



SILVERSTONE 1000 KM RACE

Allan McNish and Stephane Ortelli won an incident-filled the third Le Mans Endurance Series race of the 2005 season at Silverstone in their ORECA Audi, the first time the car has won in the series this year. Wet weather meant much of the race was run behind the safety car, and many of the drivers were caught out by the conditions.

As the weather dried in the second half of the race, which ran to six hours and finished in darkness at 10pm, the battle for the lead came down to a fight between the Audi and the Creation DBA Judd, driven by Nicolas Minassian and Jamie Campbell-Walter.

Minassian, who had started from pole position and led the first three hours, handed the blue car to Campbell-Walter, who battled first with McNish, who passed him for the lead in the final hour, and then with Ortelli, who defended his lead to the chequer flag. The margin of victory was just 6.569s, reflecting the standard of the battle over the final 90 minutes of the race. The Rollcentre Dallara of Martin Short, Joao Barbosa and Vanina Ickx also made the overall podium, the third time this year that Short and Ickx have done so, and with three different winners from the three races, they hold a strong position in the championship.

The Pescarolo of Jean-Christophe Boullion and Emmanuel Collard was an early casualty, Boullion aquaplaning off during the first hour, extensively damaging the rear of the car. The French team repaired the damage, but later lost time with a fuel problem, causing Boullion to drive nearly a quarter of a lap on the starter motor.

The weather allowed the less powerful cars to move into very competitive positions overall, Claude-Yves Gosselin, Karim Ojeh and Vincent Vosse winning the LMP2 class in their Paul Belmondo Racing Courage, finishing fourth overall. The MenX Ferrari 550 Maranello came out on top of a fantastic duel for GT1 honours, the A-Level Engineering Porsche having led for much of the race. A driver change from Wolfgang Kaufmann to Marcel Tiemann was expensive as the seat shot backwards during the change and the team could not move it forward again for Tiemann to drive comfortably.

Christophe Bouchut and Alexey Vasiliev were second in class in the Convers Team Ferrari to take the lead in the teams' championship from the BMS Scuderia Italia, ahead of their team-mates Darren Turner, Marc Goossens and Nikolay Fomenko, who debuted the Aston Martin DBR9 in the series. The Aston Martin was a brand new car and the drivers struggled to find a comfortable set-up in the dry conditions of practice and qualifying. "The problems are accentuated in the wet," said Turner.

Marc Lieb and Xavier Pompidou scored their second win of the year in the GT2 category, driving their five-year-old Sebah Automotive car almost faultlessly to defeat the Autorlando Porsche of Franco Groppi, Luigi Moccia and Mike Rockenfeller. "I like driving in the rain, which is why we were so fast in the opening stages," said Pompidou, who had aquaplaned into the gravel in the second hour.