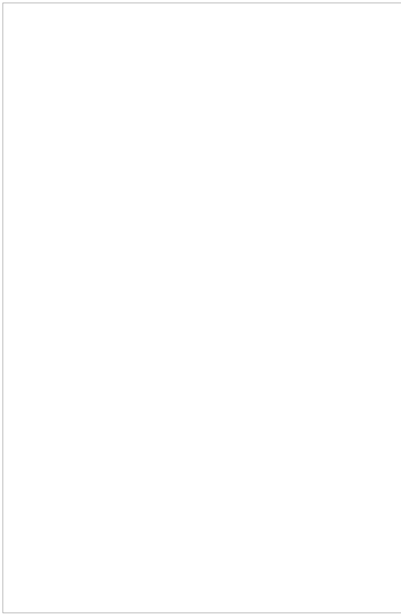


CLASSIC DRIVER

Team Maranello Concessionaires - Spa disappointments



After a monumental start to the weekend which saw cars 89 and 88 start from pole position and second place in class respectively on Saturday, the team worked tirelessly throughout the 24 hours to enable car 89 to take the chequered flag in seventh position in class and 20th overall.

As is typical of an endurance race of the magnitude of Spa, the event has seen great action, tension, drama and emotion as Brackley-based Team Maranello Concessionaires battled relentlessly to ensure that valuable points were secured in readiness for the remaining four rounds of the series. Disappointingly, race car number 88 was forced to retire after six hours with electrical difficulties. However, despite facing a number of more minor problems throughout the event, car 89 survived the harsh weather conditions overnight to cross the finish line shortly after 1600 hrs yesterday (Sunday).

In line with Championship regulations, the all-British driver line-up of Jamie Davies, Guy Smith and Darren Turner earn a valuable two points each to add to the two points achieved during the first 12 hours. This leaves Jamie Davies in fourth position in the Championship with 34 points, just two and a half points ahead of fellow TMC driver (driving car number 88), Tim Mullen,

in fifth place. With a maximum of 40 points available from the remaining four rounds of the series, both Davies and Mullen have every opportunity to repeat the success they achieved last year for Veloqx Motorsport when they secured the British GT Championship.



Kelvin Burt: "An extremely disappointing result, especially after Andrew secured P2 for the start of the race on Friday. At the time we had the problem, the car was running really well and I was confident that we could catch the leaders over time as I was happy with my pace, despite the poor weather. However, it is difficult to cater for a totally unexpected problem and being stranded out on the circuit left the team with no opportunity to help."

Jamie Davies: "It could have been worse! Any 24 hour race is tough on cars and Spa has proven to be no exception. To take four points away with me is some compensation and I'm content, given the circumstances, to be fourth in the Drivers' Championship. We just need to ensure that we achieve some victories now during the remaining four rounds."

Andrew Kirkaldy: "We proved our competitiveness on Friday by getting P2 on the grid and I know we had the respect of the Paddock for that performance. It's a big shame that an unexpected problem caused our retirement relatively early in this race but we still managed to maintain a good pace for over six hours – twice the length of a 'normal' GT race."

Tim Mullen: "An extremely frustrating weekend. The team worked hard throughout free practice and qualifying and Kelvin, Andrew and I were so confident that we could challenge for the lead. Problems of the type we encountered are impossible to predict and certainly the weather played its part. I'm disappointed to have relinquished my lead in the Drivers' Championship with Jamie but I'm confident that I can fight back in Anderstorp in September."

Guy Smith: "A repeat of my recent success in Le Mans was not to be this weekend but I've really enjoyed driving the Ferrari. The weather conditions for the first half of the race were some of the worst I have seen and made driving the car extremely tough at times with aquaplaning being the main problem. Changing the gearbox cluster twice under pressure so quickly makes you realise how skilled the engineers and mechanics are in a professional race team like this. Without their hard work, it is quite possible that we would not have

made it to the finish.”

Darren Turner: “My biggest memory of Spa will be securing pole position for the start. Everything was working so well and the car felt better than ever. The gearbox linkage issues that have caused us so many problems this season have been banished and so it is doubly disappointing that a new problem with the internals caused us the delays. Nevertheless, to cross the finishing line at the end of a long, tough race like this is a good feeling. I feel very proud to have been a part of it.”

“There just aren’t enough words to describe how the team is feeling at this moment,” stated Rod Benoist, TMC’s team manager. “Whilst 24 hours is a long time to race, the guys have been active for more than 34 hours so far and crossing the finish line here in Spa is some compensation for their efforts. Whilst we are disappointed to have achieved no better than seventh place, we are four rounds away from the end of the season and anything can happen. However, we knew that the result in Spa was always going to contribute significantly to our Championship aspirations because of the points available here. Whilst victory has eluded us, we’ve demonstrated yet again that we not only have the pace when required to secure pole position, but we have now made significant progress to improve our reliability by finishing this most punishing of races. Our development work will continue throughout the rest of the season and we look forward to some great racing during the remaining four rounds

The remaining rounds of the 2003 FIA GT Championship Calendar are -

- **SWEDEN** Anderstorp 7 September
- **GERMANY** Oschersleben 21 September
- **PORTUGAL** Estoril 5 October
- **ITALY** Monza 19 October

For information about Team Maranello Concessionaires visit www.veloqxmtmc.com.

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