



Lamborghini takes double Italian GT Championship Sprint Cup victory at Imola

Michelotto/Stadsbader inherit opening win as Denes/Bartholomew claim first win of the year for Imperiale

Sant'Agata Bolognese/Imola, 2 June 2024 – VS Racing's Mattia Michelotto and Gilles Stadsbader maintained their lead in the Italian GT Championship Sprint Cup standings as Lamborghini claimed a clean sweep of victories in the second round of the year at Imola.

Michelotto and Stadsbader, at the wheel of the #66 Lamborghini Huracán GT3 EVO2 inherited the win in Saturday's opening one-hour race after the on-the-road winning #85 Imperiale Racing Huracán of Philippe Denes and Jack Bartholomew was disqualified following post-race scrutineering.

Denes and Bartholomew bounced back from their race one disappointment by taking their first victory of the year in Sunday's second encounter, as Michelotto/Stadsbader finished 15th. The #19 VS Racing Huracán of Riccardo Cazzaniga and Alberto di Folco took third in race one while the sister #63 VS Racing car of Baptiste Moulin and Alessandro Fabi finished seventh in race two.

The weekend began in promising fashion for Lamborghini which, courtesy of Denes and Bartholomew, set the second-fastest time in opening free practice, just over a tenth of a second off the ultimate pace. In the second session, the #19 VS Racing combination of Riccardo Cazzaniga and Alberto di Folco ended up quickest overall, highlighting the pace advantage of the Lamborghini Huracán GT3 EVO2 around the 4.909km circuit.

Come qualifying, Lamborghini was again the brand to beat as Denes took pole position in the first session, leading a Huracán one-two with the #66 VS Racing machine of Michelotto completing the front-row of the grid. For race two, Bartholomew confirmed the strengths of the #85 Imperiale Racing Huracán by ending up nearly three-tenths quicker than the next best crew to deliver a double pole for the team.

Race 1

Denes maintained his lead at the rolling start with Michelotto in close company as the field headed towards Tamburello for the first time. By the time the #85 completed the first lap, Denes had opened up a healthy margin of just under a second as Cazzaniga dropped two places to sixth. Denes was soon able to extend his lead over Michelotto, which stabilised at four-seconds approaching the pit window. Cazzaniga brought the #19 Lamborghini Huracán into the pits early in the window to swap with di Folco as Denes handed over to Bartholomew at the halfway point. Bartholomew kept the #85 in the lead after the pit-stops and held off Stadsbader to take victory on the road by just over a second. However, after post-race scrutineering, Denes and Bartholomew were excluded from the race for being under the minimum weight, handing Michelotto and Stadsbader their second win of the season.

Mattia Michelotto (#66 VS Racing) said: "In race one, I had some difficulties at the beginning because I hadn't warmed up the tyres well enough on the formation lap. After a couple of laps, they

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were up to temperature, and I was able to start pushing. Then, everything went well, and we managed to bring home the car for our second victory.”

Team-mate Gilles Stadsbader, added: “This is my second victory in GT3; we had excellent pace all weekend and in race one, Mattia was fantastic during his stint, so I am very happy.”

Race 2

Bartholomew started the second race on Sunday from pole position and led for just a few corners before a mistake gave the advantage to the BMW of Klingmann and promoted di Folco to second in the #19 car. Bartholomew held onto fifth for the duration of the opening stint, before switching over to Denes at the mandatory pit-stop.

Denes returned the #85 to the track in a net third place but spectacularly leapt into second with just under 20 minutes remaining by sliding down the inside of the BMW of Jake Dennis under braking for Tamburello. Both the BMW and the leading Audi were on their out-laps, and Denes made the most of his warmer tyres to then snatch the lead at Villeneuve. The safety car was deployed soon after following an incident for a Ferrari, but the rain which had threatened all day finally arrived, making conditions difficult. The team elected not to change to wet tyres, and this proved crucial as the track began to dry while still under safety car. Denes mastered the restart perfectly and established a lead over the chasing BMW inside the final minutes, eventually coming home 2.239s clear at the flag.

In the standings, Michelotto and Stadsbader remain at the top with 51 points, 10 points ahead of second place, while Cazzaniga and di Folco lie fourth with 34 points. Thanks to their first win of the season, Denes and Bartholomew are just two points further back in fifth.

Jack Bartholomew, Imperiale Racing, said: “I certainly made it tough for myself at the start with a couple of small errors but once the race got going properly, the pace was really good. I knew that if I handed the car over to Philippe in one piece, we had a really good chance of winning. It’s been pretty much a perfect weekend for us, two wins – at least on the road – is great. Thanks to Lamborghini and Imperiale Racing for giving us a fast car and being faultless.

Team-mate Philippe Denes added: “It was a crazy race; I was under so much pressure when it started raining under the safety car. We had no idea what to do with strategy, we decided to take the gamble and stay out on slicks and luckily the track dried up and I just had to manage it until the end. After everything that happened this weekend, I couldn’t have asked for a better end to the weekend.”

The next round of the Sprint Cup campaign will take place at Mugello on the weekend of 23-25 August.

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