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4th December 2016 - Asian Le Mans Series, Round 2 - Fuji (Japan)

The second round of the prestigious **2016-17 Asian Le Mans Series** was held at **Fuji Speedway** in Japan this weekend. Last time out at Zhuhai the VSR **Lamborghini Huracán GT3** achieved a fine podium finish in its Championship debut. One change was made to the driver line-up for Fuji with the experienced Japanese driver **Yuhi Sekiguchi** joining **Kei Cozzolino** and **Corey Lewis**.

The team completed just over one hundred laps in testing and free practice, gathering precious data for the four hour race. Cozzolino qualified the car and secured a place on the fourth row of the GT grid, just seven tenths off the pole set by Ferrari.

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Sekiguchi joined the team for the Fuji round
(photo by Rewind Images)

It was Cozzolino at the wheel of the number 6 Lamborghini when the lights went green. After only a handful of corners the Safety Car was bought out and stayed on track for over twenty minutes. Most of the GT field, including VSR, chose to make one of their three mandatory stops and when racing resumed Cozzolino was running in 10th. On the half hour mark Cozzolino passed the 31 Audi for 9th and gained another place when the FFF Lamborghini returned to the pits after a spin. One of the fastest GT cars on the track he soon gained another place passing Ferrari number 7 but then his progress was halted by another Safety Car. As the caution period dragged on the top GT runners stopped and VSR bought Cozzolino in to the pits to hand over to Lewis.

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Cozzolino started the race and in the second caution period handed over to Lewis who showed impressive pace and consistency throughout his stint (photo by Rewind Images)

Ten minutes later the race went green again and Lewis found himself sandwiched between the Ferraris of Rizzo and Rugolo in 8th place. A thrilling dice ensued as Lewis kept pace with the Ferraris and the three of them set about catching the cars in front. Their first victim was the number 51 Audi and as the race entered its second half at the head of the field there were three Ferraris and the VSR Lamborghini covered by a handful of seconds. With just under ninety minutes left of the race Lewis pulled into the pits and handed the Lamborghini over to Sekiguchi during the team's final mandatory stop.

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Despite finishing just shy of another podium VSR moved up to 2nd in the Championship with two races to go
(photo by Rewind Images)

As the last pit-stops played out Sekiguchi was running in third behind two Ferraris but had Eng in the BMW chasing him down. With no further Safety Car periods the VSR team were forced to bring their car in for a splash and dash with ten minutes left. The stop cost them just under a minute and forced them to concede 3rd to the BMW. Finishing fourth meant they moved into 2nd in the Championship.

The final two rounds of the Asian Le Mans Series will take place in January at Buriram and Sepang.

Vincenzo Sospiri: We all worked very hard this weekend and if it hadn't been for the need to stop for fuel right at the end of the race we would have achieved another podium. Now we will go back to Italy and work very hard to improve for the final two rounds.

Kei Cozzolino: Starting P8 was a good enough position to fight for a podium this weekend because we knew we had a good race pace. We were running third for a long while and only lost the podium when we had to refuel right at the end of the race. For the next rounds we will do everything we can to get back on the podium.

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Corey Lewis: Overall it was a great day for the Championship as we are now 2nd. As a team we fought very hard to get on the podium but it was just out of our reach today. The crew performed faultlessly and we had a car that was capable of running at the front. I'm very much looking forward to race three in Thailand.

Yuhi Sekiguchi: I had some difficulties getting used to the car in the short time that I drove it in testing and free practice so my pace was not what I wanted it to be. However I will be working hard to ensure that this improves for the next rounds.



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