



Lamborghini dominates the GT World Challenge Europe 3 Hours of the Nürburgring

Jordan Pepper, Marco Mapelli and Franck Perera steer Huracán GT3 EVO2 to success in the Eiffel region

Sant'Agata Bolognese/Nürburg, 28 July 2024 – Lamborghini recorded its first Fanatec GT World Challenge Europe victory since 2021 as Grasser Racing Team's Jordan Pepper, Marco Mapelli and Franck Perera came out on top in the third round of the Endurance Cup at the Nürburgring.

For Grasser Racing Team, it is the first time it has tasted GTWC success in the Pro class since 2017, while Mapelli stood on the top step of the podium for the third time, after victories in both 2021 and the Sprint Cup weekend in 2019.

Pepper started the #163 and benefited from an ambitious overtaking attempt from the #71 Ferrari at turn one to snatch the lead from the pole-sitting #91 Porsche. From there, it was a straight battle with the #48 Mercedes across the remaining three hours, with Mapelli staving off a fierce attack in the second stint.

By the time Perera took over, the margins were fine as the Mercedes initially emerged from the final round of stops ahead, only for the #163 to swoop to the inside of turn one and start building a gap which extended to just over 10-seconds as the Mercedes lost out to the #22 Porsche at the end.

The victory marks the latest in a strong run of form for Lamborghini Squadra Corse and Grasser Racing Team, having taken pole position and fought for the podium positions at the 24 Hours of Spa last month. Attention now turns to the penultimate round of the Endurance Cup campaign, which takes place on the weekend of 20-22 September at Monza.

Weekend Summary

Although competitive action did not kick off until Saturday morning, a pair of private test sessions were held on Friday which gave the crews a taste of what the weekend would offer. The opening session was held on a thoroughly wet track while the afternoon running took place in dry conditions.

Come free practice, the #163 was on the pace, setting the second-fastest time and just over two-tenths away from the best effort and just four-hundredths quicker than the #48 Mercedes. The rain stayed and then intensified during the pre-qualifying session, in which the #163 finished fourth fastest.

Qualifying produced a different challenge as, although held in dry weather, the track lacked a lot of rubber from the heavy overnight rain showers. Nevertheless, Pepper, Mapelli and Perera set a combined qualifying time of 1m54.075 to secure third on the grid. After a difficult Spa 24 Hours and start to the Nürburgring weekend, the #63 Iron Lynx crew of Andrea Caldarelli, Mirko Bortolotti and Matteo Cairoli improved to set the 10th-quickest time. In the Bronze Cup, the #78 Barwell Motorsport car of Sandy Mitchell, Till Bechtolsheimer and Antoine Doquin qualified third, while Grasser's Silver Cup entry of Haytham Qarajouli, Mateo Llarena and Loris Cabirou was third fastest.

Media Information



Off the rolling start, Pepper got a decent getaway and used great dexterity to avoid the wayward Ferrari under braking for turn one. As the Ferrari and Porsche made contact, Pepper overtook both cars at turn two to take the early lead. The #48 Mercedes then appeared to have superior pace than the #163, but a strong first and third sectors helped the Lamborghini stay ahead until the pit-stops. Mapelli then took over and maintained the lead but had to defend hard against the waves of attack from the Mercedes, with Engel at the wheel. Grasser then pitted a lap earlier than the #48 and, despite slipping to second momentarily, Perera perfected a cutback move at turn one to reclaim the lead.

With clear air, Perera slowly extended his margin as the Mercedes began to struggle, eventually coming home just under 10-seconds ahead at the finish. The #63 endured an up and down race but was ultimately rewarded with a top 10 finish after a lengthy battle with the #32 BMW in the middle of the race. Caldarelli showed strong race craft and determination to keep the #63 ahead at crucial moments, while Cairoli did likewise to bring the car home in ninth position.

In the Bronze Cup, the #78 of Mitchell, Bechtolsheimer and Doquin fought hard all race and picked up a podium place after the chequered flag, due to a post-race time penalty for the BMW ahead. It is the first Endurance Cup podium finish for the #78 but second third place in as many races for Barwell, after the sister #72 machine's strong effort at Spa.

Quotes

Jordan Pepper: "It's such an unbelievable day at the Nürburgring from, what was from our side, a really good qualifying starting from P3. We knew that anything could happen at the start and to get the lead at turn one was really the perfect execution, and from there we just had to push 110%. I've never driven so hard in my life, honestly. Thanks go out to Lamborghini Squadra Corse and the Grasser Racing Team for such an awesome car and for the preparation, hard work never goes unnoticed."

Marco Mapelli: "I think we executed the race perfectly from the start; Jordan did an amazing job, and we were able to manage the race properly. The Mercedes had more than us at times but to stay behind another car is not easy. But in the end, we were able to manage it well and Franck did a great job. This is a big credit to Grasser because they prepared the car perfectly since Paul Ricard; we've had a decent shot since the start of the championship, so now we have to fight."

Franck Perera: "I am really happy, really proud of the team, especially after the disappointment of Spa. Like Marco says, we have seen a strong pace since Paul Ricard and so this is a good result for everyone who keeps working hard. I want to thank my team-mates, and Lamborghini and now we can go for the title."

Photos and videos: media.lamborghini.com

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