



## ***Daring Long Beach Strategy Brings Dramatic Second Consecutive Victory to Tafel Racing - East Coast Plan Plays Well in the West for No. 71 Tafel/Bell Micro Ferrari***

Source: Tafel Racing

**LONG BEACH, Calif., April 19, 2008** - The question posed was if an East Coast strategy that won Tafel Racing its first American Le Mans Series victory could be as successful on the West Coast? The No. 71 Tafel/Bell Micro Racing Ferrari F430 GTC answered with a resounding 'yes!' taking its second consecutive GT2 class victory today in a dramatic battle at the American Le Mans Series at Long Beach (Calif.). 2000 American Le Mans Series GT2 Champion Dirk Müller (a native of



Germany living in Monaco) crossed the finish line a narrow 0.317 seconds in front of the No. 45 Porsche in a battle that was at times even closer. A daring strategy call by Team Technical Director Tony Dowe (Cumming, Ga.) not to change Michelin tires during the race's only pit stop positioned Tafel Racing at the front of the pack with approximately 30 minutes remaining in the 100 minute race. Taking a pristine car from opening driver Dominik Farnbacher (Ansbach, Germany), Müller was able to hold-off two Porsches with fresher tires to claim the Jim Tafel (Alpharetta, Ga.) owned team's second-straight, and second career, American Le Mans Series victory.

Starting fourth, Farnbacher had the challenging task of keeping the leaders close while simultaneously protecting his Michelin Pilot racing slicks on the 1.968-mile, 11-turn, temporary street course. Farnbacher, in just his second season of American Le Mans Series competition, did a veteran-like job

with both tasks. The test was then on the Cumming, Ga.-based team. The task before them was to perform a perfect pit stop on Lap 46, of the 68 covered by the GT2 class, refueling the Italian exotic while Farnbacher handed the driving duties over to Müller. Müller sped out of pit lane first in class with a four second lead. With 20 minutes to go the lead had slipped to 3.3 seconds as the competitors' fresher tires allowed them to close on Müller, the 2007 FIA GT GT2 class champion. The gap fell to less than half that with 12 minutes to go. The five minute mark showed just 0.551 seconds between the Bell Micro Ferrari and second-place at the start- finish line; a gap that was much closer on other portions of the track.

The team's day was threatened one last time when Müller saw the checkered flag flying for the overall race leader behind him. Despite thinking the race was over, Müller stayed hard on the throttle awaiting confirmation from the team. Instead of confirmation, Müller was warned he needed to take one more lap under the onslaught of the cars behind. Drawing on decades of experience,

Müller kept the V8-powered, mid-engine machine at the point of the field in a close but clean one-two battle between the two great manufacturers of sports car racing; Ferrari and Porsche.

For Müller, the Long Beach win gave him his tenth career Series race title. It was Farnbacher's second and the team's second in the ALMS. The victory also gave the team the outright lead in the GT2 Team Championship and widened the still narrow battles for Driver and IMSA Cup titles with eight races remaining on the schedule.

Today's Grand Prix of Long Beach can be seen, tape- delayed, on ABC Sports at 12:30 pm (ET), Sunday, April 20. The Next American Le Mans Series event will be held on May 18 at Miller Motorsports Park in Tooele, Utah.

### Quotes

**Jim Tafel, Owner:** "The drivers, the crew, the great strategy by Tony Dowe got the job done. It was pretty intense. We were relying on Dirk to really hustle the car because he didn't have new tires. Watching the last three laps it was so gut wrenching. He finished that last lap and held off Wolf Henzler. He did an absolute fabulous job and so did the team. I am just so proud of this team right now."

**Tony Dowe, Technical Director:** "That strategy to go without a tire change was made about two weeks ago, almost straight after St. Petersburg. One of the things you do is play to your strengths and other people's weaknesses. When we didn't qualify on pole it is because it was part of a plan. I don't mean that in an arrogant way. We had to run those tires to get the situation right in the race. Dominik is a credit. When I spoke on the phone a week ago with Dom, I said 'it is your turn to qualify' and he said 'no' that it should be Dirk. So, we decided to do the same driver plan that we did at St. Pete because it worked. We have drivers that haven't got their own agendas. Their mind is in the team and what it takes to win. Any other driver would have said 'I am going to qualify' but he didn't, he did what was right for the team. Clearly, I am pleased with the way the strategy worked out, the way the drivers respond to everything and how the crew acts. Everything is rockin' as somebody says."

**Dominik Farnbacher, Driver, No. 71:** "At the start I just tried to stay out of trouble. I didn't try to risk anything. My goal was to stay with the pack. I knew we were going to double stint the tires and that the Porsche would have to change them. I tried to get through the traffic well without any contact. I can't believe it yet. This is such an incredible feeling. I don't think I have realized it yet. It gives me self confidence. As a young driver you want to win and this is my second victory in this year and it is going to push me. I am on a wave right now. It is motivating me even more!"

**Dirk Müller, Driver, No. 71:** "The second in a row is a really nice one. I really think it was one of the toughest I have done in GT2. I had to open the whole experience book I have gotten in touring cars the last couple of years. I knew the places where to overtake and I tried to cover myself so not to leave any room. I want to really thank Wolf for racing me so clean. It is a way of racing I appreciate. Our strategy really paid off, it was brilliant. Tafel/Bell Micro Racing did a fantastic pit stop and put me in the lead and I just brought it home. I was a little disappointed yesterday because I thought we could be a little quicker in qualifying but it really paid off. The Michelin tire really did a great job."

**(About the last lap):** "The Porsches were right on my tail. I positioned myself for the last lap and then all of a sudden I saw the checkered but they told me to keep going. I thought 'this is going to be so close'. I mean Wolf tried everything. It wasn't just close, it wasn't just playing around it was really close. Wolf was hoping for a mistake from me, I was hoping for a mistake from him so I could get away. I like this racing. I like this finish. It doesn't matter how close it is, we like to be in front. The season is going to be really tough; very tight

