

Larbre Competition victim of bad luck in Mexico

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7 September 2016 at 12:30

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LARBRE COMPETITION VICTIM OF BAD LUCK IN MEXICO

French squad was again fighting for a podium in FIA WEC

Larbre Competition saw its hopes of scoring a fourth podium finish out of five rounds in the FIA World Endurance Championship disappear, when the #50 Corvette C7.R was hit by another LMP2 competitor at the half distance of the 6 Hours of Mexico (1-3 September).

The contact resulted in a bent steering rod, which led to nine minutes in the pits for repairs, pushing the Le Vigeant team down the order. Larbre was still targeting some precious points in the LMGTE Am classification but Yutaka Yamagishi got caught with slick tyres on a wet track a few minutes before the chequered flag.

For the first non-European event of the season, Jack Leconte's crew had the pleasure of being reunited with official Corvette Racing driver Ricky Taylor. The American had previously been given the opportunity to experience the Le Mans 24 Hours with Larbre back in 2013 and 2014. To underline the close links between the Val-de-Vienne organisation and the American manufacturer, Larbre also welcomed Charlie Ping, an engineer delegated by Corvette Racing USA to complement Ricky's participation.

With the 6 Hours of Mexico appearing on the FIA WEC calendar for the first time this season, the entire grid benefited from an additional 90-minute test session in order to learn the Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez circuit, where the Formula 1 Mexican Grand Prix also takes place.

Ricky, Yutaka, and Pierre Ragues – who's the third member of the #50 crew - used the extra running time and the traditional free practice sessions in order to prepare properly for qualifying, where they secured a solid fourth position. Replacing Paolo Ruberti as the Larbre team leader, Taylor was also given the task of taking the start of the race on Saturday.

Having fallen back briefly to fifth place after avoiding a Ford spinning ahead of him, Ricky then showed great pace during his opening double stint, climbing back to second before handing over to Yutaka.

After a solid start to his stint, the Japanese driver was able to keep the Corvette in a podium position until the #78 Porsche sent him into a spin. Later on an LMP2 prototype hit him, damaging his steering rod. Even though Yutaka was able to continue, the team called him back into the pits when they saw his lap times increasing.

Following this set back, the car was handed over to Pierre who rejoined the track as the rain arrived to disrupt the race. In very tricky conditions, the 2013 European Le Mans Series champion not only showed great composure, but his pace was just as competitive as the pro drivers. Having refitted the slick tyres for his second stint, Pierre handed his seat back to Yutaka for the final 40 minutes of the Mexican event.

With the rain returning Yutaka slid on a wet kerb, which sent the #50 into the wall and ended Larbre's race, only a few laps from the finish. The French team will nevertheless be able to rebound quickly as the 6 Hours of COTA headlines the sixth round of the FIA World Endurance Championship, which will be taking place in less than two weeks in Texas (**15-17 September**).

Larbre Competition will continue to benefit from the double experience of Corvette Racing and Ricky Taylor, both of whom are very familiar with the American track.

Ricky Taylor: "I really enjoyed being back with Larbre in Mexico. The result was not what the team was hoping for but we showed potential for a strong result. With me coming back into the team as well as our new race engineer getting on-board, we can

now continue to build on our performance when we move onto COTA and Fuji.”

Pierre Ragues: “For sure it is a shame we did not get to the finish, but once again, we have shown that we have the pace in order to challenge for the podium with our #50 Corvette C7.R.

“Regarding our retirement, it is never easy to drive with slicks on a greasy wet track. These things are part of motor racing and we will have the opportunity to correct this as soon as the next round in Texas.”

Yutaka Yamagishi: “I know that the accident at the end of the race is my fault, and I would like to apologise to my team mates but also to the entire Larbre Competition squad, starting with Jack Leconte. There is not much to add and I prefer to focus towards Austin now.”

Jack Leconte, Team Manager: “We have delivered a solid race and Ricky found his marks very quickly within Larbre Competition. His pace allowed us to climb up to second place after the first two hours of racing.

“We managed wise pit stops and the race strategy was going perfectly well when Yutaka suffered a series of contacts at half distance, the last one costing us precious time. Pierre was nevertheless able to rejoin and delivered a very competitive double stint, in the rain as well as in dry conditions.

“It is for sure frustrating to retire so close to the finish. We had warned the drivers to be cautious with the kerbs during the track walk but unfortunately Yutaka did not remember it.”

Larbre Competition still remains well placed in the fight for the overall podium of the FIA WEC LMGTE Am class.

6 Hours of Mexico – LMGTE Am results:

1. Abu Dhabi-Proton Racing/Porsche 911 RSR/AI Qubaisi-Heinemeier Hansson-Long: 197 laps

2. AF Corse/Ferrari F458 Italia/Perrodo-Collard-Aguas: 1 lap

3. KCMG/Porsche 911 RSR/Ried-Henzler-Camathias: 17.755s

4. Gulf Racing/Porsche 911 RSR/Wainwright-Carroll-Barker: 33.854s

DNF Aston Martin Racing/AstonMartin V8 Vantage/Dalla Lana-Lamy-Lauda

DNF Larbre Competition/Corvette C7.R/Taylor-Ragues-Yamagishi

FIA World Endurance Championship – LMGTE Am class (after round 5/9)

1. AF Corse/Ferrari F458 Italia: 129 pts

2. Abu Dhabi-Proton Racing/Porsche 911 RSR: 94 pts

3. Aston Martin Racing/Aston Martin V8 Vantage: 70 pts

4. Larbre Competition/Corvette C7.R: 69 pts

5. Gulf Racing/Porsche 911 RSR: 62 pts

6. KCMG/Porsche 911 RSR: 59 pts

ENDS.



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