



LARBRE COMPETITION SCORE MORE FIA WEC POINTS IN CHALLENGING AUSTIN RACE

- *French squad unable to capitalise on strong opening stint*

Larbre Competition secured a second consecutive FIA World Endurance Championship points finish at Austin last weekend (September 17-19), bringing the LMGTE Am-entered #50 Corvette C7.R home in seventh at the 6 Hours of CoTA. The French squad will nevertheless rue the few mistakes that prevented them from converting a strong opening stint into a better end result.

Drivers Paolo Ruberti, Gianluca Roda and Kristian Poulsen enjoyed a good start to the weekend, utilising data from the factory Corvette team to optimise the car's set-up and record competitive lap times in free practice. Unfortunately, following a tyre pressure problem in qualifying, the #50 crew was unable to convert their promising performance into a representative grid position and ultimately had to settle for sixth.

Despite this setback, Ruberti delivered a typically fast start to the race. The Italian climbed up to second position and was even catching the race-leading #77 Porsche when its hard compound tyres started to show signs of wear.

Larbre had decided to start with the hard rubber for the first time this season and wasn't expecting it to degrade as quickly as the mediums. Nevertheless, Ruberti's impressive performance allowed compatriot Roda to re-join the race in a strong position. But it was at this point things became more complicated for the #50 car.

Suffering with a safety harness issue, Roda was forced to re-pit a lap later and shortly after returning to the track he spun as a result of contact with a prototype car. Within the space of a few laps Larbre Competition had gone from fighting for victory to being two minutes behind the leaders.

In a championship as competitive as the FIA WEC, reducing such a gap is difficult. Nevertheless, the Larbre drivers tackled the US Grand Prix circuit head-on and did everything they could to make up for the lost time.

Roda then handed the C7.R over to Poulsen, who produced a very clean run before Ruberti jumped aboard for the closing stint. The Italian rediscovered his race-opening form and recovered to bring the car home in seventh, only 40 seconds behind the #96 and #98 Aston Martins, resulting in six more championship points for Larbre Competition.

Paolo Ruberti: “We started on the hard tyre, which might not have been the right call because the car was difficult to drive. And after that we had a problem with the seat belt.

“Kristian also had an issue with his tyre pressures, so we eventually finished seventh. Experiencing a problem in a competitive category like this means you are immediately sent to the back of the field.

“If we have a race without any issues we can potentially score some strong results.”

Gianluca Roda: “It was an unbelievable race, but for the wrong reasons!

“I lost my belt before the pit exit, so I had to deal with that whilst steering the car. I lost 1m10s, which is nearly a whole lap. I was then tapped by the #7 Audi and spun off as a result.

“After that the car was quite hard to drive, so it became more difficult to compete.”

Kristian Poulsen: “It wasn’t the best weekend; we faced an uphill battle.

“The first stint was good. Paolo did a fine job, but we then had to deal with a few small problems. It has been a very hard season. We need to get everything together to finish on the podium.”

Jack Leconte, Team Manager: “Our weekend started well and we could count on the Corvette works team’s support and data, as they are used to testing at Circuit of The Americas. We consequently knew how to adapt the set-up for the track, which has very specific requirements.

“The C7.R proved to be competitive as early as free practice. We were also able to eliminate oversteer, which the car often experiences at other circuits.

“We were satisfied with our performance at the beginning of the race, as Paolo made a great start and was even fighting with the leader Patrick Long. Unfortunately, 10 laps before the end of his stint Paolo’s tyres weren’t performing as well, which was quite surprising. We then changed to the medium compound for the rest of the race.

“Gianluca’s problem with the harness marked the start of our drop down the order, as the incident with the Audi occurred just after he emerged from the pits. These combined incidents cost us a lot of time.

“Despite this, we managed to slightly reduce the gap to our direct competitors. Kristian’s second stint went fine, whilst Paolo – as usual – attacked until the end.

“There is no room for mistakes in a class like LMGTE Am. All our competitors had an error-free race. We have to do the same in order to return to the podium, ideally at the next round in Fuji; it’s a circuit we know well having raced there twice before.

“We are also pleased to welcome Nicolai Sylvest, a young 19 year-old driver who replaces Kristian Poulsen in Fuji. Kristian has to be in Denmark for a business engagement regarding the opening of a new venue for his HGV truck rental business.”

Larbre Competition now travels from the Wild West to the Far East for round six of the 2015 FIA World Endurance Championship, which takes place in Japan from 9-11 October.

6 Hours of COTA – LMGTE Am race results:

1. SMP Racing / Ferrari F458 Italia / Shaytar/Bertolini/Basov: 159 laps
2. Abu Dhabi-Proton Racing / Porsche 911 RSR / Ried/Al Qubaisi/Bamber: 40.854s
3. AF Corse / Ferrari F458 Italia / Perrodo/Collard/Aguas: 1 lap
4. Dempsey Racing - Proton / Porsche 911 RSR / Dempsey/Long/Seefried: 1 lap
5. Aston Martin Racing / Aston Martin V8 Vantage / Dalla Lana/Lamy/Lauda: 1 lap

6. Aston Martin Racing / Aston Martin V8 Vantage / Castellacci/Simonsen/Hall: 1 lap
7. Larbre Competition / Corvette C7.R / Roda/Ruberti/Poulsen: 2 laps

FIA World Endurance Championship – LMGTE Am classification:

1. SMP Racing / Ferrari F458 Italia: 131 pts
2. AF Corse / Ferrari F458 Italia: 96 pts
3. Aston Martin Racing / Aston Martin V8 Vantage: 81 pts
4. Dempsey Racing - Proton / Porsche 911 RSR: 79 pts
5. Abu Dhabi-Proton Racing / Porsche 911 RSR: 48 pts
6. Aston Martin Racing / Aston Martin V8 Vantage: 34 pts
7. Larbre Competition / Corvette C7.R: 22 pts

Nightmare trip for Larbre Competition team members

Larbre Competition employees experienced severe disruption during their journey to the US.

Multiple problems arose with the trip to Austin, as squad members missed the connection to Texas after their first **British Airways** flight from Paris Orly to London departed four hours behind schedule.

An even longer voyage beckoned for the team as a result, with the airline placing them on a flight destined for Miami before an additional two-hour delay forced the entire squad to spend a sleepless night in Florida airport.

Despite having had no rest, Larbre's staff faced an arduous programme of work the following day to compensate for having to unload the team's cargo 24 hours late.

Unfortunately their problems worsened on the return trip. Indeed, British Airways neglected to reconfirm all the staff's flights after the changes to their outbound journeys, which prevented the mechanics from boarding the aircraft after they had prepared all the equipment for the next race in Japan.

Following an additional day of waiting in Austin, the operator finally redirected them to a flight travelling via Houston, only to be delayed by a further three and a half hours. The fiasco continued upon returning to Paris, where they discovered that their checked-in luggage had not been delivered.

Larbre travelled back to Val-de-Vienne with a poor opinion of the airline, which should be avoided at all costs!

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All media enquiries should be directed to:

contact@pole.uk.com
+44 (0)20 8605 9797

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