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Team Maranello Concessionaires at Monza - disappointment but there is always next year...



Having set their sights so high this year after 2002's British GT Championship success, TMC has ended its assault on the FIA N/GT Championship disappointed but ultimately satisfied. Entering the final round at Monza today with Jamie Davies in second place behind the leading pair in the Drivers' Championship and TMC also second behind the Freisinger Porsche squad in the Teams' Classification, the Brackley-based operation knew that they had a mountain to climb. Despite every effort to ensure the competitiveness of both cars this morning, the race ended with car 88 (Davies/Turner) crossing the finish line in ninth position and car 89 (Burt/Mullen) not being classified. Scoring no points means that the German Freisinger pairing of Stephane Ortelli and Marc Lieb are crowned N/GT Champions by finishing second in the race today, and the team also secures their Championship. Davies ends the 10-race season in fourth position and TMC take third place in the Teams' Classification.

The race started well for both cars from fifth and eighth positions in class on the grid. Both Darren Turner (starting in car 88) and Kelvin Burt (in car 89) quickly made up ground and were running in third and fourth positions within the first 30 minutes. Unfortunately, Burt suffered a collision with a safety barrier which meant that he had to come in to the pits for immediate repairs. After pitting on schedule to enable Turner to hand over to Davies, car 88 suffered a starter motor failure whilst attempting to rejoin the race. With the team having no option but to push-start the car, Davies was subjected to a 10-second stop/go penalty. Further rectification work was needed during the car's second stop, thwarting Davies' efforts to attempt a challenge on the leaders. Time spent in the pits repairing car 89's damage effectively ended any attempt at a points finish for driver, Tim Mullen.

Kelvin Burt: "The accident was my fault, plain and simple. I made a mistake under braking and collided with the barriers. I'm disappointed for the team, as they all worked so hard this weekend to ensure that Tim and I were on the pace."

Jamie Davies: "Not a great deal I can say about the result today. To be let down by a component failure is just one of those things. Overall, I've learnt a lot this year and to finish fourth is gratifying considering this was my first year in the FIA GT Championship. I believe we have impressed a lot of people with our performance."

Tim Mullen: "We were struggling for speed yesterday but with warmer weather this morning, we were well on the pace. It's a shame our race ended prematurely but that's one of those things. Our lap times throughout the year have demonstrated what the team is capable of."

Darren Turner: "I've had an interesting year, full of highs and lows. We had some great results early on but plenty of bad luck too. Failure of the starter motor effectively killed our Championship hopes today - I had a really good stint initially and I'm confident that we could have caught the leaders."

"The team has learnt so much this year," added **Rod Benoist**, TMC's Team Manager. "We have had a frustrating end to the Championship today, that's for sure. We were hoping to win but we won't have disappointed anybody with our performance this year considering we were newcomers to N/GT. We promised that we would be competitive and it's mission accomplished in that respect. We know that we have earned the respect of the organisers, the paddock and all of our publics this year."

Editor's note - I was fortunate enough to spend some time with the Team at the UK round of the Championship, at Donington Park. As we have been following their exploits all year, and knowing how hard the whole Team has tried, it is such a shame that their ultimate goal was not achieved. Congratulations to everyone involved on a superb effort over the whole season. - SW

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