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Lamborghini SC63 confirms strong reliability in the 12 Hours of Sebring

#63 takes first GTP points finish as #19 Iron Lynx claims GTD Pro class podium in dramatic late finish

Sant'Agata Bolognese/Sebring, 16 March 2024 - The Lamborghini SC63 once again demonstrated its strong reliability by reaching the finish of the 12 Hours of Sebring, the second round of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship and first competitive outing for the LMDh machine in the United States.

The #63 Lamborghini Iron Lynx crew of Matteo Cairoli, Andrea Caldarelli and Romain Grosjean came through what is regarded as one of the toughest endurance races for machinery all season in a creditable seventh position, confirming the solid foundations on which to unlock further improvements.

Faced with the unique demands of the former airfield terrain of the Sebring International Raceway, the only major issue for the duration of the 12 Hours was a loose door inside the final four hours with Grosjean at the wheel.

In GTD Pro, the #19 Iron Lynx partnership of Mirko Bortolotti, Franck Perera and Jordan Pepper claimed an unexpected last-gasp podium finish in third place, achieved on the final lap of the race due to a penalty for the #77 Porsche.

The weekend was also a momentous occasion for Lamborghini, which was selected as the official safety car for the 12 Hours; the Urus Performante was a regular presence in the race with no fewer than 12 Full Course Yellow periods.

Next up for Lamborghini Squadra Corse is one of its most important races of the season as it competes in round two of the FIA World Endurance Championship, on home soil at Imola in a month's time, while the SC63 returns to IMSA action at Watkins Glen in the summer.

Free Practice and Qualifying

While the physically demanding Sebring International Raceway was not completely unfamiliar to the Lamborghini Iron Lynx team, the trio of practice sessions were always going to be a journey into the relative unknown for the SC63. The car's first competitive outing on the notoriously bumpy circuit presented some early issues which were soon rectified; the #63 completed 18 laps and finished with the 10th quickest time. The team then undertook a qualifying simulation at the start of the second session, briefly taking the #63 to second in the standings with a best time of 1m49.492. Preparations were then wrapped up with a 90-minute third session under the lights.



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Qualifying on Friday delivered another challenge as a lengthy red flag after the #6 Porsche crashed at Turn 1 meant that all but a few cars could only complete one flying lap. Cairoli was given the responsibility of qualifying, and his best effort was good enough to put the #63 eighth on the grid for the 12 Hours.

Race

Cairoli took the start and, despite dropping to the rear of the GTP field, stayed out of trouble on the opening lap and completed his first double stint aboard the SC63 in racing conditions. The early stages of the race were interrupted by a number of Full Course Yellow periods, but the reliability remained a strong point for the team as Cairoli, who had run as high as eighth, handed over to Grosjean in the third hour. With tyre warming still a learning process, Caldarelli dropped some time to those ahead approaching the halfway stage but managed to keep the lap-times of the #63 competitive.

A loose door forced the #63 into an unplanned stop with some four hours to go, momentarily going a lap in the process before gaining it back with a well-timed pit-stop during a FCY. Grosjean then fought valiantly to hold off the race-leading Porsche for around 10 laps to stay on the lead lap before coming in to switch with Caldarelli. Full Course Yellows continued to disrupt the rhythm in the final hour and helped the #63 to get back onto the lead lap once more. A further clean run in the last stint, and a spin for the Proton Porsche late on ensured the #63 finished a superb seventh place, just a few hundredths of a second behind the sixth-placed BMW.

GTD PRO and GTD

Free Practice and Qualifying

For the quintet of Lamborghini Huracán GT3 EVO2 cars, competing across the GTD Pro and GTD classes, the weekend began in promising fashion with the #78 Forte Racing machine of Loris Spinelli, Misha Goikhberg and Devlin Defrancesco finishing fourth and second in the first two practice sessions. Elsewhere, some teething issues for the #83 Iron Dames (gearbox) and #19 Iron Lynx (electrical) cars required attention before qualifying.

A puncture for the #83 in qualifying meant the all-female crew of Sarah Bovy, Rahel Frey and Michelle Gatting had to start from the back of the field, but the #19 and #63 managed fifth in class, elevated to fourth following penalties for their rivals. The #45 WTRAndretti Huracán of Kyle Marcelli, Graham Doyle and Danny Formal started 10th on the GTD grid, while the #60 of Leonardo Pulcini, Claudio Schiavoni and Matteo Cressoni started 12th in GTD Pro.

Race



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All five Huracán GT3 EVO2s got away well off the start, with the #19 of Perera and #78 of Spinelli maintaining their fourth place and the #45 of Kyle Marcelli moving up three positions in GTD. Further back, the #83 of Bovy gained eight places as an incident involving a Ferrari and a McLaren bunched the field up between turns one and two. The #78 took up the fight for overall honours, consolidating top-five pace for several hours before moving onto the cusp of the podium places. The Forte Racing machine, with Spinelli in for the final pair of stints eventually finished fifth. Trouble, unfortunately, hit the #83 which had to undergo a throttle pad change, necessitating repairs behind the wall in the paddock. The car dropped 30 laps and alternated between the pit-lane and the track before the team ultimately withdrew in order to preserve the car for future races.

In GTD Pro, Perera completed a single stint before handing over to Pepper at the first round of stops and the #19 battled hard against the elements to remain in touch with the leading crews at the six-hour marker. With Pepper and Bortolotti alternating, the #19 demonstrated strong race pace in third overall but slipped down to sixth in the final hour, before a late surge catapulted the car back up onto the podium. The sister #60 car's progress was steady but effective and, by the time Schiavoni completed his minimum drive time and handed over to team-mates Pulcini and Cressoni, the car was inside the top 10. A spin and drivethrough penalty hurt their chances but they rallied to finish sixth at the flag.

Quotes

Matteo Cairoli: "I really didn't expect this result, but I am really happy with what we achieved in this first official race for us in this car. I want to thank the whole team because they have never stopped working during the weekend. Finishing 20-seconds behind the winner, after 12 hours of racing and on a track like this, is an important result so we must enjoy it we will certainly be more competitive in the next rounds."

Andrea Caldarelli: "It was a quite fun race, my first double stint we had a very good pace, and I was very confident with the car. At the end, I knew I would probably have to do a triple stint, so I took it quite easy to be sure and I didn't know if we could make it to the finish but at the end, we were able to fight with the two cars in front of us which was a bit unexpected. To finish the race was our target, fighting was not really the target so to be able to do that is all down to the team."

Romain Grosjean: "I am super happy with the result, we know that the Sebring 12 Hours is one of the toughest races out there, due to the track nature. It is a really positive step therefore, that we managed to finish the race and on the lead lap in P7. There is still a lot that we need to work on, and I am excited for the future."



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Rouven Mohr, Lamborghini CTO and Head of Motorsport: "First of all, let me say that I am delighted with the result of the #63, finishing seventh and on the same lap as the winner of the race is an incredible achievement. Of course, there is always things to do better, and we are aware that we need to close the gap to the front of the of the field, which is still quite far away at the moment. But we have put a lot of effort into this weekend and it has given us extra motivation to fight again in the next round. I want to give my congratulations also to the #19 car that achieved a podium in GTD Pro, thanks to their hard work and never-give-up approach."

Photos and videos: media.lamborghini.com

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