

Le Mans Series – 1000 km of Budapest - Race

## Trip East rewarded with a podium for IMSA Performance Matmut

Three weeks after its success in the FIA GT2 European Cup, IMSA Performance Matmut shone on the international stage again during the weekend's Le Mans Series event in Hungary. However, with Ferraris dominating qualifying, it was difficult to predict that outcome, especially as 38 cars squeezing onto the Hungaroring's narrow, twisty layout made things difficult, particularly at night during the last two hours of the race.



Despite having only set the ninth fastest time in Sunday morning's qualifying session, both of the #76 Porsche 997 GT3 RSR's drivers had been pleased with the car since the beginning of the weekend. Balanced, comfortable and more economical on fuel than the Ferraris, the Matmut-liveried GT was inspiring both Raymond Narac and Patrick Pilet with confidence. *"At this circuit where we have to learn nearly everything from scratch, we have managed to find a good balance with the set-up. That was a great performance in itself when you take into account the fact that we didn't know the circuit at all. Unfortunately, we had to admit that the Ferraris were quicker, especially over one lap,"* said Franck Rava.

But, as usual, qualifying is one thing and the race is another, where reality and fact overtake predictions and the first edition of the Hungaroring 1000kms delivered a lot of twists and turns that saw many a betting slip torn up!



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Matmut



IMSA



Performance #76



CENTRE PORSCHE ROUEN

In heavy heat, Patrick Pilet made an excellent start to the race and, as usual, gained several positions in the first few kilometres. While the Auch-based racer, like all the other Official Porsche Factory Drivers, did their best to remain in contact with the Ferraris, the first on-track incidents began to happen. The first stint showed the low fuel consumption of the Porsches, particularly IMSA's which was the penultimate car to stop to refuel, pushing the car into the lead for a few laps. After this very successful first stint, Patrick handed the car to Raymond who also produced a solid display. The next four hours of racing reflected the first two, despite the interventions of the Safety Car – which the team managed perfectly – and various events on track. Raymond and Patrick repeated their performances despite the oppressive heat (a track temperature of around 45 degrees Celsius), the crazy traffic and numerous counts of debris on the circuit. Their pace therefore allowed them to bring home the Porsche in third place when the chequered flag flew at around 10pm.



*“The race was tougher than in Portimao,” admitted Raymond Narac. “The circuit is so twisty that you have no time to relax. The main straight is very short and not long enough to have a break. The air conditioning worked really well but it was still very hot. Nevertheless, this wasn’t the biggest problem because here, the toughest challenge is definitely the traffic. So many times we found ourselves in a difficult position with the GTs or Formula Le Mans cars. We were close to disaster on many occasions and I must admit that it was permanently stressful. Maybe I didn’t do as well as in Portimao as I didn’t know the circuit here, but Patrick has again done an amazing job to compensate. What he did during his last stint is extraordinary. He refused to give up and used all his resources to get us on the podium. I am delighted to have achieved this podium as the team have deserved it for a long time this year. They again did some excellent pit stops today and in such a tight race where the top nine or ten cars are fighting for tenths of a second, the work of the team in the pits is crucial. Without our bad luck at the start of the season we would certainly be fighting for the championship podium. It’s not over yet though and at Silverstone I will be more comfortable as I know the track well, even though it has changed a bit since last year. It will be a superb finale with an exceptional entry list.”*



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Having recovering from his final stint, Patrick Pilet could enjoy the result of his efforts after the finish and, keeping the Ferrari of Toni Vilander at bay throughout the last hour remains his highlight of the race. *"He didn't give up either! He was 13 seconds behind and all I could do was try to maintain that gap and show him that I wouldn't back off,"* said the Porsche official driver. *"It was really hard and I was on the limit everywhere, but in the end he gave up with five laps to go and that meant I could do the same a couple of laps later. The end of the first stint was a bit difficult with the tyres as we took the logical decision not to start on new rubber, but afterwards it was better. We had the best strategy and I think we used less fuel than our rivals, including the other Porsches. I'm really happy with this result, especially for the team which hasn't been rewarded as it deserved to be since the beginning of the year in this championship. But what a race!*



*"Despite the fact that they were different than normal, we managed the interventions of the Safety Car very well and they allowed us to gain some time,"* confirmed Arnaud Soudey, the team's engineer. *"The car was also competitive against the Ferraris. At the beginning of the stints we were losing a bit of time compared to them, but then we did quite well. We changed tyres at the end of each stint which allowed us to maintain the same pace as the leader throughout the entire race. This is not a result obtained by chance and with the quality of the other entries, we appreciate its value, especially after the disappointment of Portimao!"*

Lying fourth in the overall classification after this penultimate event, the IMSA Performance Matmut team still has hopes of climbing on the championship podium after the last round on 12 September at Silverstone. The round also counts for the International Le Mans Cup and, according to Franck Rava, is *"the last opportunity to shine and confirm our position as the best GT car in the Michelin Green X Challenge."*

[www.imsa-performance.fr](http://www.imsa-performance.fr)



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