



What a difference two months can make in sportscars racing! Circumstance, excellent strategy and brilliant driving today in Portugal won Team ORECA Matmut its first race with the Peugeot 908 HDi FAP.

The 1000Km of Algarve saw Nicolas Lapierre, Olivier Panis and Stéphane Sarrazin emerge victorious to take their and Team ORECA Matmut's first victory of the 2010 season as they have driven an absolutely faultless race. Given French team's pace this season, it's hard to believe that their victory was only their first win of the season.

In a no full course caution race, the Frenchmen delivered a solid drive, holding fast at the front till the end in front of so many fans who enjoyed a herringbone start, the traditional Le Mans start, for the

very first time in the Series.

AN ALMOST FLAWLESS RACE IN LMP1

With only two rounds of the 2010 season remaining the Le Mans Series holds the race-fans spellbound. Many men and teams are mathematically in with a shot at the title. It all bodes well for a gripping climax to the 2010 title chase and a victory in Hungary next month could seriously change the face of the title fight.

So, Team ORECA Matmut is right back on top of its game, and Rebellion Racing tried to maintain an impressive challenge. Does Team ORECA Matmut's first victory in the season mean that it has taken a step forward? What is for certain is that they desperately needed that victory, just as Rebellion Racing needed such a strong second place to stem the challenge.

Despite starting from pole at Le Castellet, the French team couldn't do better than third because of technical gremlins and had to retire at Spa after Olivier Panis ended in the tire wall helped by another competitor. Today's victory is a reward for the team hard work as Olivier Panis said: "I would like to thank the whole team, from the mechanics to the engineers. This victory was important for them. It is a great pleasure to climb on the first step of the podium again, moreover with the Peugeot 908 HDi FAP. It is great to win so shortly after Le Mans and I hope there are more victories to come. I really enjoyed the weekend."

Rebellion Racing looked a lot more convincing than they had in the previous rounds, and #12 Lola-Rebellion, driven by Nicolas Prost and Neel Jani, was fast enough to be the runner-up although the squad started last. Lady luck was on their side today! Third place is a kind of a relief for Team Signature after the retirement at Le Mans. There is a lady on the podium as Vanina Ickx shared the duty with Pierre Ragues and Franck Mailleux.

BIG SURPRISES IN LMP2

The RML AD Group Lola-HPD, driven by Mike Newton, Thomas Erdos and Ben Collins, added another podium to their tally by scoring an outright victory. The British team secured the third podium in a row which means that they are back on top form as they were in 2005 and 2006 when they won the class at the 24 Hours of Le Mans.

To say that Team Bruichladdich sprang a major surprise in Portugal is an understatement. Karim Ojeh, Tim Greaves and Thor-Christian Ebbesvik have crossed the line in second after a faultless six hour race. But, does this mean that they made the sort of progress it needs in order to fend off their rivals at the coming round at Hungary? It's a hypothetical question right now, of course, because there is no way just yet to tell for sure. But there were indications that the team might be able to take up the challenge.



Pegasus Racing came away with a far better result than almost anyone had predicted. Third place is more like a victory for Julien Schell and Frédéric Da Rocha as the pre-race favorites had an awfully tough time in Portimao, against all expectations. The prototype from France also proved to be the vehicle that demonstrated the best overall efficiency and fuel consumption at the race in Portugal as it won the Michelin Green X Challenge.



HARD TIME FOR FORMULA LE MANS ET LMGT1

The Formula Le Mans field has been decimated early in the race, and only two were still racing in their expected position when the checkered flag dropped. It is a 1-2 for DAMS cars which just had to roll down to victory lane and the first win in 2010 for Jody Firth and Darren Hughes with Andrea Barlesi, Alessandro Cicognani and Gary Chalandon as runners-up.

If a Saleen had to win the LMGT1 class, the question was: which one? Larbre Compétition were clearly favorites as they were leading strongly the class thanks to the victory at Le Castellet. Patrice Goueslard, Gabriele Gardel and Fernando Rees didn't fail and increased the team's lead as they snatched the victory. QUOTE

The newcomer Atlas FX-Team FS from Austria Saleen driven by Julien Schroyen, Carlo Van Dam and Adam Lacko secured promising second place.

GREAT FIGHTS IN LMGT2

The LMGT2 competition started full force at the green flag and didn't let up until the checkered almost six hours later. Pit stops and caution periods shook up the order from time to time, but the AF Corse Ferrari remained in the hunt for victory until the last lap. The pair Gianmaria Bruni and Jaime Melo was unbeatable today on a track that Gimmi loves: "This is our second time here at Portimao and it's a fantastic place and an amazing circuit. We had a poor start this year and the title is gone for us, but we love the Series and will be in Budapest."

Toni Vilander had a great fight for second place late in the race with Richard Lietz and could pass him with five laps to go. They drove door to door for a while before the Finn could get the better on the Austrian.

Has Ferrari really made a big leap back into contention? Did the nature of Portimao simply favor the aspects of its package? These were just some of the questions ricocheting around the paddock after AF Corse Ferrari's dramatic comeback victory in the Portuguese race, which set the scene for further battle in the championship struggle in both Hungaroring and Silverstone.

But there was another one, too. Was this another race that could have gone Porsche's way with slightly better fortune? Had Richard Lietz thus maintained his momentum to take pole position, could he have turned the tables in the race? Richard Lietz and Marc Lieb could not extend their Le Mans Series, but they didn't lose too many points thanks to third place as Marc Lieb explained: "The competition this time was very strong. The leaders were simply unreachable. With the others, we fought for our position to the last minute and achieved our main goal of defending our lead in the points."

The prospects for Hungary are tantalizing.

The next race will be round four of the Le Mans Series on the Hungaroring (Hungary) on Saturday, August 22.

