



Podium position for Minassian at Nurburgring

Nicolas Minassian and Jamie Campbell-Walter drove their hearts out today in the Eiffel Mountain circuit in Germany to finish in a strong third position despite fighting understeer throughout the race. The Creation Autosportif DBA was only one of three cars on the lead lap as the chequered flag fell, just 25 seconds off the victorious Zytec Motorsport entry.

With an inherited Pole position on the grid, Minassian lead the field through turn one, but not without severe pressure from the Pescarolo Sport entry driven by Emmanuel Collard, some slight contact did no obvious damage to either car and the DBA began to pull away until debris in the first turn caused the first deployment of the Safety Car.

Minassian maintained the lead as the Safety Car pulled into the pits, but as traffic began to come into play around lap 15 he was baulked by a Porsche and had to back off slightly, giving Collard the run he'd been waiting for and Minassian had to settle into second position.

At the first round of pitstops the Pescarolo Sport team chose to fix the flapping rear diffuser on the C60, losing Collard vital track time and vaulting Minassian back into the lead. Creation Autosportif were encouragingly the last of the three top runners to blink and stop for fuel, but the speed of the Audi R8 meant that McNish took up the front running, pulling out 3.2 seconds on the Frenchman, a challenge he could not fail to rise to.

Over the ensuing laps the split between McNish and Minassian see-sawed back and forth, the DBA being pushed through the traffic cleanly by the Creation driver, bringing the gap down to 1.5 seconds until a gaggle of three back markers held up Minassian allowing McNish to extend his lead once again.

At the end of the double stint Minassian handed over the DBA to team-mate, Campbell-Walter, the Brit taking up the charge on Stephane Ortelli, now at the wheel of the Audi R8.

"I couldn't push any harder," explained Minassian. "I had a problem with the front tyres giving us understeer, but now with fresh Michelin rubber Jamie should have a good handing car underneath him and should be back on the pace straight away. The traffic is hard, there are so many cars out there, but it's the same for everyone and our strategy should work well. The next couple of hours are really important, so we'll see."

Campbell-Walter sitting over 12 seconds behind Ortelli when he exited the pits began to reel him in gradually, bringing the gap down to around nine seconds in only two laps, proving the improved handling of the DBA with the fresh Michelins. It was not long before the British driver was right on the rear spoiler of the Playstation backed Audi and as Ortelli pitted he took up the lead, pitting for fuel just two laps later and with great work from the Creation Autosportif team came back out in front once more.

Ortelli continued to pile on the pressure, but despite the heavy traffic and still suffering from understeer, Campbell-Walter began to extend his lead, sitting over ten seconds ahead when the time came to hand back the DBA controls to Minassian. A problem in the pitstop, though, with a sticking wheel nut on the left rear, lost the team





some time and Minassian exited the pits some 15 seconds adrift of McNish, who was now back at the wheel of the Audi R8. The chase was back on!

"The Audi R8 is such a hard car to beat, it doesn't seem to matter what regulation changes the ACO impose it's a helluva car," said Minassian.

But the battle became a different one, Hayanari Shimoda in the Zytek had been quickest all weekend and despite starting at the back of the 44 car field, was catching the DBA rapidly. Minassian defended with all his skill for two laps until the additional speed of the Zytek took its toll and Shimoda took away second spot before also catching and passing the Audi driven by McNish to score a very well deserved victory.

"This was a tough race," exclaimed Minassian. "We suffered with understeer the whole way through, so it was difficult to really push like we wanted. It was a question of setup, we knew the track would offer up more grip as the race went on, it just wasn't our day. At the end of the day the only problem we had was with the left rear when I took back over the car which cost us 30 seconds and we finished just 25 seconds off the lead, so who knows... The whole team were fantastic today but we were not the fastest out there and sometimes you just have to accept that."

The team now move on to Turkey on the first weekend in November and to the newly created track just outside Istanbul.

"Turkey is a good new track on the calendar and we expect to be competitive as usual, but I think the Pescarolo will be the one to beat purely on straight-line speed," explained Minassian. "It should suit us though, and it's new to everyone so we just have to go for it!"

Having scored their second consecutive podium position this weekend, the team will be in high spirits once more as they once again set off in search of their maiden victory that will surely open the flood gates for more.

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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