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Costa claims Super GT Cup Championship

16th October 2016 - Italian Super GT Cup, Mugello

Nicolas Costa headed into the final round of the **Italian Super GT Cup** at **Mugello** this weekend with a twenty point lead in the Driver's Championship. The Brazilian driver shared the 106 VSR **Lamborghini Huracán** for the third race in a row with rapid Japanese driver **Yuki Nemoto**. The pair scored two pole positions, two fastest laps, one victory and one second place this weekend, enough to ensure that Costa took the title by thirty-five points.



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Nicolas Costa celebrates becoming Super GT Cup Champion after winning the final race alongside team-mate Yuki Nemoto (photo by Photo 4)

Bar Baruch and **Jia Tong Liang**, partners for the first six rounds of the season, were this time paired with Italy's **Jacopo Faccioni** and Brazilian **Jaime Melo**.

After two sessions of free practice qualifying took place late on Friday afternoon. The circuit was slippery and damp but not wet enough to renounce slick tyres. Baruch, Nemoto and Liang drove in Q1 which was red-flagged twice. At the end of the session Nemoto was the fastest driver and took pole alongside his team-mate Baruch to complete an all VSR front row while Liang qualified on row four.



Double pole position for Costa and Nemoto was followed by 2nd in race one and victory in race two despite a thirty second handicap in both races (photo by Photo 4)

Following an aborted start for a Porsche stuck on the grid the race got underway with Nemoto and Baruch at the head of the field. While Nemoto eeked out a gap at the front, setting the fastest lap of the race along the way, Baruch passed his stint defending from Kasai in third. Liang moved up from 7th to 6th and was the first VSR car to stop when the pit window opened. The Chinese driver handed over to Melo and a lap later Nemoto came in to give the 106 Lamborghini to Championship leader Costa. With a handicap twenty seconds greater than that of his main rival Desideri, who had taken over from Kasai, Costa was forced to sit in the pits and watch his lead evaporate. A lap

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later Baruch, who had taken over the lead of the race, stopped and handed his car over to Faccioni who rejoined in 2nd place behind Desideri. By lap fifteen Costa had worked his way up to 4th and two laps later passed Necchi for 3rd. Mindful of the Championship he carried on pushing and with six laps to go took 2nd from team-mate Faccioni. The VSR liveried cars finished 2nd and 3rd which meant a welcome return to the podium for Baruch whilst Melo finished in 5th.



The number 105 VSR Lamborghini driven by Baruch and Faccioni returned to the podium in both races at Mugello (photo by Photo 4)

Q2 started just as the heavens opened and the drivers quickly returned to the pits for wet tyres. As a storm lashed the Mugello circuit Costa showed his mettle by claiming the second pole of the weekend for the VSR 106 Lamborghini. Faccioni and Melo were caught out by the increasingly bad weather and when the conditions worsened all the drivers returned to the pits and the session was stopped.

Sunny skies greeted the teams as they lined up for the final race of the season on Sunday. Costa had the pole and his sole remaining Championship rival started directly behind him in 3rd. With his lead reduced to fifteen points after race one Costa was determined to keep Desideri behind him and the two battled hard at the front of the field for the first half of the race, rarely separated

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by more than a hundred or tenths of a second. Behind them the other two VSR cars were coming through the field; Faccioni was battling for 4th and Melo was running in 6th having made up seventeen positions. Twenty minutes into the race the safety car came out and almost simultaneously the pit window opened. Sospiri immediately called in all three of his cars whilst Desideri elected to stay out. When racing resumed and the pit window closed Nemoto, who had taken over from Costa, found himself in 6th place due to their thirty second handicap. Baruch was leading but was hampered by a ten second penalty for team-mate Faccioni's indiscretion earlier in the race and Liang was 4th. Baruch, the fastest man on track in the closing stages of the race, did enough to ensure that when his penalty was added he still finished in a fine 2nd place whilst Nemoto scythed his way through the field to claim the fourth win in six races for himself and team-mate Costa - a victory which sealed the Championship for the Brazilian.



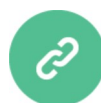
Liang teamed up with Melo at Mugello and the pair finished 5th in race one and 4th in race two (photo by Photo 4)

Costa's title is the fourth Championship he has won in partnership with Vincenzo Sospiri and his team. Their collaboration started in 2010 when, making his single-seater debut in Europe, Costa won the Formula Abarth Winter Trophy. In 2012 he re-joined Sospiri's team and went on to win both the Italian and European Formula Abarth Championships. After time in America the Brazilian raced with the VSR Lamborghini Squadra Corse Formula Junior team

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last season in Japanese Formula 4 and soon became a member of the Lamborghini Junior Driver Programme. He made his GT debut in the Lamborghini Super Trofeo World Final at the end of 2015 and this year was the dominant driver in the Italian Super GT Cup taking six victories and three second places in the twelve races he disputed.

Baruch finished 5th overall in the Championship and Liang 8th.

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