



TECHNICAL ISSUE STOPS LARBRE COMPETITION'S PODIUM CHALLENGE IN FUJI

French GT experts still able to secure some valuable points

Larbre Competition were competing for a fifth podium in seven rounds of the FIA World Endurance Championship at the 6 Hours of Fuji (14-16 October), when a technical issue dropped the #50 Corvette C7.R down the order.

After a superb job by the mechanics, the Le Vigeant-based squad were able to return to the track and secure some valuable points, meaning they remain fourth overall in a LMGTE Am class as competitive as ever.

Following their podium in Texas last month, the Larbre crew arrived at the Fuji Speedway with high ambitions, as the 4.563km circuit has been good to them in the past.

Between the two events, Larbre were pleased to confirm that official Corvette Racing USA driver Ricky Taylor will drive for Jack Leconte's team until the end of the season. For his home race, Japan's Yutaka Yamagishi was back in the cockpit, with Pierre Ragues completing the trio of drivers on board the #50 machine.

After solid free practice sessions at the foot of the famous Mount Fuji, Taylor and Yamagishi were at the wheel for qualifying and did a great job, securing third on the

grid for the sole French GT team competing in FIA WEC, just a tenth off pole position. This confirmed the performance level of the team in what is a closely fought championship.

Taking the start once again, Taylor made good progress, moving up to second place at the end of the first lap. Remaining at the front of the race during his entire opening stint, the American handed over the car to Yamagishi for the second hour.

Following a good and clean stint by Yamagishi, Ragues was next to take over with the #50 Corvette C7.R running in fourth position at the time. The Frenchman made an immediate impression, pulling off a great overtaking manoeuvre to land the Larbre squad back inside the top three.

Following another error-free run from Yamagishi, the Frenchman was back behind the wheel for his own second stint and was maintaining the #50 car in the fight for a fifth podium. However, a transmission issue forced him to return into the pits less than 90 minutes before the end of the race.

After completing a temporary repair, the mechanics found a clever solution which worked and were rewarded for their efforts as the team managed to do the 14 more laps they needed in order to reach the 70 per cent overall distance of the event. Larbre were classified in sixth, meaning they secured eight important points for the championship.

Away from the track, everyone in the French squad remembered Ietoshi Kaneko, who passed away on 23 September. He was a great endurance expert from Japan, but also a long time friend of Jack Leconte and Larbre Competition.

Ricky Taylor: "My first trip to Fuji was one to remember. Both of my team-mates were able to pass on their knowledge of the circuit to me and we proved to be competitive in the practice sessions and qualifying.

"The race result was disappointing, but the guys did an incredible job to get us to the 70 per cent completion we needed to get those vital points, showing amazing spirit, perseverance and teamwork. I am happy to be staying with Larbre until the end of the season and look forward to the next race in Shanghai."

Pierre Ragues: "It is a shame we missed out on a podium finish, especially after one of our most homogenous performances as a crew. Our #50 Corvette C7.R has been extremely reliable since the beginning of the year but mechanical issues will always be a part of motor racing.

"I would like to underline the exceptional work of the mechanics, who were able to find a solution that allowed us to re-join the race and be classified. These points keep us fourth in the championship and with two races to go, anything can still happen."

Yutaka Yamagishi: "I was delighted to drive in my home country and happy with my race pace. During my first stint, lap times were very consistent and the behaviour of the car suited me perfectly.

"During my second stint, debris on the track sped up the degradation of the tyres, so I eased off in order not to take too many risks and look after the car.

"The team worked very hard this weekend and Kaneko was definitely in the back of everyone's minds. I know he would have been looking down at the whole team feeling proud."

Jack Leconte, Team Manager: "Once again, Larbre Competition was on the money to deliver a solid and successful weekend, with a podium finish looking likely, before we encountered this transmission issue.

"As a consolation, we have been able to bring the car back into the pits to make some repairs, whereas normally this type of issues forces us to stop out on track. The points scored in Fuji allow us to remain in the fight for an overall podium position in the championship.

"I would like now to pay tribute to my friend Kaneko, who was in Endurance Racing since I started to be involved with motorsport thirty years ago and sadly passed away last month.

"We have spent so many privileged moments together through our passion for Le Mans and associated championships. After some joint programmes over the years, we shared a full project this season in the FIA WEC with our Japanese driver Yutaka for whom he was managing.

"We enjoyed working together in Austin, once again sharing our great professional and friendly relationship with a lot of enthusiasm and energy.

"Coming back to Japan, where we were extending this project for 2016, the emotion was huge and the void left by his absence was just as big. At the foot of Mount Fuji, all the team joined me to say a last goodbye to Kaneko."

The **6 Hours of Shanghai** plays host to the eighth and penultimate round of the 2016 FIA WEC in less than three weeks time (**4-6 November**), at the same circuit that welcomes the Formula 1 Chinese Grand Prix.

6 Hours of Fuji – LMGTE Am results

- 1.** Aston Martin Racing/Aston Martin V8 Vantage/Dalla Lana-Lamy-Lauda: 208 laps
- 2.** AF Corse/Ferrari F458 Italia/Perrodo-Collard-Aguas: 1 lap
- 3.** KCMG/Porsche 911 RSR/Ried-Henzler-Camathias: 1 lap
- 4.** Gulf Racing/Porsche 911 RSR/Wainwright-Carroll-Barker: 1 lap
- 5.** Abu Dhabi-Proton Racing/Porsche 911 RSR/Al Qubaisi-Heinemeier Hansson-Long: 5 laps
- 6.** Larbre Competition/Corvette C7.R/Taylor-Ragues-Yamagishi: 53 laps

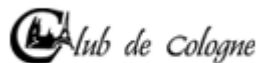
FIA World Endurance Championship - LMGTE Am category (7/9 rounds)

1. AF Corse/Ferrari F458 Italia: 155 pts
2. Aston Martin Racing/Aston Martin V8 Vantage: 122 pts
3. Abu Dhabi-Proton Racing/Porsche 911 RSR: 114 pts
4. **Larbre Competition/Corvette C7.R: 92 pts**
5. KCMG / Porsche 911 RSR: 92 pts
6. Gulf Racing / Porsche 911 RSR: 86 pts

ENDS



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