo of Beaubelique-Bourret is sixth in AM. After the summer break, the fifth round will take place in Valencia (Spain) from the 15th to the 17th of September.



Portimão has a reputation for being a technical track. It's quite hilly, and its 4.653 km is characterised by steep inclines and a long straight. During the first free practice session, the protagonists of the Fanatec GT2 European Series were taking measure of the difficulties ahead. Christophe Bourret and Jean-Luc Beaubelique, aboard the #87 Mercedes-AMG GT2, set the best times in the AM category, while the #61 of Mauro and Benjamin Ricci entered the top six in Pro-AM (and overall). In the second session the #61 was P6 Pro-AM and the #87 P2 AM.



Under a blazing sun and with a temperature of 27°C, the first qualifying session of the weekend had an Akkodis ASP Team group shot. Jean-Luc Beaubelique positioned the #87 P7 overall (P4 Am), just ahead of his teammate, Mauro Ricci (#61), P8 overall (P4 Pro-AM). But beware the track limits, as the penalties were raining down on the competitors. The next day, the second session defined the grid for Race 2, and saw the #61 of Benjamin Ricci place P6 (despite a time cancellation) and the #87 of Christophe Bourret P11.



RACE 1 - Podium for the AM duo (#87)!

The first race of the meeting proved exciting from the very first laps, and not just among the leaders. During the first stint, the two Akkodis ASP Team Mercedes-AMG cars, driven by Mauro Ricci (#61) and Jean-Luc Beaubelique (#87), fought side by side for fifth place. This brotherly duel provided an excellent moment of sport and lasted several laps before the refuelling stops, shaking up the established order.

In fact, Benjamin Ricci (#61) went back on track second overall (and Pro-AM), just behind the leading Audi of Anthony Beltoise, while Christophe Bourret (#87) settled into second place in AM (P5 overall). Under a sweltering heat, the pace accelerated and the PRO drivers set the tempo.

Lap after lap, Benjamin Ricci (#61) saw the #88 Audi approach in his rear view mirrors. A fierce fight for second place began, interrupted for a moment by the entrance of a safety car on track.



With 10 minutes to go, the track went green and the battle picked up where they'd left off. DI Giusto (#88) tried by all means to find the best angle to attack, and finally slid up the inside, taking second place with three minutes to go. The last lap was just as intense. Up like a shot, the #18 managed to overtake the #61 to take third place. Benjamin Ricci narrowly missed out on the podium and took a very good fourth place.

In the Am category, Christophe Bourret did not let up, fighting off his adversaries' attempts. He crossed the line P3 AM, the crew of the #87 celebrated their debut in the series with a podium (P8 overall).

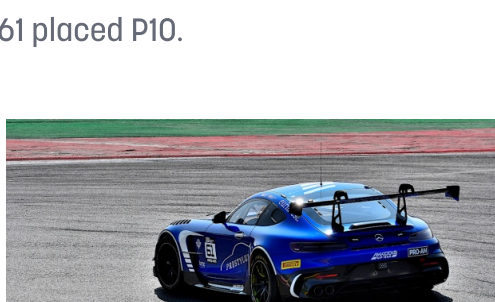
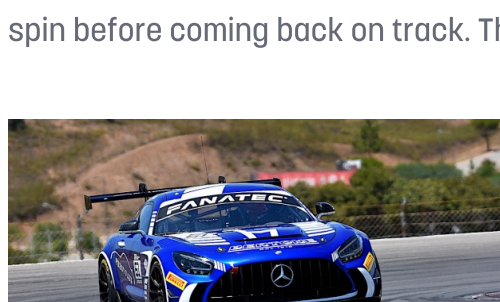


RACE 2 : Another AM podium!

The next day, it was time to go again. The track conditions were identical, and it was just as hot in the Algarve (28°C).

After a good start from sixth place on the grid, Benjamin Ricci (#61) overtook the #88 Audi (that one again) in the first lap. As the laps went by, the fight for fifth place reproduced the scenario of the previous day between the #61 Mercedes-AMG and the #88 Audi, who finished by passing its rival a bit before the halfway mark. Benjamin was then in P6. In the #87, Christophe Bourret, who started from the back of the grid, managed his stint carefully by conserving the tyres as much as possible.

After the refuelling and driver change, things were moving fast. In Pro-AM, Mauro Ricci started his stint relatively well from P5 and another fierce battle began. After a contact with the #15, Mauro lost a place, P6. But during the last ten minutes, the competition hardened. To avoid an incident in front of him, the driver of #18 swerved. Mauro Ricci did the same and went off in a spin before coming back on track. The #61 placed P10.



In AM, Jean-Luc Beaubelique (#87) was at the wheel, fighting for second place in the category. The fight was intense and Jean-Luc put a lot of pressure on the #911 Porsche during the last 20 minutes, before being hit by the #16 (who would finish its race in the gravel). Although the #911 received a double penalty (10s) after the race for track limits, it managed to keep second place in the category. Jean-Luc Beaubelique and Christophe Bourret (#87) got a second podium in two races.

In the Pro-AM classification, Mauro and Benjamin Ricci were sitting in sixth place, just 4 points off the Top 5. For their debut in the series, Jean-Luc Beaubelique and Christophe Bourret were sixth in AM.

Next rendez-vous will be on the 16th and 17th of September in Spain, at the Valencia circuit for the fifth and penultimate round of the season.