



## Minassian 'mugged' at Monza

Nicolas Minassian drove a hard and fast race at Monza this afternoon, the fight for the lead with the Pescarolo Sport team was going to go right down to the wire until an unscheduled pitstop by the Creation Autosportif team, in the closing stages of the race, for a water leak on the DBA sadly ended the speculation and lost the team 13 laps, slipping them back down to seventh place.

"We were a minute and ten behind the lead and had no more stops to make," said a frustrated Minassian. "The Pescarolo had to stop again and it's about one minute five for a stop. That would have put us in contention with ten to 15 laps to go. I am so disappointed as the car had run faultlessly all day... until this. I think we have a gremlin with a screwdriver trying to ruin our day."

The DBA Judd did not get off to a great start as Hayanari Shimoda driving the pole sitting Zytek Motorsport entry held the field right up to the line, Minassian had to back off to avoid jumping the start and lost two places in the process.

"The start was confusing and frustrating," said Minassian. "Shimoda was going really slowly and I believe I was overtaken before the line, which is not right."

Running right behind the now third placed car of Jean-Marc Gounon in the Courage Competition he was losing valuable time to the leaders and by lap 14 was 22 seconds adrift. The Creation DBA ran nose to tail with the Courage, constantly attacking at every opportunity until finally with some intelligent, opportunistic driving Minassian found a way past the very wide C60 and immediately began to pull away.

"I lost a lot of time in my first stint, around a minute," Minassian explained. "The hybrid cars are so quick in a straight line, it is impossible to pass them even if you are quicker and Gounon made it even harder."

With the Pescarolo Sport entry pitting from the lead, it vaulted Minassian temporarily into second position until on lap 28 he too bolted for the pits for fuel, exiting in third place and the chase was on.

After just under two hours of running, Minassian pitted to hand over to Jamie Campbell-Walter and With a suspension problem for the Zytek Motorsport entry, JCW exited in second place. With a gap to the Pescarolo of over a minute, he began to patiently eat into the lead little by little.

Good strategy and trouble free pitstops from the Creation Autosportif team put them out of sequence with the Pescarolo entry, a situation that was to be the focus of the race. With Minassian back in the car for the final run, the gap to the leader was one and half minutes and the DBA was under threat of being lapped. Great defensive driving by Minassian kept Boullion behind until they too pitted for a driver change and the DBA moved up to just ten seconds behind Collard, who was now at the wheel of the Pescarolo.

Strong consistent laps from Minassian were eating into the gap by around a second a lap, times seesawing with traffic, but reducing rapidly and was soon down to under four seconds. Superb aggressive driving by the Frenchman to make up the time before his final pitstop meant he exited 70 seconds adrift, but a pitstop ahead - it was all to play for.





"We had a great chance here today and had to watch it slip away from the pitlane," commented Minassian. "I know that's the nature of endurance racing, but it is harder to accept when you can almost taste the Champagne. It is painful this one, for the whole team, but it is not the end of the world, we have to turn the page and move on to Silverstone."

A brief shower towards the end of the race didn't have any effect on the outcome and Minassian will walk away from Monza feeling somewhat hard done by. Both drivers pushed hard from flag to flag and never put a foot wrong, but once again the mechanical gremlins that have affected the Creation DBA's season, spoilt what could have been an excellent day for the British based team.

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### Editorial Notes

Nicolas Minassian, 32, lives in England with his wife Jayne. Minassian was runner up in the French F3 Championship in 1995, British F3 in 1997 and the FIA F3000 Championship in 2000. He has tested with both Williams and Honda in Formula One and competed in the Champ Car World Series with Ganassi Racing before taking the 2002 ASCAR title with RML. With Creation Autosportif, Minassian was a front-runner in the inaugural four-round LMES Championship and will contest the series once again in 2005 for the team as well as driving in their Le Mans 24 hrs debut.

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