

# GT WORLD CHALLENGE EUROPE : double victory for Team AKKA-ASP!

11-10-2021

## #News

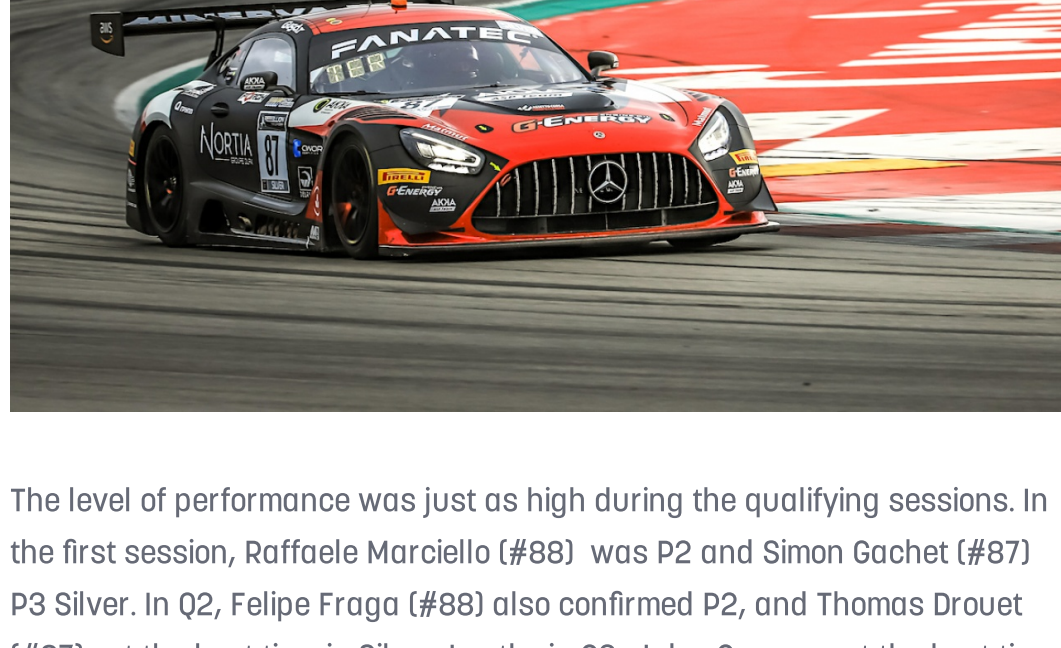
**Barcelona has often smiled on Team AKKA-ASP, and this year, the saying once more proved true. With a pole and two victories (overall and Silver), the French crew has returned to success. Raffaele Marciello, Felipe Fraga and Jules Gounon won a solid, clean and undeniable victory in the #88 Mercedes-AMG, leading the race from start to finish. A success that was deserved after having dominated in the practice and qualifying sessions. The Silver crew was just as efficient in winning the race with determination, building up their victory lap by lap. At the wheel of the #87, Simon Gachet, Konstantin Tereschenko and Thomas Drouet didn't waver. As for the championship, Raffaele Marciello finished the season in second place in the overall championship (Sprint + Endurance), as did Team AKKA-ASP. He also shares second place with Jules Gounon in the Endurance Cup. Simon Gachet, Konstantin Tereschenko and Thomas Drouet also finished in second place in the Silver Endurance Cup. It's been a good harvest of awards for a fine and successful team. The 2021 season isn't over yet, as Team AKKA-ASP is heading to the USA, Indianapolis more specifically, for the second round of the Intercontinental GT Challenge that will take place next weekend.**



Barcelona is a track that Team AKKA-ASP knows well. The team had their first success in Sprint Cup there in 2016 and their first success in Endurance Cup in 2017. This year, although the Endurance title was still within reach for the crew of the #88, it would be a complex task, with no fewer than 46 cars on track. The final 3 hours of racing of the season would be hotly contested, in Pro as well as Silver... Regarding the crew line-ups, just as at the Nürburgring, Dani Juncadella (busy with a round of the DTM) left his spot to Felipe Fraga in the #88, alongside Lello Marciello and Jules Gounon. No changes in the sister car, the #87 entered in Silver - Simon Gachet and Konstantin Tereschenko shared the Mercedes-AMG GT3 with the France GT4 champion, Thomas Drouet.

As of the official test sessions, the Team went into battle mode. Jules Gounon, Raffaele Marciello and Felipe Fraga (#88) set themselves in the first places (P1 and P2), whereas the Silver trio set the best time in their category twice.

The free practice sessions allowed the teams to work on the tyre degradation, a crucial point on this layout, and on the overall balance of the car. The #88 was P2 and the #87 P3, once more quickest in Silver. The Pre-Qualifying session didn't hold any surprises. Once more, the #88 was the quickest of the bunch, just ahead of the #87, leading Silver.



The level of performance was just as high during the qualifying sessions. In the first session, Raffaele Marciello (#88) was P2 and Simon Gachet (#87) P3 Silver. In Q2, Felipe Fraga (#88) also confirmed P2, and Thomas Drouet (#87) set the best time in Silver. Lastly, in Q3, Jules Gounon set the best time overall in the tree sessions and Konstantin Tereschenko was P2 Silver. With the average of the three sessions, the #88 missed out on pole by 0.009 seconds, but would be starting from the front row for the 4th time this season. The #87 would be P9 on the grid, P2 Silver. Meanwhile, for not having slowed down enough under yellow flag, the poleman (#53 Lamborghini) got a three place penalty on the grid. The #88 would thus be starting from pole, but would not get the point for pole position.

The start of the last race of the season was given Sunday at 15h00. No blue skies, but no rain forecast either. Raffaele Marciello (#88) started from pole with confidence and kept his advantage in the first turn. Thomas Drouet (#87) also managed his start while the field was already jostling.

As from the first laps, Lello set a sustained rhythm and strove to put some distance between him and his rivals, while Thomas Drouet was keeping in close range of the Silver leader. After just 5 minutes of racing, the first safety car came out on track. Five minutes later, the flags went green again and Raffaele Marciello went on the offensive again. After 20 laps, the #88 had a lead of more than 7s and the driver had set the best laptime of the race. Thomas Drouet didn't slow down the pace either, solidly holding onto P2 Silver. Ten laps later, the #88's lead was up to 14s.



Le premier changement de pilote se déroule sans encombre. Konstantin Tereschenko prend le volant de la #87 alors que Raffaele Marciello, auteur d'un relai impeccable et ultra-rapide, ayant parfaitement maîtrisé la dégradation de ses pneumatiques, attend la limite de son temps en piste pour rejoindre les stands. Felipe Fraga enchaîne sur la #88, toujours sur un rythme élevé. Le Brésilien continue d'augmenter l'écart avec ses poursuivants pour atteindre 21s après 45 tours. Konstantin Tereschenko, désormais en tête des Silver, se fait une belle frayeur à 1h35 du damier en s'écartant de la trajectoire idéale mais se récupère sans aucun contact. Le pilote russe, P11 au général, reste aux commandes de la catégorie.

Pour la dernière heure de course, Simon Gachet se glisse au volant de la #87, solidement cramponné à la tête des Silver (P12 du général). A moins d'une heure du damier, c'est à Jules Gounon que revient la lourde tâche de conclure la course, disposant de 23 secondes d'avance sur la meute. Cette avance est portée à 45s quand le deuxième Full Course Yellow est présenté, suivi de la procédure de safety-car. L'étau se resserre et quand le tracé repasse au vert, il reste moins de 28 minutes de course et seulement 4 secondes entre le leader et le deuxième.



The last 20 minutes were exciting. The safety car had revitalised the competitors and fearlessness took hold of the pack, multiplying the overtaking manoeuvres. With 9' to go, a third and final Full Course Yellow was called, followed by the safety car. Jules Gounon showed extraordinary composure, perfectly controlling the last three laps after the restart (with less than a second lead). At the end, the Frenchman crossed the line by claiming a clean victory (his second) at the end of a perfectly managed race. For their part, Raffaele Marciello and Felipe Fraga climbed onto the top step of the Endurance Cup podium for the first time.

This great overall victory was accompanied by a wonderful victory in Silver Cup for the crew of the #87. After precise and flawless stints, Simon Gachet, Konstantin Tereschenko and Thomas Drouet closed the season in style (P11 overall).

Team AKKA-ASP allowed Mercedes-AMG to get a victory in Endurance once more. The German brand had not won since Barcelona 2018. Concerning the Endurance Cup rankings, Raffaele Marciello and Jules Gounon finished second, 2021 vice-champions, and the Team is third. Simon Gachet, Konstantin Tereschenko and Thomas Drouet are also vice-champions in the Endurance Silver Cup, the Team third.



In the overall classification, that combines the Sprint and Endurance championships, Raffaele Marciello is second and Jules Gounon fourth. Team AKKA-ASP takes a wonderful second place. Lastly, Konstantin Tereschenko, entered in Sprint and Endurance, finishes on the third step of the overall Silver podium.

Some positives and a few regrets meanwhile in Jérôme Policand's clan, namely thinking back to the 24 Hours of Spa. But today's result demonstrates the value of a professional and passionate team. But there's no time to rest, as next weekend, Raffaele Marciello, Felipe Fraga and Timur Boguslavskiy will be at Indianapolis, taking part in the second round of the Intercontinental GT Challenge in the #89 Mercedes-AMG GT3. To be continued...