

ACURA RECORDS 1-2-3 SWEEP ON THE LONG BEACH STREETS

De Ferran Team Takes 1st ALMS Win, Lowe's Fernandez Notches 3rd 2009 Victory

LONG BEACH, Calif. — Acura was the marque of the day in the Tequila Patrón American Le Mans Series race Saturday in the famed streets of Long Beach.

A 1-2-3 overall sweep for the auto manufacturer yielded the second complete podium in Acura's two-and-a-half-year history in ALMS, following the Detroit sweep last August. In addition, Acura recorded its second consecutive victory in the LMP1 and LMP2 categories following the St. Petersburg double class win two weeks ago.

The Acura team of Gil de Ferran and Simon Pagenaud scored its first ALMS career win by taking a one-second victory over David Brabham and Scott Sharp under caution to earn the overall event victory and the LMP1 title. Meanwhile, the Mexican duo of Adrian Fernandez and Luis Diaz notched their third straight LMP2 triumph of the 2009 campaign.

Pagenaud made a sensational first-turn pass of Scott Sharp to grab the lead in the one hour, 40-minute sports-car event. Pagenaud, pole winner at St. Petersburg, came from the second starting spot to vault to a four-second advantage by Lap 11 in the No. 66 de Ferran XM Radio Acura ARX-02a prototype.

But Sharp, LMP1 winner with David Brabham in the No. 9 Patrón Highcroft Acura ARX-02A at St. Petersburg, fought his way back to take the lead from Pagenaud on Lap 21. Pagenaud's mount then lost rear bodywork and began sliding more than the French driver would have liked. But he drove hard to close within a second of Sharp before handing driving chores to the former Indy 500 winner, de Ferran.

When Brabham jumped in the Patrón Acura during the team's only pit stop, a penalty was assessed to the car for a pit violation. That 20-second penalty gave Brabham a difficult margin to make up on de Ferran. A late-race caution flag moved Brabham within a second, but the race finished under yellow and the XM Radio-sponsored team celebrated its first victory since de Ferran formed the team last year.

The second-place finish for Patrón Highcroft Racing kept its point lead in the LMP1 class, with de Ferran in second place. The Lowe's Fernandez operation holds a strong lead in the LMP2 standings.

The American Le Mans Series returns to action May 15-17 at the beautiful Miller Motorsports Park outside Salt Lake City, Utah for the fourth stop on the ten-race ALMS tour.

Acura will be seeking its first win at the Utah racing facility, after just missing the winner's circle last year.



Tequila Patrón ALMS Grand Prix Overall Results

1. XM RADIO de FERRAN ACURA ARX-02a No. 66
Drivers: Gil de Ferran, Simon Pagenaud (1st LMP1)
2. PATRÓN HIGHCROFT ACURA ARX-02a No. 9
Drivers: David Brabham, Scott Sharp
3. LOWE'S FERNANDEZ ACURA ARX-01b No. 15
Drivers: Adrian Fernandez, Luis Diaz (1st LMP2)

ACURA QUOTES:

GIL de FERRAN (#66 XM Radio de Ferran Acura ARX-02a): " It was a race full of ups and downs. Simon had a great start and he was pushing hard. We lost some pieces of the bodywork , but he drove back to nearly lead. When I got in, I wanted to pace himself and watch David's speed. But they had trouble in the pits and we ran well at the end. This is a great feeling to finally win at Long Beach. I have been so close previously. This is big for our team."

SIMON PAGENAUD (#66 XM Radio de Ferran Acura ARX-02a): "I have planned that start before. I have learned from other guys here at Long Beach. I was happy with the way the start went for us. We lost the rear engine cover in the race and the XM car seemed to be sliding quite a bit. I didn't have the grip that I would have liked. I was able to come back and get close to Scott by the pit stop. I am really happy for our team, Acura, XM and Panasonic today."

DAVID BRABHAM (#9 Patrón Highcroft Racing Acura ARX-02a): "We are pretty disappointed with the finish. Scott drove well to put our car in the lead.. But the ALMS officials felt we had a penalty on our pit stop. And that misfortune basically hurt our race. It would have been a great shootout with Gil at the end. "

SCOTT SHARP (#9 Patrón Highcroft Racing Acura ARX-02a): "I took it easy into Turn One and Simon [Pagenaud] made a nice move on the outside for the lead. I patiently waited to see our the car was working. Simon seemed to be sliding around a lot. I waited for my moment and then made the move for the lead. The Patrón Acura was really hooked up after that. It was nice to hold the lead for David. But then we were given a penalty."

ADRIAN FERNANDEZ (#15 Lowe's Fernandez Acura ARX-01b): "Luis didn't panic when the Mazda took the LMP2 lead. He drove well and stayed in position. I was able to pull good laps with the new tires. But I had a close call with the two GT2 cars spinning right in front of me. That was very dangerous. I have been close to winning at Long Beach for many years. Now we got the win after many attempts. Plus, winning three straight races is good for Acura and Lowe's."

LUIS DIAZ (#15 Lowe's Fernandez Acura ARX-01b): "This is a big win for our Lowe's Acura team. We've always wanted to win at Long Beach. I had to fight hard with the Dyson Mazdas throughout my stint. But we stayed close with them and I didn't want to make a mistake before giving the car to Adrian. Adrian drove a super race and the team was outstanding."

UPCOMING ALMS RACE:

Event: Larry H. Miller Utah Grand Prix
Track: Miller Motorsports Park
Tooele, Utah
(3.06 Miles , 15 turns)
Date: Sunday, May 17, 2009
1 p.m. (MDT)
Distance: 2 hours, 45 minutes
TV: SPEED TV, May 17
10 p.m. EDT (Delayed)

(Photos) The scenic Long Beach harbor is a great backdrop for the annual Long Beach Grand Prix [lower left]. The Patrón Highcroft Acura [upper right] led the 76-lap ALMS race in the early portion of Saturday's race. It was the third straight LMP2 class win for Lowe's Fernandez Acura squad with Adrian Fernandez and Luis Diaz driving the Acura AX-01b sports car [lower right].

