



LARBRE COMPETITION



TOP FIVE IN SHANGHAI FOR LARBRE COMPETITION

By finishing fifth at the 6 Hours of Shanghai (November 4-6), Larbre Competition scored points for the seventh time out of eight rounds in the 2016 FIA World Endurance Championship.

After the penultimate race of the season, the Le Vigeant-based team and its #50 Corvette C7.R remain in the fight to clinch third place overall in a LMGTE Am class as competitive as ever.

Before travelling to the Chinese Grand Prix venue, Larbre reorganised its driver line-up. Yutaka Yamagishi was replaced by Romain Brandela, an experienced Bronze driver who has already raced in various endurance racing championships, although this was his first taste of FIA WEC at Shanghai.

Once again, the French GT experts proved their credentials as they quickly integrated their new team-member alongside Corvette Racing USA official driver Ricky Taylor and Pierre Ragues, who's been racing with the crew since the start of the season.

The chemistry was working well within the revamped trio of drivers, but the #50 car wasn't showing its usual level of performance. The characteristics of the Chinese track, combined with the high temperatures, meant tyre management was the main

focus.

After completing a total 65 laps on Friday, Larbre made several set-up changes and were rewarded with the third fastest time overall across all pre-race sessions.

However, issues surfaced again over the first half of the six-hour contest, forcing the team to go for a long-term strategy in the race, starting from sixth place on the grid.

Taylor, who has become the usual starter since he joined in Mexico, delivered a solid first stint before handing the car over to Brandela for his baptism of fire in the championship.

The Frenchman did a great job, driving well and with composure before handing over the steering wheel to his compatriot Ragues. The Normandy-born driver also impressed with a faultless stint on board the Corvette C7.R to reach the halfway mark of the race.

Temperatures then started to drop in Shanghai, which allowed Larbre to increase their pace over the second half of the event. Back in the cockpit of the #50 machine, Romain set more competitive lap times, as did his more seasoned team-mates during their own second stints.

Despite running at the same pace as the leaders, it proved difficult to close the gap in an extremely competitive field. In the end Larbre had to settle for fifth at the chequered flag, but nevertheless pocketed 10 valuable championship points and remain in the fight for the overall LMGTE Am podium.

Jack Leconte and his team are already focusing on the **6 Hours of Bahrain (November 17-19)**, which is the ninth and final round of the season, with hopes to end 2016 on a high.

Ricky Taylor: "It was a very difficult race, but I think the weekend as a whole was good. We improved the car and the team worked hard. There weren't any mistakes from the drivers or the mechanics. Everybody did a great job.

"During the first half of the race, the conditions didn't really suit our setup, but halfway through the track really came to our car and we were much more competitive. If we had started three hours later, I think we could have had a good shot of a podium, or even fight for the win."

Pierre Ragues: "Difficult weekend! This is the first circuit this season where our Corvette didn't have the pace straightaway. We had to work hard and managed to find a coherent balance on a cold track, but not when it was warmer.

"We had to be patient during the first half of the race, before being able to attack and have more fun during the last three hours. We are all a bit frustrated but these issues

are part of motorsport.

ÒWe are now going to analyse all the data and also use the experience and expertise of Charlie Ping, our engineer supplied by Corvette, to return to the front in Bahrain and end our season on a positive note.Ó

Romain Brandela: ÒI am delighted with the experience. I was slightly under pressure at the beginning of the weekend as I got to grips with the car and the circuit. I have never driven a GT car with prototypes also competing in the same race. Everybody knows how professional Jack Leconte and Larbre Competition are and I did not want to make any mistakes.

ÒThe objective was clear: bring the car back in a good condition. I have progressed well, getting better each time I was back out on the track. I am happy because I feel I have fulfilled my contract whilst bringing a bit of performance during my final stint.

ÒI enjoyed it a lot and would like to thank Jack and all the team for their support and confidence throughout the weekend.Ó

Jack Leconte, Team Manager: ÒThis year, Larbre Competition has been like the school of the FIA WEC, with the training of four Bronze racers under our belt. This represents a lot of work for the team and their crew-mates, but we are becoming quite handy and the recipe seems to be working as all have proved to be good enough and competitive on track.

ÒNevertheless, it is difficult for a driver who gets accustomed to the World Endurance Championship over one race, as they are against competitors who have around four years of experience.

ÒIn Shanghai, we got caught out by the temperatures and the behaviour of our medium tyres, which did not offer the usual level of performance. As we had a limited number of soft compounds here, we had to make sacrifices during the opening stages of the race. Each drivers' first stint was then about tyre management, but we were able to react during the last three hours and had a similar pace to the leaders.

ÒAfter suffering an accident in Mexico and a mechanical failure in Fuji, I remain satisfied with our display in China. The team and the drivers have delivered a faultless performance, whilst the reliability of our Corvette C7.R has been perfect. We will have to be thorough in Bahrain in order to end the season as we started it, on the podium.Ó

6 Hours of Shanghai DLMGTE Am results

1. Aston Martin Racing/Aston Martin V8 Vantage/Dalla Lana-Lamy-Lauda: 166 laps
2. AF Corse/Ferrari F458 Italia/Perrodo-Collard-Aguas: 54.023sec
3. KCMG/Porsche 911 RSR/Ried-Henzler-Camathias: 1min1.837sec
4. Abu Dhabi-Proton Racing/Porsche 911 RSR/AI Qubaisi-Heinemeier Hansson-Long:

1min13.423sec

5. Larbre Competition/Corvette C7.R/Taylor-Ragues-Brandela: 2 laps

6. Gulf Racing/Porsche 911 RSR/Wainwright-Carroll-Barker: 2 laps

FIA World Endurance Championship Ծ LMGTE Am category (8/9 rounds)

1. AF Corse/Ferrari F458 Italia: 173 pts

2. Aston Martin Racing/Aston Martin V8 Vantage: 148 pts

3. Abu Dhabi-Proton Racing/Porsche 911 RSR: 126 pts

4. KCMG/Porsche 911 RSR: 107 pts

5. Larbre Competition/Corvette C7.R: 102 pts

6. Gulf Racing/Porsche 911 RSR: 94 pts

ENDS



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