Pescarolo at Istanbul Park: the Return!

Under the threat of rain, but on a dry track, the first round of Le Mans Series 2006 season took place as a 4-hours race, due to a shortage of fuel. But this unforeseen change only increased the suspense of this race won as last year by French team Pescarolo. This new season seems to announce a new balance of the forces, as for the first time for the birth of Le Mans Series, a "LM" P2 took place on the podium of the overall classification. In the "LM" GT1 Class, since three cars on the podium were fitted with Michelin tyres.

Pescarolo wins a fine Le Mans Series opener in Istanbul

Pescarolo Sport, the reigning Le Mans Series champions, opened their 2006 campaign with a fine victory in Istanbul. The 5-litre Judd powered Pescarolo C60H had a perfect run from start to finish in the hands of Emmanuel Collard and Jean-Christophe Boullion, ending the 4-hour event six laps ahead of the Barazi Epsilon team Courage C65 AER, which was the winner of the LMP2 category. Michael Vergers, Juan Barazi and Jean-Philippe Belloc also had a trouble-free race and had three laps in hand over their nearest class rivals.

The weather was unseasonably cool at the Istanbul Motorsport Park but the racing was very lively in the opening hour as Nicolas Minassian traded the lead with Collard, the blue Creation Autosportif CA06/H making some cheeky moves on the Pescarolo. Eventually, though, the Creation's gearbox failed, lacking both fifth and sixth gears, and the British team decided that there was insufficient time to make a repair.

Promoter Patrick Peter announced that the Turkish race would be shortened from 1,000 kilometres to four hours due to a shortage of fuel which left the teams with insufficient supplies for the full distance. In the event, the Pescarolo C60H covered 715 kilometres in four hours, enough for the 'endurance' element to be observed.

In third position overall was the Chevrolet V8 engined Lister Storm LMP Hybrid raced by Nicolas Kiesa and Jens Moller, the Lister team's best result in Le Mans Series racing, 96 seconds ahead of the Chamberlain Synergy Lola B06/10 AER V8, a car making its race debut in the hands of Bob Berridge, Gareth Evans and Peter Owen.
Another debutant, the Radical SR9, was heading for a podium result, too, but was forced out of the event with just 15 minutes remaining when the electrical system caught fire underneath the dashboard.

Fifth place overall, and a very popular second position in LMP2, was taken by Pierre Bruneau's Pilbeam Judd, which was started by Marc Rostan. Third in LMP2 was the G-Force team's Courage Courage C65 Judd driven by Frank Hahn, Jean-Francois Leroch, and the youngest competitor in the race, 17-year-old Ed Morris.

Lamy tops for Aston

Pedro Lamy, the star of Aston Martin's line-up, pulled out an early lead in the GT1 category driving the Aston Martin Racing Larbre DBR9 and fought off determined challenges from the MenX Convers Bank Ferrari 550 and the two Chevrolet Corvettes. Lammers, with FIA GT champion Gabriele Gardel and Vincent Vosse, dominated GT1 in the moss green Aston Martin, finishing up a lap in front of the MenX Ferrari of Peter Kox, Alexei Vasiliev and Robert Pergl. Third in category was the Luc Alphand Aventures Chevrolet Corvette C5-R driven by Jerome Policand, Anthony Beltoise and Patrice Goueslard.

Ferrari tops in GT2

Is the reign of the Porsche 911 GT3 RSR finally ended? The first big win of the Le Mans Series 2006 in GT2 was claimed by the GPC Sport Ferrari 430 GT driven by Fabrizio de Simone, Gabrio Rosa and Luca Drudi. The scarlet Ferrari finished 7.6 seconds ahead of the Autorlando Sport Porsche GT3 RSR of Joel Camathias and Marc Lieb, who were poised for a victory until the car needed a late 'splash and dash', the Italian team's tactics affected by the shortening of the event. The Dutch Spykers started the race on slick tyres and after a steady start, came through to lead GT2 briefly, and run second and third at the completion of the first hour. They finished fourth and sixth in class, Jeroen Bleekemolen surrendering the final podium position to Lawrence Tomlinson and Richard Dean's Panoz Esperante when the Dutchman needed a final splash for fuel.

Press Contact: Marine Allainguillaume – mallainguillaume@lemans-series.com
Le Mans Series – 103, rue Lamarck – 751018 Paris – France – Tel : +33 (0) 1 42 57 84 02 – Fax: +33 (0) 1 42 57 84 35
www.lemans-series.com