



LARBRE COMPETITION



BAD LUCK DENIES LARBRE COMPETITION PODIUM IN BAHRAIN SEASON FINALE

**French GT experts dominated the beginning of the race
Fastest lap confirms pace on #50 Corvette C7.R**

Having led the 6 Hours of Bahrain (17-19 November) after a thundering start, Larbre Competition were still fighting for a fifth FIA World Endurance Championship LMGTE Am podium of the season with 75 minutes to go, when their #50 Corvette C7.R suffered damage as a result of contact.

The Le Vigeant-based squad eventually crossed the line in fifth, but underlined their level of competitiveness as they picked up the fastest lap of the race.

For the final round of the season, Romain Brandela returned to partner official Corvette Racing USA driver Ricky Taylor and former European Le Mans Series champion Pierre Ragues.

The race's twilight format made practice all the more important and Larbre got their weekend off to a promising start, setting the second fastest time overall on Thursday, as they focused on the evolving track conditions whilst night fell at the Sakhir circuit.

Taylor and Brandela continued to demonstrate the #50 Corvette C7.R's strong pace

on Friday, as they equalled their best qualifying performance of the year with third place.

Larbre enjoyed a great start on Saturday, as Taylor stormed into the lead of the LMGTE Am class by the end of the first lap. The American maintained his position throughout his opening stint and opened up a decent gap, before handing over to Brandela. The Frenchman ran into traffic, but kept the #50 Corvette C7.R in the fight for the podium.

Ragues then took over and immediately showed competitive pace, fighting back into third position. After his fantastic start, Taylor returned behind the wheel to try and claw back into the advantage, but a Full Course Yellow cut short his charge and cost Larbre one lap.

However, the 27-year-old managed to clinch back third place after a superb overtake, before handing the car to Brandela. The Frenchman continued to battle for a place on the podium with the LMGTE am champions-elect's #83 Ferrari, before the #50 was hit by an LMP2.

Although the prototype was given a penalty for the incident, this did not erase the nine minutes Brandela had to spend in the pits to have the Corvette's steering rod repaired. Larbre's expert mechanics worked extremely quickly to get it fixed and send Romain back out on track before Ragues took over for a solid final stint, with the #50 ultimately crossing the line in fifth place.

Despite it being Larbre's eighth points finish in nine events, this result did not reflect the high level of performance displayed by the only French squad competing in the FIA WEC's GT categories. Taylor's fastest lap of 2mins1.184sec was three-tenths quicker than the next competitor.

Larbre Competition's 2016 season still remains a positive one. In their second FIA WEC campaign running the Corvette C7.R, the Val-de-Vienne outfit scored four podiums, on demanding circuits such as Silverstone, Spa-Francorchamps, Nürburgring and the Circuit of the Americas. More importantly, Jack Leconte's crew have consistently been front-runners in a highly competitive LMGTE Am class.

Ricky Taylor: "The result didn't show how well the team performed all weekend. I think the car was the best it has been all season, which is a nice way to end the year. All the mechanics, everybody, did a great job and worked very hard. We had great pace and it was good to be leading at the start of the race. The positive is that we had the speed and hopefully that can be taken to next year."

Pierre Ragues: "We knew from the first few laps that we had good pace here, maybe even more so than at other rounds. Everybody was really motivated to end the season on a positive note and I think that we had a real chance to challenge for the victory, fair and square."

ÒRegarding the contact, we are at the end of the season and everybody is trying to show how good they are. Obviously we are disappointed but clearly we have positive aspects to take from this last round.

ÒPersonally, I am very happy to have done a full season with Larbre Competition: it is a fantastic team with passionate people, starting with Jack Leconte. It's been a great pleasure working with them, as well as getting used to the Corvette C7.R. I cannot wait for next year.Ó

Romain Brandela: ÓFirst of all, I'd like to extend my warmest thanks to Jack Leconte and Larbre Competition for renewing their trust and calling me up for a second FIA WEC event.

ÓIt's never easy as driver to join a team near the end of a season, nor is it simple for a crew to welcome a newcomer. Larbre really made my life easy as they helped me settle in smoothly. So a big thanks to all the guys for the great experience.

ÓAs for the race itself, I was obviously disappointed not to finish on the podium after the incident with the LMP2 car. I was extra careful in traffic all race long, if anything even too much. I moved over to let him by but as soon he got past me it was as if he did not pay attention anymore. What makes it all the more frustrating is that I was having a great time fighting François Perrodo in the #83 Ferrari for third place.Ó

Jack Leconte, Team Manager: ÓThis final FIA WEC round was very positive in terms of pace, as we have constantly challenged the #83 Ferrari who were crowned LMGTE Am champions. We were even ahead of the #98 Aston Martin before they encountered mechanical issues.

ÓThe team did a great job, well supported by Charlie Ping, the engineer supplied by Corvette during the season to work with Ricky ð who has quickly emerged as the top Pro driver and proved it both in the race and qualifying.

ÓWe suffered from a lack of experience in traffic. Even if the LMP2 was in the wrong, knowing how to avoid an incident is part of the game. Pierre had the same pace as Rui çguas on the #83, so it's even more frustrating that we missed out on a podium.

ÓWe would have liked to conclude the season in the top three, we clearly had the capability. Saying this, it's important to remember that our 2016 season was much better than the previous one.

ÓThe evaluation process for a WEC LMGTE Pro programme in 2017 is now completed. Over the past three months, the work we have accomplished with the Pratt & Miller engineers, and the experience Ricky Taylor gained in Mexico, Fuji, Shanghai and Bahrain - which will be again on the 2017 calendar - does not leave anything to chance for next year.

ÓWe are now waiting for the decision from the Management of General Motors to enter a Corvette in the Pro class, which is very promising for us after six years of partnership with Corvette Racing.Ó

6 Hours of Bahrain Ð LMGTE Am results:

1. Abu Dhabi-Proton Racing/Porsche 911 RSR/AI Qubaisi-Heinemeier Hansson-Long: 171 laps
 2. KCMG/Porsche 911 RSR/Ried-Henzler-Camathias: 1 lap
 3. AF Corse/Ferrari F458 Italia/Perrodo-Collard-Aguas: 2 laps
 4. Gulf Racing/Porsche 911 RSR/Wainwright-Carroll-Barker: 3 laps
 5. **Larbre Competition/Corvette C7.R/Taylor-Ragues-Brandela: 7 laps**
- DNF.** Aston Martin Racing/Aston Martin V8 Vantage/Dalla Lana-Lamy-Lauda

FIA World Endurance Championship Ð LMGTE Am class (after 9/9 rounds):

1. AF Corse/Ferrari F458 Italia: 188pts
2. Abu Dhabi-Proton Racing/Porsche 911 RSR: 151pts
3. Aston Martin Racing/Aston Martin V8 Vantage: 149pts
4. KCMG/Porsche 911 RSR: 125pts
5. **Larbre Competition/Corvette C7.R: 112pts**
6. Gulf Racing/Porsche 911 RSR: 106pts

ENDS



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