

Larbre Competition claims second consecutive FIA WEC podium in Spa

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LARBRE COMPETITION CLAIMS SECOND CONSECUTIVE FIA WEC PODIUM IN SPA

- *Crew-mates Ruberti, Ragues, and Yamagishi finish third in # 50 Corvette C7.R*
- *French GT experts enjoy strong dress rehearsal ahead of 2016 Le Mans 24 Hours*

Larbre Competition continued its positive momentum in the 2016 FIA World Endurance Championship after claiming a second consecutive podium finish at last weekend's WEC 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps (May 5-7).

The #50 Corvette C7.R secured third position in the LMGTE Am category after a thrilling race at the Belgian Grand Prix venue, which bodes well for next month's Le Mans 24 Hours (June 18-19).

As the final competitive rehearsal before the la Sarthe classic, round two of this year's FIA WEC allowed teams to fine-tune their setups and further strengthen their chemistry on a daunting high-speed track. Coming off a strong podium finish at Silverstone, Paolo Ruberti, Pierre Ragues, and Yutaka Yamagishi headed to the Ardennes confident and ambitious.

The #50 threesome wasted little time making an impression, as they clocked the second fastest time in Thursday's opening free practice. While the Larbre crew repeated the feat in Friday morning's FP3, they had to settle for fourth on the grid after narrowly missing out on a front row start.

Saturday afternoon saw the WEC 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps get under way under sunny skies and hot summer temperatures. It did not take long for the always fast-starting Paolo to work his way up to third. In a drama-filled contest of attrition, the Larbre team kept its cool and smoothly unfolded its strategy, with Pierre taking over from his Italian crew-mate and confidently maintaining the Vigeant-based outfit's front-running speed.

The Frenchman then handed over the wheel to Yutaka, who managed to match the pace of his fellow Bronze drivers, thus keeping the C7.R in podium contention. However, the going got tougher when the Japanese racer had to serve a drive-through penalty for exceeding track limits. Slotting back into the cockpit, Paolo reached the halfway mark in fifth but he was already up to third one hour later.

Larbre had to fight all the way to the chequered flag to secure another podium finish, because while the French GT experts had skilfully managed previous full course yellows, it saw its rivals close the gap 60 minutes from the flag when the Safety Car came out following a big shunt for the #66 Ford on the exit of Eau Rouge.

With Larbre having brought its final driver change forward, Pierre ended up embroiled in a fierce scrap with KCMG's #78 Porsche. The Frenchman, who is making the switch to GT cars this year after a successful career racing prototypes, showed poise and speed to keep his opponent at bay and reward the collective effort with a second consecutive FIA WEC podium.

Larbre Competition's 15 points haul further cements its third place in the 2016 Endurance Trophy for LMGTE Am Teams, as it embarks on a month-long programme to prepare for the iconic Le Mans 24 Hours. The next stop on its busy schedule will be the official Test Day, which takes place on Sunday 5 June at La Sarthe.

Paolo Ruberti: "It's always satisfying to finish on the podium. The #50 Corvette C7.R felt really good over the course of the entire weekend, including during qualifying where we kept our rivals honest. Our race pace was also very strong. We deserved to finish third and I now look forward to preparing for my seventh participation at the Le Mans 24 Hours. I've already finished second twice, so it would be great to go one step

higher with Larbre Competition this year.”

Pierre Ragues: “We really had to fight to get this podium on merit! It’s a strong result, especially when you consider that the late Safety Car did not really help us. We’ve made significant headway since Silverstone and are much more consistent in the car. I’m very happy about that. Personally, I also feel I’m improving compared to Paolo, who remains the benchmark in the team but also in the LMGTE Am class. I hope we can extend this strong form all the way to Le Mans. I can’t wait for the magic of la Sarthe to start all over again, beginning with the official Test Day.”

Yutaka Yamagishi: “I’d like to extend my warmest thanks to the entire Larbre Competition team, the mechanics, who did a tremendous job and prepared the car so well, and my team-mates Paolo and Pierre who were flawless last weekend. I also want to apologise for the penalty that cost us a lot of time. The #50 Corvette C7.R felt much better towards the end of my stints and I’ll carry on racking up experience ahead of my sixth Le Mans 24 Hours. With such a professional team around me, I am confident we can fight for a good result at la Sarthe.”

Jack Leconte, Team Manager: “Claiming two podium finishes in as many races this year is clearly a strong start to the 2016 FIA WEC campaign for Larbre Competition and our #50 Corvette C7.R! The championship remains very hotly contested though, and this across all four categories. The team continues to learn how to work together quickly and efficiently and you can feel a real chemistry growing.

“Luckily, we can rely on Paolo and Pierre who, just like Larbre, boast extensive FIA WEC experience. This provides Yutaka, who is making his series debut this year, with very solid benchmarks and valuable help. We are currently implementing a number of procedures to ensure he carries on progressing and we can actually see their positive effects already. Pierre, for his part, has made a superb transition to GT racing, keeping the likes of Porsche factory drivers Patrick Long and Wolf Henzler on their toes. This is very promising for the future indeed!

“Time has now come to tread the road that will lead us to Le Mans. For our twenty-fourth appearance at la Sarthe, we’ll strive to follow and apply the methods that have been driving our success up to now.”

6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps WEC – LMGTE Am results:

1. Aston Martin Racing/Aston Martin Vantage V8/Dalla Lana-Lamy-Lauda: 140 laps
2. AF Corse/Ferrari F458 Italia/Perrodo-Collard-Aguas: 1 lap
- 3. Larbre Competition/Corvette C7.R/Ruberti-Ragues-Yamagishi: 33.635**
4. KCMG/Porsche 911 RSR/Ried-Henzler-Camathias: 0.161
5. Gulf Racing/Porsche 911 RSR/Wainwright-Carroll-Barker: 1 lap
6. Abu Dhabi-Proton Racing/Porsche 911 RSR/AI Qubaisi-Heinemeier Hansson-Long: 2 laps

FIA World Endurance Championship – LMGTE Am class (after round 2/9):

1. Aston Martin Racing/Aston Martin V8 Vantage: 44 pts
2. AF Corse/Ferrari F458 Italia: 43 pts
- 3. Larbre Competition/Corvette C7.R: 30 pts**
4. KCMG/Porsche 911 RSR: 24 pts
5. Abu Dhabi-Proton Racing/Porsche 911 RSR: 19 pts
6. Gulf Racing/Porsche 911 RSR: 10 pts



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