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Garden State 250 Grand-Am KONI Sports Car Challenge Series at New Jersey Motorsports Park.

Source: Team Race Reports

Photo Courtesy Grand-Am



TRG Race Report

Source: Kyle Chura, TRG

TRG's Duncan Ende and Spencer Pumpelly won today's running of the Garden State 250 Grand-Am KONI Sports Car Challenge Series GS race at New Jersey Motorsports Park.

In the No. 39 DigiTrust Group/Adam's Polishes/Racer's Roast Coffee/TRG Porsche 997 Duncan Ende started the weekend off right by putting the 997 on the front row in qualifying. In the race Ende turned fast and consistent laps to keep the Porsche upfront, handing the car over to Pumpelly in prime position. The keys to the race win was Ende's qualifying position and early race pace, the strategy call by team owner Kevin Buckler to refuel early and take left side only tires. Pumpelly sealed the deal by driving flawlessly and passing the No. 91 for the lead and taking the victory.

"I had a really good stint," Ende said. "I was able to get a good start, even though I was on lined up on the outside. I was able to avoid any type of carnage in the first couple of corners. I was running second pretty comfortably the first ten minutes or so. Then I got boxed by some ST traffic coming on the straight-away and then I lost a few spots. I settled in after that and ran consistent

laps. I was able to maintain a gap and gave it to Spencer who ran a great race to bring it home in first place."

"We originally thought that the 91 was going to have to pit for gas," Pumpelly said. "Then Kevin came on the radio and said maybe they won't. I then had to get a little more aggressive, I was able to get a run on him and get by. TRG did an awesome job the last pit stop. It was super fast, we got on and off pit road the best we have all season. I think that was more than the four second gap than we won with, I really have to hand it to them. Duncan did a great first stint and they helped with those four seconds as well."

The race was the opposite for John Potter and Andy Lally in the No. 41 Magnus Racing/TRG Porsche 997. Potter started the race and handed over to Lally on lap 24. Lally proceeded to run in tandem with Pumpelly until lap 45 when the Porsche lost power, ending the day for the duo.

"We took a big points hit today," Lally said. "I was just cruising along following Spencer to the front when it just let go. No real warning, it just quit. That is a tough way to go when we have had two good races and almost won at Homestead in the last race. We will pick ourselves up and be ready to race tomorrow in the GT event."

Kevin Buckler, TRG team owner, had a near perfect race with the No. 39.

"That was a great race," Buckler said. "Duncan did an excellent job to set the tone for the team in qualifying yesterday by having us start on the front row. He did a great job at the beginning and then Spencer brought it home. We made the right calls in the pits, our pit stops were really good and the win is a great reward for this team. This was a long time coming and well deserved. John Potter was also a superstar today with his stellar first stint. I am sorry for John and Andy, but those guys will come back stronger than ever."

Turner Motorsport Report

Source: Linda Mansfield, Restart Communications

Gleason and Hand Finish Second in Garden State 250

Only a few miles from the theaters of Atlantic City's casinos, Chris Gleason of Johnstown, Pa. and Joey Hand of Sacramento, California, came in for their share of applause Saturday after they finished second in the Garden State 250 at New Jersey Motorsports Park's Thunderbolt Raceway.

Gleason and Hand's Turner Motorsport BMW M3 was only 2.505 seconds behind a Porsche 997 co-driven by Duncan Ende of Los Angeles and Spencer Pumpelly of Suwanee, Ga. after two and one-half hours of competition on the demanding, 2.25-mile road course.

Peter Ludwig of New Paltz, N.Y. and Billy Johnson of San Clemente, Calif. finished a distant third. Their Porsche was more than 18 seconds behind Gleason and Hand's No. 97, which is sponsored in part by Gleason Financial.

The race featured 10 lead changes. Hand led once for three circuits, heading the field from laps 52 through 54. He also set the second-fastest lap of the race on lap 48 in 1:30.190 for an average speed of 89.810 miles per hour. Only Pumpelly ran faster, as he set the fastest lap of the race with a 1:29.963 (90.037 mph) on lap 47 while battling Hand in the 45-car contest.

Ironically the top three in the race at that point ended up being the three podium finishers, in that order, when the checkered waved on lap 93. A great deal happened before and after that, however. Gleason started 18th and passed both Scott Panzer and Charles Putman right away. He ran the fastest lap of his 38-minute stint on lap six, which was just about a second off the laps

being run by Matthew Bell at the time. Bell had won the pole and led the first 27 laps of the race in a sister Turner Motorsport BMW M3 that he shares with Bill Auberlen.

Gleason moved up to 15th on lap five and 14th on lap 10. For most of his stint he chased Mark Boden of Winnetka, Ill., who was driving another BMW M3 fielded by Fall-Line Motorsports, while keeping ahead of Putman, of Mills, Wyo., who was in the Automatic Racing BMW M3 that was in contention for the victory until the very end with Charles Espenlaub of Lutz, Fla. driving.

Gleason was one second behind Boden on lap 16, but he'd cut Boden's advantage to only 0.450 of a second two laps later despite the fact there were no cautions during his stint to tighten the field. When one did occur on lap 24 for a disabled Mazda MX-5, Gleason pitted for four tires, fuel and to turn the car over to Hand. The pit stop dropped the entry back to 27th place, but Hand had it back in the top 15 by lap 28 and in ninth by lap 33. Through some other drivers' pit stops and some passing, he moved from seventh on lap 35 to second on lap 38 after the event's second and final caution came out at about the one-hour mark for two cars that had rolled to a stop. It lasted only five laps.

Hand was 1.820 seconds behind Pumpelly on lap 50, and he took the lead on lap 52 when Pumpelly pitted. Hand pitted himself on lap 55, which dropped him back to 12th place. Two laps later he was 11th to Auberlen's tenth.

Auberlen and Bell's car led 29 laps on Saturday to Hand and Gleason's three laps, but the latter's BMW was quicker Saturday.

Hand climbed back into the top 10 on lap 61. With 20 minutes remaining in the race he was eighth, but three minutes later he was fourth. With 12 minutes to go he was third to leader Charles Espenlaub and Pumpelly. With less than 10 minutes remaining Pumpelly took the lead from Espenlaub on lap 86.

With six minutes left Pumpelly was 2.534 seconds ahead of Espenlaub, while Hand was 2.596 seconds behind Espenlaub and 5.130 seconds behind Pumpelly.

With just three minutes remaining Espenlaub faded to third. He dropped to sixth at the very end because he was running out of fuel, which allowed Johnson to take the final podium position.

This event was the first of five KONI Challenge races within eight weeks. The next race is coming up May 15-16 at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca in Monterey, Calif. Another race is on the docket for May 22-25 at Connecticut's Lime Rock Park. The circuit then moves to Watkins Glen International in Watkins Glen, N.Y. June 4-5, followed by the Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course in Lexington, Ohio June 19-21.

RSR Motorsports Race Report

Source: Matt Cleary, Sunday Group Management

Heading into Saturday's Garden State 250 for round 3 of the 2009 championship season, Adam Burrows and Trevor Hopwood were looking to build on the points-generating momentum the duo scored with a 7th place finish in the last round of Grand-Am KONI Challenge competition in March.

That plan was kicked into action as Burrows qualified the No. 198 Fischer Ski MINI Cooper S fourth on the grid, and pounced at the start to emerge as the race leader in the early laps. Turning the car over to Hopwood in a quick RSR Motorsports pit stop, the 2007 KONI Challenge Champs were looking to leave New Jersey with another solid points-paying day.

"That was good fun at the start, racing with (former teammate and eventual race winner) Christian," said Burrows. "It was good to get out front, particularly for the RSR guys. We'd been fighting some electronics issues earlier this weekend and everyone worked so hard to find a solution. From there I was just trying to save as much fuel as I could to give us as many options as possible for our pit window. I had a little problem with some of the traffic that we were lapping, but otherwise it was a great start to the day."

Unfortunately that good fast didn't convert into a good finish as Hopwood took the controls. Moving up through the order after rejoining deep in the 45-car field, Hopwood's progress was soon hampered by a problem at the front end of the car that slowed, and then halted, his upward mobility in the charts as the car was unable to finish the race.

"It was pulling left for a while, and I was just trying to take it easy as much as I could, but in the end, it completely lost drive and I was stranded out on course," said Hopwood, who will be making a double out of the weekend as he heads to New Hampshire to race his Spec Racer on Sunday. "You hate to run up front and show the speed that we had today and not be able to make it to the finish. The corner station was the same one that I had to stop at last year when my motor blew, and the corner workers all recognized me—'you again!?' Hopefully my race tomorrow will go a little bit better even though I'll be starting from the rear."

Porsche Motorsports Race Report

Source: Andy Schupack, Porsche Motorsports

TRG's Ende and Pumpelly Win Grand-Am KONI Sports Car Challenge Race Park in Production-Based Porsche 911s

Porsche 911s, only slightly modified from the current showroom models, finished first and third in Saturday's two hour, 45 minute Garden State 250 Grand-Am KONI Challenge series race at New Jersey Motorsports Park.

Spencer Pumpelly (Mason Neck, VA) and Duncan Ende (Los Angeles, CA) co-drove the #39 TRG Porsche 911 (type 997) to victory, using quick pit stops to win by 2.5 seconds. Pumpelly passed Charles Espenlaub's gas-starved BWM M3 in turn 5 on lap 86 of the 93-lap race.

"The thought was that Espenlaub was not going to make it to the end," Pumpelly said. "The TRG crew was great. The four seconds we won by came from the pit crew. Then it appeared Espenlaub might make it so we had to hustle a little more."

Espenlaub slowed to sixth, allowing the #18 Motorsports Technology Group's Porsche 911 of Bill Johnson (San Clemente, CA) and Peter Ludwig (New Paltz, NY) to move up to third place and a podium appearance.

"We weren't going to be here because of sponsorship and funding problems," Ludwig said. "Tuesday I made a call to a company I do business with and explained what we were doing. They

were already a track sponsor, so they agreed to sponsor our team. We missed Thursday's practice because we just couldn't get here.

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