

PRESS RELEASE: 21st April 2024

Fanatec GT World Challenge Asia by AWS, Round 1 – Sepang, Malaysia

Pro-Am victory for Bian and Liberati as VSR and Lamborghini return to Asia

VSR's Asian adventure kicked off with a double-header event at the Sepang Circuit in Malaysia this weekend. Bian and Liberati raced in the team's number 6 Lamborghini Huracán GT3 Evo 2 with Zhou and Mapelli in charge of the 63 car. Both cars competed in the Pro-Am class. A sister car, run under ANR with VSR, lined up in Silver-Am with Mizutani and Nemoto driving.



#6 – Bian / Liberati: photo by Kako Photography

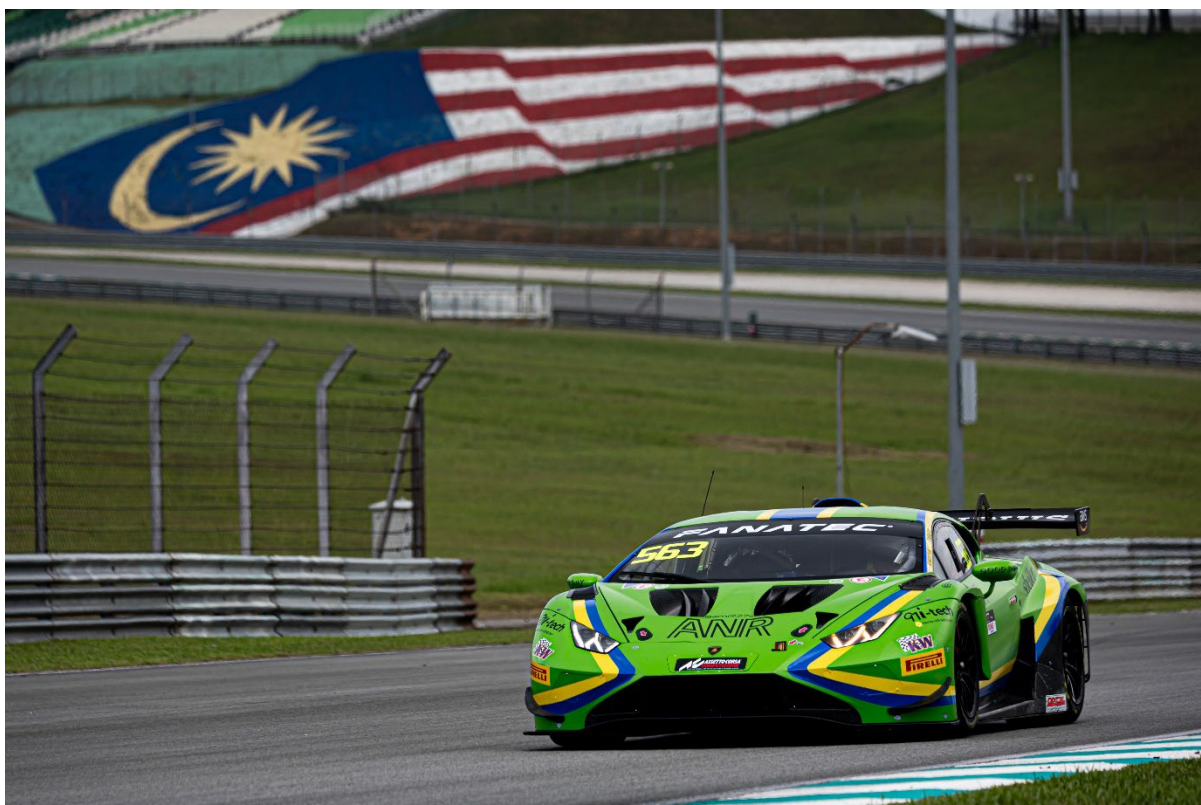
Saturday morning's qualifying session saw the VSR Am drivers out first, setting the grid for race 1. Bian qualified fourth in class with Zhou just behind him, sixth in Pro-Am. Mizutani was the tenth fastest Silver-Am car. The race start was delayed when a storm hit the track minutes before the cars were due to leave their garages leaving the teams with a tough call to make on tyres. Bian and Mizutani started on wets whilst Zhou, along with many of the front runners, opted for slicks. After two laps behind the Safety Car the race went green and Bian was quick to make the most of his tyre choice, rocketing up from twelfth to second on the first lap of racing before passing Cheng to take the lead on lap four. As Bian pulled away a collision between Mizutani and Zhou delayed the 63 car and resulted in a Drive Through penalty for the Japanese driver. A short Full Course Yellow to recover Liang's Ferrari from the gravel didn't delay Bian and by the time the pit window opened on lap ten he had a healthy lead. Zhou was the first of the VSR cars to stop, handing over to Mapelli, who continued on a circuit now better adapted to the car's slick tyres. Mizutani pitted for Nemoto and a lap later Bian stopped for Liberati, both cars fitting slick tyres. A delay

in the stops lost the number 6 valuable seconds and when Liberati rejoined on cold tyres he was passed by Morad and Fong who had pitted a lap earlier. Fong was quick to take advantage of a slow backmarker to wrest the lead from Morad and a lap later Liberati followed him through to retake second and the Pro-Am lead. When the chequered flag fell the battling pair were covered by just two seconds but the win went to Fong. Mapelli recovered to finish ninth in Pro-Am and Nemoto took the flag tenth in Silver-Am.



#63 – Zhou / Mapelli: photo by Kako Photography

Mapelli lined up eighth in Pro-Am for race 2 after losing his best lap to a track limits infringement. Liberati was tenth fastest in the class whilst Nemoto sat out the session hampered by a technical issue and was forced to start from the back of the grid. Mapelli made a great start but had to back off to avoid a spinning car in turn one and the two VSR cars completed the first lap in sixteenth and seventeenth places as Nemoto gained nine spots in the ANR with VSR car. Mapelli soon settled into a rhythm and moved up through the field to break into the top ten just as the pit window opened on lap eleven. Nemoto, who passed the second half of his stint just behind Liberati, was the first to stop whilst the two VSR cars pitted just as the window closed. Zhou showed great pace and made several passes to run sixth before a Stop and Go penalty for an early release pushed him down the order. He took the flag eleventh in Pro-Am but further post-race penalties elevated him back to tenth in class. Bian, who had to discount a ten second success penalty from the previous day's race, tangled with Uchiyama in the final minutes of the race and took the flag eighth in class but later received a penalty for the collision and Mizutani bought the ANR with VSR Lambo home eighth in Silver-Am.



#563 – Mizutani / Nemoto: photo by Kako Photography

The GT World Challenge Asia Championship continues in three weeks time in Buriram but VSR will be back on track before then, for the opening round of the Italian GT Sprint Championship at Misano a fortnight from now.

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