



**LARBRE** COMPETITION



## ***BAD LUCK DENIES LARBRE COMPETITION FIA WEC WIN IN BAHRAIN***

- *#50 Corvette C7.R held comfortable lead at halfway mark*
- *Ill-timed Full Course Yellow (FCY) hinders French GT specialists' charge*

Larbre Competition came very close to ending its 2015 FIA World Endurance Championship campaign with a strong LMGTE Am win at last weekend's 6 Hours of Bahrain (November 19-21). The #50 Corvette C7.R was well in the lead after three hours when an FCY cost the Vigeant-based squad nearly two minutes, dropping them to sixth by the chequered flag.

Larbre entered this year's eighth and final FIA WEC round determined to fight their way to a class podium having clearly been on the rise since Fuji. The French outfit welcomed reigning LMGTE Am champion Kristian Poulsen back to the #50 Corvette line-up in Bahrain alongside Paolo Ruberti and Gianluca Roda.

The trio looked strong from the get-go at the grand prix venue, finishing P2 and P3 in Thursday's free practice sessions. Larbre capitalised on that promising performance and clocked the second fastest time during Friday's qualifying, edging out the LMGTE Am-leading #72 Ferrari in the process.

Saturday's six-hour contest saw usual starter Ruberti make a blinding getaway and immediately surge into the class lead. Indeed, the Italian was so fast that he soon ended up fighting with the LMGTE Pro-entered cars and even headed the #91 Porsche, which would eventually win that category. Ruberti handed the wheel over to Roda with a 15-second gap to their nearest rivals after maintaining consistently fast pace over the opening hour.

Roda completed a flawless stint, matching the lap times produced by the LMGTE Pro class Silver drivers and keeping the Corvette out in front. Poulsen then climbed aboard and quickly got back up to speed, challenging the Gold racers from the class above and reaching the three-hour mark in first position. It was then that bad luck struck the #50 crew and dashed Larbre's hopes of a win.

The Corvette temporarily relinquished the lead during its fuel stop and had barely got going again when race control initiated an FCY to clear on-track debris. While the other LMGTE Am cars had been able to go at full speed whilst the CR.7 pitted, Roda now had to slow down to 80kph, which effectively handed his

rivals a free stop. The ill-timed FCY ended up costing Larbre very dearly, resulting in a loss of 1min50s and five positions.

In a championship as competitive as FIA WEC reducing such a gap was a tall order indeed. Nevertheless, Roda, Poulsen and Ruberti drove their hearts out over the second half of the race to make up for the lost time, each of them delivering stints as competitive as their first. The drivers carried on setting fast lap times to eventually cross the line in sixth less than 20 seconds adrift of the LMGTE Am-winning #72 Ferrari.

**Paolo Ruberti:** “It was an unlucky weekend as we were very competitive in every session. I had a good start in the race and was really fast, even matching the pace of the LMGTE Pro cars and opening up a healthy lead in our class.

“We were enjoying a strong lead when we encountered the FCY three hours into the race. The timing was really bad because we had just pitted. Despite finishing P6 we clearly had what it took to challenge for victory.”

**Gianluca Roda:** “It was a good weekend overall, as highlighted by our second place in qualifying and our very strong, error-free performance on race day. Everybody did a fine job.

“We were leading the race after Paolo, Kristian and I all completed our first stints, but then the FCY ruined our efforts. I really feel this was a race to win for us.”

**Kristian Poulsen:** “What a shame! Everything was going very well after leading over the first three stints, but then it went awry with the FCY.

“I feel sorry for the entire team. We really deserved to win, but that’s how racing goes sometimes.”

**Jack Leconte, Team Manager:** “Our Bahrain weekend was very positive in terms of performance; we came very close to claiming pole position and winning the race.

“Everything went smoothly this time. We didn’t have any issues except for the FCY, which came at the worst possible time. All that to repair a bollard! There hadn’t been any on-track incidents. In sporting terms, such a procedure is highly unpredictable when it takes place at the end or the start of a new hour of racing.

“Nevertheless, I’m very happy because we had the race under control; our three drivers stayed in the lead over the first half. Paolo made a great start and managed to compete with the LMGTE Pro cars. Gianluca and Kristian also maintained the same pace as their competitors in the higher GT class. We were looking very strong indeed and, for the first time this year, occupied P1 after all our drivers had completed their respective opening stints.

“It’s a shame to end the season like this as we deserved a podium at least. Naturally we’re very disappointed with the result, but I’m pretty sure everybody thoroughly enjoyed themselves.”

#### **6 Hours of Bahrain – LMGTE Am results:**

1. Aston Martin Racing / Aston Martin V8 Vantage / Dalla Lana/Lamy/Lauda: 170 laps
2. Abu Dhabi-Proton Racing / Porsche 911 RSR / Mapelli/AI Qubaisi/Bachler: 14.486s
3. Dempsey Racing - Proton / Porsche 911 RSR / Ried/Long/Seefried: 39.539s
4. AF Corse / Ferrari F458 Italia / Perrodo/Collard/Cressoni: 1 lap
5. SMP Racing / Ferrari F458 Italia / Shaytar/Bertolini/Basov: 1 lap
- 6. Larbre Compétition / Corvette C7.R / Roda/Ruberti/Poulsen: 1 lap**
7. Aston Martin Racing / Aston Martin V8 Vantage / Castellacci/Goethe/Hall: 2 laps

#### **FIA World Endurance Championship – LMGTE Am classification:**

1. SMP Racing / Ferrari F458 Italia: 165 pts
2. AF Corse / Ferrari F458 Italia: 148 pts
4. Aston Martin Racing / Aston Martin V8 Vantage: 144 pts
3. Dempsey Racing - Proton / Porsche 911 RSR: 131 pts
5. Abu Dhabi-Proton Racing / Porsche 911 RSR: 82 pts
6. Aston Martin Racing / Aston Martin V8 Vantage: 54 pts
- 7. Larbre Compétition / Corvette C7.R: 52 pts**

**Larbre Competition and the entire FIA World Endurance Championship paid tribute to the victims of the November 13 Paris attacks.**



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