



Tujula and Vainio dominate at Imola to take Championship lead

10th September, 2017 – Italian Super GT, Imola

Finnish drivers Tuomas Tujula and Aaro Vainio had a perfect weekend at Imola taking two pole positions and winning both races. They now lead the Championship with four races to go.



Tujula and Vainio conquered Imola this weekend (photo credit Fotospeedy).

The Italian GT Championship returned to action this weekend for round five at Imola. VSR's regular three driver pairings Liang-Ortiz, Tujula-Vainio and Cazzaniga-D'Amico were joined once again by the Polish couple of Lewandowski-Myszkowski who won on their series debut at Monza. Liang-Ortiz held a slim nine-point lead over Desideri in the Driver's Championship but would also have to discount a fifteen second success penalty in Saturday's race, as would Lewandowski-Myszkowski.

Qualifying early on Saturday morning was dominated by the Finnish pair Tujula-Vainio. Tujula took pole from Basz for race one by nearly half a second and D'Amico qualified in 5th just 0.1 seconds off the front row. Liang secured a spot on the third row with Myszkowski two places further back.

At the start Tujula made a perfect getaway, leading comfortably into the first corner ahead of Desideri and Basz. Halfway round the lap they both hit trouble and as Ruberti ran wide Liang slotted in to second place with D'Amico just behind in fourth. Tujula easily extended his lead and had an eight second gap by lap five which was then obliterated when the Safety Car neutralised the race for two laps. At the restart Tujula began inexorably pulling away again while behind him D'Amico, who had passed Pastorelli for third took second away from team-mate Liang. The pit window opened on lap eleven and Liang and Myszkowski came in immediately to discount their fifteen second success penalties and to hand their Huracans over to Ortiz and Lewandowski. Two laps later Tujula passed the lead to Vainio while Cazzaniga replaced D'Amico. Vainio continued to push on and at the end of the race was able to lap more than one second faster than everyone else. He took the chequered flag with an impressive thirty second margin over the rest of the field, catapulting himself and Tujula into the Championship lead. After climbing as high as third Ortiz finished in a tactical fourth place ensuring he and Liang would have no success penalty for Sunday's race. Lewandowski finished sixth, just five seconds off a podium finish. Bad luck struck Cazzaniga, forced to retire halfway through his stint with a technical problem.



Ortiz-Liang are 2nd in the Championship (photo credit: Fotospeedy)

The front of the grid for Sunday's race was an all VSR affair after Vainio took pole by 0.854 seconds. The Finn managed only two flying laps when a lengthy Full Course Yellow left him without a time as the session drew to a close. Cazzaniga, the early pole-sitter, hung on to a place on the front row despite a late charge from Ortiz who qualified 3rd. Lewandowski put the Polish car on row four.

After heavy rain for most of Sunday the race was declared wet but the track was just dry enough to risk slicks. Under uncertain skies the race was started behind the safety car. Green flag racing began on lap five but the safety car was soon in charge again while Ortiz, caught out by the slippery conditions, was recovered from the gravel. Racing resumed just as the pit window opened and Cazzaniga was the first VSR car to stop, coming in from second and handing over to D'Amico. A lap later Myszkowski took over from Lewandowski but his run was short lived when he ran off track at turn ten causing a third safety car period. Vainio pitted under the safety car, followed by Ortiz, and despite the Finnish drivers fifteen second success penalty Tujula rejoined the race in second place just behind team-mate D'Amico. This was reversed at the restart and Tujula went on to take the second victory of the weekend for himself and Vainio. D'Amico held off Pastorelli to take second by just seven tenths and Liang finished eighth.



Second in race two keeps Cazzaniga-D'Amico in the hunt for the Championship (photo credit: Fotospeedy)

The Championship continues in two weeks when the teams convene at Vallelunga for the penultimate round of the 2017 season. Tujula-Vainio now lead the standings by twenty points but will have a thirty second success penalty to discount in the first race at Vallelunga. Liang-Ortiz lie in second place just six points ahead of Cazzaniga-D'Amico while VSR's nearest challenger, Desideri, has slipped to 4th place.

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