



ALMS - The Raceway at Belle Isle Park, Detroit ***Race Report Compilation***

Source: Team Race Reports / Photos Courtesy American Le Mans

Team Audi Sport North America Race Report

Audi drivers Marcel Fässler and Emanuele Pirro achieved their first victory in the LM P1 class of the American Le Mans Series in the city street race in Detroit (U.S. state of Michigan). After a faultless drive they finished third overall with their Audi R10 TDI. Lucas Luhr and Marc Werner retired early following an accident and, after seven consecutive victories, for the first time this year did not score any points.

At the "Belle Isle Street Circuit", Team Audi Sport North America's two Audi R10 TDI prototypes started the race from the forth row of the grid. During the first half hour of the race, Emanuele Pirro and Lucas Luhr passed the two Penske Porsches and one of the four Acura/Hondas. The two diesel-powered sports cars were running in fourth and fifth position when Lucas Luhr first spun on lap 22 before crashing sideways into a tyre wall at high speed on the same lap – his foot having slipped from the brake pedal on a bump, Luhr remained unhurt. The race, however, ended prematurely for him and his teammate Marco Werner because under IMSA rules a repair was not permitted.

This meant, all hopes of the Audi squad remained on the "sister car" which Emanuele Pirro handed over in third position to Marcel Fässler on lap 62. In his second race for Audi the Swiss drove faultlessly, bringing the R10 TDI home in third place. Fässler celebrated his first class victory in the American Le Mans Series. Emanuele Pirro scored his first win of the season.

Before the last two races at Road Atlanta (October 4) and Laguna Seca (October 18), only the Audi drivers Lucas Luhr, Marco Werner and Emanuele Pirro can still win the LM P1 Drivers' Championship. Audi had already clinched the Manufacturers' title last weekend at Mosport.

Quotes after the race in Detroit

Dr Wolfgang Ullrich (Head of Audi Motorsport): "It is nice having achieved such a good result from such a poor starting position. Marcel (Fässler) and Emanuele (Pirro) did a great job. This also applies to the team which did not have an easy time due to the accidents, but was nevertheless able to secure a third place overall and another LM P1 victory."

Marcel Fässler (Audi R10 TDI #1): "The track is very difficult; I really had my hands full dancing between the walls. The traffic was even worse than last time at Road America. I am very happy. Emanuele (Pirro) did a superb job, the team was great and the tyres were super consistent over the whole distance. I am glad to be a part of this team. It is great fun."

Emanuele Pirro (Audi R10 TDI #1): "We can really be happy. We did the best we could on a very difficult race track. We both did a good race. I was very happy with my stint. For Marcel (Fässler) it was very difficult, our track time before the start of the race was very small, but he brought the car home and did a very good job."

Lucas Luhr (Audi R10 TDI #2): "That was a very difficult weekend for us. We almost did no practice in dry conditions. Because I have never been here before, I first had to get to know a few bumps. In the race, I hit a bump when I had to avoid Emanuele (Pirro). I spun, but without further consequences. Five, six corners later I slipped of the brake pedal – again on a pump. It was a hard impact. This was clearly my mistake, I am sorry for the team and I hope that such a thing will not happen again."

Marco Werner (Audi R10 TDI #2): "Congratulations to Emanuele (Pirro) and Marcel (Fässler). With their third place they have achieved a good result for Audi. It was not our weekend, we had all the bad luck on our side. We knew that it would be difficult for us, but the fact that we had so many problems is a shame. It's also a shame we were not allowed to repair the car because we know how good Audi is in such a situation."

Dave Maraj (Team Director Audi Sport North America): "It was a tough weekend. We did not have enough track time to do a proper set-up. The cars were in quite good shape and coming here and finishing third overall is a decent result after all that we experienced this weekend. The track did not suit us at all."

American Le Mans Series Race Recap

ANDRETTI GREEN AND ACURA ON TOP IN DETROIT

Andretti Green Racing fulfilled the promise and potential it showed all season with its first overall victory in the American Le Mans Series on Saturday. James Rossiter and Franck Montagny won the Detroit Sports Car Challenge presented by Bosch as Acura swept the overall podium for the first time.

Rossiter and Montagny took the lead for good when it won the race out of pitlane with 69 minutes left. Montagny never gave up the lead and beat Patrón Highcroft Racing's David Brabham across the line by 3.985 seconds.

Andretti Green won in the Series for the first time since taking an LMP2 victory at Sebring in 2007. That race marked Acura's debut in the Series. Now late in its second season, Acura passed Porsche in the race for the manufacturer championship by four points.

Emanuele Pirro won in Detroit for the second time, and Marcel Fässler scored his first Series victory for Audi Sport North America. The Audi R10 TDI finished third overall and 20.114 seconds behind the AGR entry. Pirro and Fässler also ended a seven-race class win streak for Lucas Luhr and Marco Werner, who crashed out of the race on Lap 21.

The crash prevented the Luhr/Werner pairing from clinching the P1 championship.

Pirro and Fässler finished ahead of Gil de Ferran and Simon Pagenaud as de Ferran Motorsports' completed the P2 podium sweep for Acura. The top six cars finished on the lead lap.

Corvette Racing's Oliver Gavin and Olivier Beretta won in GT1 for the first time since late March with more than a minute in hand to beat teammates Johnny O'Connell and Jan Magnussen. Three-time and defending class champions, Gavin and Beretta took the lead early on when the No. 4 crew got the car out of pitlane ahead of the sister car during the first round of stops at the 40-minute mark.

The Bell Motorsports' Aston Martin DBR9 of Terry Borcheller and Chapman Ducote finished third in class for the third straight race.

Flying Lizard Motorsports scored its third 1-2 finish as GT2 championship leaders Jörg Bergmeister and Wolf Henzler bolstered their class lead with their fourth win of the season. The pair of Porsche

factory drivers stayed clean while Ferraris from Tafel Racing and Risi Competizione had their problems, and Johannes van Overbeek was hit while leading by Penske's Bernhard.

Henzler, the class polesitter, crossed the line 6.570 seconds ahead of van Overbeek who teamed with Patrick Pilet. Mika Salo and Jaime Melo, last week's winners at Mosport, finished third in Risi's lead Ferrari F430 GT.

Detroit Sports Car Challenge presented by Bosch

The Raceway at Belle Isle Park, Detroit

Saturday's results

1. (5) James Rossiter, England; Franck Montagny, Brignoles France; Acura ARX-01B (1, P2), 104.
2. (1) Scott Sharp, Jupiter, FL; David Brabham, Australia; Acura ARX-01B (2, P2), 104.
3. (9) Emanuele Pirro, Italy; Marcel Fässler, Switzerland; Audi AG R10/TDI (1, P1), 104.
4. (2) Simon Pagenaud, France; Gil de Ferran, Brazil; Acura ARX-01B (3, P2), 104.
5. (6) Romain Dumas, France; Timo Bernhard, Germany; Porsche RS Spyder (4, P2), 104.
6. (7) Patrick Long, Oak Park, CA; Ryan Briscoe, Australia; Porsche RS Spyder (5, P2), 104.
7. (3) Guy Smith, England; Chris Dyson, Pleasant Valley, NY; Porsche RS Spyder (6, P2), 103.
8. (11) Ben Devlin, England; Gerardo Bonilla, Orlando, FL; Lola B07 46 Mazda (7, P2), 103.
9. (10) Marino Franchitti, Scotland; Butch Leitzinger, State College, PA; Porsche RS Spyder (8, P2), 102.
10. (17) Oliver Gavin, England; Olivier Beretta, Monaco; Corvette C6.R (1, GT1), 100.
11. (13) Jan Magnussen, Denmark; Johnny O'Connell, Flowery Branch, GA; Corvette C6.R (2, GT1), 100.
12. (14) Wolf Henzler, Germany; Jörg Bergmeister, Germany; Porsche 911 GT3 RSR (1, GT2), 98.
13. (18) Patrick Pilet, France; Johannes van Overbeek, San Francisco, CA; Porsche 911 GT3 RSR (2, GT2), 98.
14. (15) Jaime Melo, Brazil; Mika Salo, Finland; Ferrari F430 GT (3, GT2), 98.
15. (22) Lonnie Pechnik, Pacific Grove, CA; Martin Ragginger, Austria; Porsche 911 GT3 RSR (4, GT2), 98.
16. (19) Robert Bell, UK; Harrison Brix, San Jose, CA; Ferrari F430 GT (5, GT2), 98.
17. (26) Jim Tafel, Alpharetta, GA; Alex Figge, Hollywood, CA; Ferrari F430 GT (6, GT2), 95.
18. (28) Joel Feinberg, Ft. Lauderdale, FL; Chris Hall, Daytona, FL; Dodge Viper Comp Coupe (7, GT2), 94.
19. (20) Terry Borcheller, Vero Beach, FL; Chapman Ducote, Miami, FL; Aston Martin DBR9 (3, GT1), 93.
20. (16) Dominik Farnbacher, Germany; Dirk Mueller, Germany; Ferrari F430 GT (8, GT2), 92.
21. (27) David Murry, Cumming, GA; Andrea Robertson, Ray, MI; David Robertson, Ray, MI; Doran Ford GT-R (9, GT2), 89.
22. (21) Tom Milner, Leesburg, VA; Tom Sutherland, Los Gatos, CA; Panoz Esperante Ford (10, GT2), 87, Accident.
23. (12) Jon Field, Dublin, OH; Clint Field, Dublin, OH; Richard Berry, Evergreen, CO; Lola B06/10 AER (2, P1), 83.

24. (4) Luis Diaz, Mexico; Adrian Fernandez, Mexico; Acura ARX-01B (9, P2), 83.
25. (25) Tim Pappas, Boston, MA; Anthony Lazzaro, Acworth, GA; Doran Ford GT-R (11, GT2), 49, Accident.
26. (24) Marc Basseng, Germany; Nicky Pastorelli, Netherlands; Francisco Pastorelli, Netherlands; Porsche 911 GT3 RSR (12, GT2), 38, Mechanical.
27. (8) Lucas Luhr, Germany; Marco Werner, Germany; Audi AG R10/TDI (3, P1), 21, Accident.
28. (23) Paul Drayson, London, UK; Jonny Cocker, UK; Aston Martin Vantage (13, GT2), 1, Accident.



Tafel Racing Report

Tafel Racing entered today's Detroit Sports Car Challenge with high expectations for both its No. 71 Tafel/Bell Micro Racing Ferrari F430 GTC and No. 73 Tafel Racing Ferrari F430 GTC. However, a starter motor failure as Dominik Farnbacher (Ansbach, Germany) handed the Bell Micro entry to Dirk Müller (a native of Germany living in Monaco) on the first pit stop would end the three-time American Le Mans Series GT2 class winners' pursuit of a fourth class victory this season. The No. 71 would finish ninth in class, 21st overall, at the end of the two hour and 45-minute race. Alex Figge (Denver, Col.) in the No. 73 he shares with Jim Tafel (Alpharetta, Ga.), would be on the receiving- end of a glancing blow under passing that would necessitate an additional pit stop. The stop to attach a new mirror cost the car several laps leaving them sixth in class, 17th overall on the 2.096-mile, 14-turn circuit that winds through Detroit's Belle Isle.

No. 71 Tafel/Bell Micro Racing Ferrari F430 GTC

Drivers: Dominik Farnbacher (Ansbach, Germany), Dirk Müller (a native of Germany now living in Monaco)

The No. 71 Tafel/Bell Micro Ferrari took the green flag from the third in the GT2 field with Dominik Farnbacher behind the wheel. The young German was involved in a four-deep, nose-to-tail battle for most of his 50-minute stint. The fight, which Farnbacher fought from third but within two car-lengths of the leader, carried through the second yellow flag at which time technical director Tony Dowe (Cumming, Ga.) called the Bell Micro Ferrari in for fuel, four Michelin tires and a driver change. All went well until Dirk Müller reached for the starter button to ignite the V8 engine just behind his head. The car failed to start. The crew immediately ascertained the problem as a failed starter motor and set to making repairs. A spare starter, donated by fellow Ferrari team Risi Competizione, arrived seven minutes after Farnbacher entered pit lane. 11 minutes later Müller pushed the button and the engine came to full song. The impressive repair of the hot starter - which includes the removal of the car's underbody - was completed in under 20-minutes total; a testimony to the Tafel Racing crew. As it became clear how fast the car was and that Müller could gain positions, the 2000 American Le Mans Series GT2 Champion set on the task of picking-off as many cars as possible. He made his final pass for position on the second to last turn of the last lap, moving from 10th to ninth at the checkered flag. In the process, he added his third fastest race lap of the season (one minute, 25.082 seconds) on lap 54 of 74. It was the team's fifth fastest race lap of the season and its fourth in a row.

The Bell Micro squad retains second in the American Le Mans Series GT2 Driver and Team Championship chase with two races remaining. The drivers currently sit 28 points out of the lead while the team is 35 markers back. 55 points remain available in the final two races of the season.

No. 73 Tafel Racing Ferrari F430 GTC

Drivers: Alex Figge (Denver, Col.), Jim Tafel (Alpharetta, Ga.)

Jim Tafel started the No. 73 Tafel Racing Ferrari F430 GTC from 11th position. Tafel held the position for most of his stint gaining two spots as he brought the No. 73 in for a driver change just short of the one hour mark. Alex Figge, making his sixth career GT2 start, his first on a street course, made impressive strides until a prototype made an inside move, up on the curb, passing the No. 73 and taking off the passenger-side mirror in the process. Race officials ordered Figge in for a repair. The stop would cost the car three laps in the final scoring and the chance to better its season- high best finish - a fourth earned at the season 12 Hours of Sebring.

Quotes

Tony Dowe, Technical Director: "One day you're the windscreen the next day you're the fly. The starter motor is the first mechanical failure of the year but it came at a time that it was least welcome. However, one famous person once said: 'it ain't over, til it's over.'"

Dominik Farnbacher, Driver, No. 71: "I think my start was very good. My goal was to give Dirk a good car for the last stint. I tried to overtake Melo [No. 62] but it was impossible. I was already on the edge, he was already on the edge and Wolf [Henzler, No. 45] in front was on the edge. It was

like a little train we made. There was a lot of action in there. I tried to stay out of trouble and let the other two become involved in an incident but it didn't happen. I came in and everything worked well. Dirk got in the car and 'boom' there it was; our bad luck. That happens but if that decides the championship it would be very sad. Now we have to take some risk to come back. You never know what will happen but I am excited for the next race."

Dirk Müller, Driver, No. 71: "I was just flying out there. The car was awesome. I had a lot of fun with that. I even gained positions in the second to last corner. So, it really paid off to push to the end. I am personally satisfied with the fastest race lap but disappointed for the team. We lost a little momentum. There is nobody to blame for it. I am thankful to the team for the nice race car at the end. Now we need to look-up, keep focused and keep pushing."

Alex Figge, Driver, No. 73: "That was a tough race for sure. Jim did a great job. I think it was one of the best performances I have seen him have. I was trying to be a little positive with the prototype and let him know I was in a fight but, he had already committed and took off our mirror. We had to fix that and that cost us a lot of time. I felt like I ran a good pace. We bounced off a curb pretty bad and I think we did something to the gearbox or something. We were struggling at the end but we stayed in there for a top- six. So, I was excited for that."

Jim Tafel, Driver, No. 73: "I am obviously happy with another top-10 for the No. 73. Personally, I didn't get my times where I wanted or needed them to be. It was hard to get the car to turn. I think I had a lot of pickup on the tires. I just had to keep it off the wall and hand it over to my co-driver. Alex drove another great race and I am looking forward to moving on to Atlanta and Laguna from here."

Tafel Racing now turns its full attention to the final two endurance races of the season. The Cumming, Ga.- based operation will use the month of September to prepare for their hometown event, the Petit Le Mans at Road Atlanta (October 4) and the Monterey Sports Car Challenge season-finale at Raceway Laguna Seca (October 18).



Acura Motorsports Race Report

The Acura American Le Mans Series sports car program recorded many firsts Saturday in the Detroit Sports Car Challenge, the ninth round of the 11-race ALMS series, on the streets of Belle Isle.

In its 21st race in the highly-competitive, technically-advanced prototype division, Acura collected its first 1-2-3 overall finish, with the No. 26 XM Satellite Radio Andretti Green Acura ARX-01b car of Frenchman Franck Montagny and Englishman James Rossiter leading the way. The tandem of David Brabham and Scott Sharp drove the No. 9 Patrón Highcroft Acura ARX-01b machine to second when Montagny bettered Brabham by 3.98 seconds at the checkered flag in the two-hour, 45-minute endurance contest.

In addition, the top-three finish was another first for Acura when the team of Simon Pagenaud and former Indy 500 champion Gil de Ferran took their No. 66 Panasonic ELS Surround Acura ARX-01b to the third position.

The final chip in the Acura jackpot was that the entire 104-lap race was led by an Acura sports car. Sharp led 49 laps, Pagenaud eight circuits and Montagny paced the final 47 laps.

The 1-2-3 finish moved Acura to a four-point lead in the LMP2 Manufacturers' Championship, and the second place for Brabham and Sharp closed the Patrón pair to within four points in the drivers' title chase.

Brabham and Pagenaud had posted front-row clockings in Friday's qualifying and Sharp started the race in the Patrón Acura from the pole. The Florida veteran never looked back at the drop of the green flag by bolting to a five-second lead on Lap 22. Pagenaud saved his mount and took the point on Lap 50 before pitting seven laps later. During a caution period, the strategy of the XM Acura team proved to be the key to the race.

Montagny made his final stop for fuel only and was ahead of the field when the green flag flew on the 62nd lap. The Le Mans veteran held off the challenges of Timo Bernhard in the No. 7 Penske Porsche and Brabham to secure the second victory for Andretti Green in ALMS competition. The XM team captured the 2007 12 Hours of Sebring, the first-ever race for Acura in the ALMS.

An earlier incident involving Luis Diaz in the No. 15 Lowe's Fernandez Acura ARX-01b damaged his and Adrian Fernandez' chances for a top finish Saturday.

The next ALMS race will be the famed Petit Le Mans at Road Atlanta on Saturday, Oct. 4.

ACURA QUOTES:

FRANCK MONTAGNY (#26 XM Satellite Radio Acura ARX-01b): "The XM team had a great strategy today. They know the rule on changing the driver and I jumped in right at about 45 minutes [into the race]. James did a good job with car and I was able to race pretty well with the leaders. I had to get into position to pit for fuel only when the other leaders changed drivers, tires and fuel. It was tough to try and stay on the groove. It was easy to get pickup [rubber] on my tires. So I was able to use traffic to make a strong run at the end. We have been close to a win previously and we finally got it today. I feel good for the XM Acura team."

JAMES ROSSITER (#26 XM Satellite Radio Acura ARX-01b): "I got a good start and moved into third early. Then on the restart, I made a bold move inside of Simon [Pagenaud], but the car slid wide with the marbles. It took me four or five laps to get the rubber off the tires and I lost about five seconds. After that, the XM car was very good. Franck did a tremendous job taking the car home for the win. The last two races were tough for all of our XM crew. We thought we had the win at Road America and we were close at Mosport. So this win is a great feeling for everyone at Andretti Green Racing."

DAVID BRABHAM (#9 Patrón Highcroft Racing Acura ARX-01b): “When I jumped in the car, we lost a couple of spots due to different strategies today. But the car was very good. I was able to move from fifth to second and get close to Franck. But it was very tough to move around some of the traffic without getting the marbles on your tires. So, I made a couple of strong attempts to push the car at the end, but it wasn’t there. It was more important to calm down and get the points today. We are in a championship fight and points are a key. A great 1-2-3 finish for Acura today. Just fantastic.”

SCOTT SHARP (#9 Patrón Highcroft Racing Acura ARX-01b): “The Patrón Highcroft team gave me a great car today. We were fast from the start. Then traffic hurt me a little bit. Simon was able to get by due to my tires being worn out. We ran a lot of laps with the Michelins. They were very strong. We ran more laps than normal before we stopped. I was trying to be clean and give David a strong car. This was an important event for points for the title run. And we moved within four points of the lead. Plus, Acura took the LMP2 Manufacturers lead today. It is great for all of the Acura teams.”

SIMON PAGENAUD (#66 Panasonic ELS Surround Acura ARX-01b): “The de Ferran team gave me a great car today. Earlier in the race, I was sliding around a bit and I needed to get the tires warm. But after that, our Panasonic ELS Acura was very fast. I think we showed that this young team is getting better each race.”

GIL de FERRAN (#66 Panasonic ELS Surround Acura ARX-01b): “It is great day for Acura to finish 1-2-3 in the class and 1-2 overall. We had a great car today. Simon was outstanding. The race came down to strategy. We were leading the race and really couldn’t pit under the green-flag conditions. Some of the other teams played it differently and it paid off for them. We tried that type of strategy last week and we missed it by a second from a victory. Overall, I’m pleased with the performance of the team and the car. We are looking forward to the Petit Le Mans in another month.”

ADRIAN FERNANDEZ (#15 Lowe’s Fernandez Acura ARX-01b): “We don’t know what happened. We think something broke on the car. We are not 100 percent certain but it is very disappointing.”

LUIS DIAZ (#15 Lowe’s Fernandez Acura ARX-01b): “It was a very bad day for me. At the exit of Turn Three I felt the car snapping on me and brushed the wall. I barely brushed the wall. I didn’t do anything differently. I didn’t lose the car or anything like that. I feel bad about this result and we will keep working very hard.”





Dyson Racing Report

The second annual American Le Mans Detroit Sports Car Challenge was an entertaining race with engaging stand-alone chapters. Adding to the fan's enjoyment was the run of the #16 Porsche RS Spyder of Chris Dyson and Guy Smith. They qualified third yesterday, but elected to change tires after this morning's warm-up, which meant they started the race from the rear of the grid. Smith started the car and was twentieth after two laps, tenth after fourteen and fifth on lap twenty-eight. The 16 car finished sixth in the LMP2 class, followed by the sister car of Marino Franchitti and Butch Leitzinger in eighth, maintaining the team's third place in the ALMS team championship.

Franchitti started the #20 car eighth in class and stayed in the leading group for the first hour and a half before pitting on lap fifty-seven and handing the car over to Leitzinger. A stop-and-go penalty for a loose wheel nut in the pit lane during the stop dropped the car a position and an unscheduled pit stop under green on lap seventy one to replace a deflating right rear tire kept them from moving up the order. Leitzinger maintained a competitive pace but was not able to repeat his second in class finish from last year.

One of the more noteworthy chapters unfolded the last half hour of the race as Dyson held off spirited assaults and drove the last half of his stint mirroring the hard fought battle at the front head of the field.

"We did very well here last year and started this weekend where we left off with a very solid qualifying effort," said Dyson. "Both our cars kept good respective pace, but we didn't have enough raw speed today. During the stints, we found the track had changed dramatically since Saturday. This balance shift was more than we had anticipated, and it kept us from contending, ultimately."