

CLASSIC DRIVER

Victory for Maserati in FIA GT at Oschersleben



The number 1 Vitaphone Racing Maserati MC 12 of Bartels and Biagi crossed the line 14 seconds ahead of its sister car, in the hands of Davies and Biagi, to give the team a fantastic one-two and an increased lead in the Championship.

At the end of the three hour race, the Vitaphone cars finished ahead of the Aston Martin DBR9 of Deletraz-Piccini (suffering from a broken exhaust), the Saleen driven by Bert-Janis and the other Aston driven by Gollin-Babini. With this result, Bartels and Bertolini move to the top of the drivers' standings and Maserati stays in second position in the Manufacturers' Cup. For Michael Bartels and Andrea Bertolini, Oschersleben is the second win of the season and comes on the heels of the Silverstone victory in round one.

Michael Bartels maintained his pole once the green light came on. He extended his lead over the chasing group led by Bert-Janis' Saleen and the Aston Martin driven by Deletraz-Piccini. The second Maserati MC12, with Englishman Jamie Davies at the wheel, started from the seventh row (14th) after being hit with a penalty handed down at Brno. However, he climbed seven places in one lap and then engaged in a duel with the Aston Martin driven by Pescatori-Ramos (overtaken on lap four) and Gollin-Babini (overtaken on lap six). On lap eight Davies swept past the Aston Martin with Wendlinger-Peter on board to move into fifth behind Longin-Kumpen-Hezemans (Corvette).





The first Maserati MC12 to make a stop was that driven by Davies on lap 45. Replacing him was the Italian Thomas Biagi. Michael Bartels followed into the pits to hand over to Andrea Bertolini on lap 46. The places remained more or less unchanged with Bertolini leading and Biagi having moved into fourth and duelling for third with Janis-Bert. The second hour saw many of the back markers being lapped. Bertolini still led and Biagi was still fighting for a podium position. After the second pit stop, made by Biagi on lap 84 and Bertolini on 90, the two Maseratis were in first and second with Bartels and Davies back in the driving seat and heading for the finish line.

"It was not an easy race," declared Andrea Bertolini. "When I took the wheel for the second stint, I tried to maintain the advantage we had built up. The track had less grip owing to the high temperatures. I had to take care in the pack with the back markers and we managed to stay in the lead even after the pit stops. It was great race."

"We had to fight from start to finish," stated Jamie Davies. "This was because we started from row seven and I don't know how many times Biagi and I overtook. Aside from the back markers, we attacked and defended well, even over the last few laps when we had the Deletraz and Piccini Aston Martin on our tails. All this was thanks to a perfect MC12, a superb team and excellent Pirelli tyres."



In GT2, Nathan Kinch and Andrew Kirkaldy claimed their first-ever FIA GT win in Oschersleben after a close fight amongst the other Ferrari 430 GT2 cars. They finished ahead of Salo and Aguas in the nr 59 AF Corse Ferrari, with Mullen and Niarchos taking third, despite driving for much of the race without a clutch. Collard and Riccitelli finished fifth as the leading Porsche 996 GT3 RSR, but nevertheless have the lead in the points classification.

The separate GT3 heats saw wins for Stefano Livio and Andrea Ceccato driving a Dodge Viper in race one and a superb maiden win in International competition for the Aston Martin DBR9 of the BMS Scuderia Italia team driven by Marcello Zani and Massimiliano Mugelli.



The next FIA GT championship race will take place on 29-30 July with the Spa Francorchamps 24 Hours (Belgium) where Porsche will debut the 2006 911 GT3 RSR in a two-car entry from Manthey Racing .

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