



Suzuka podium for Au and Schandorff

23rd June 2019 – Blancpain GT World Challenge Asia, Suzuka

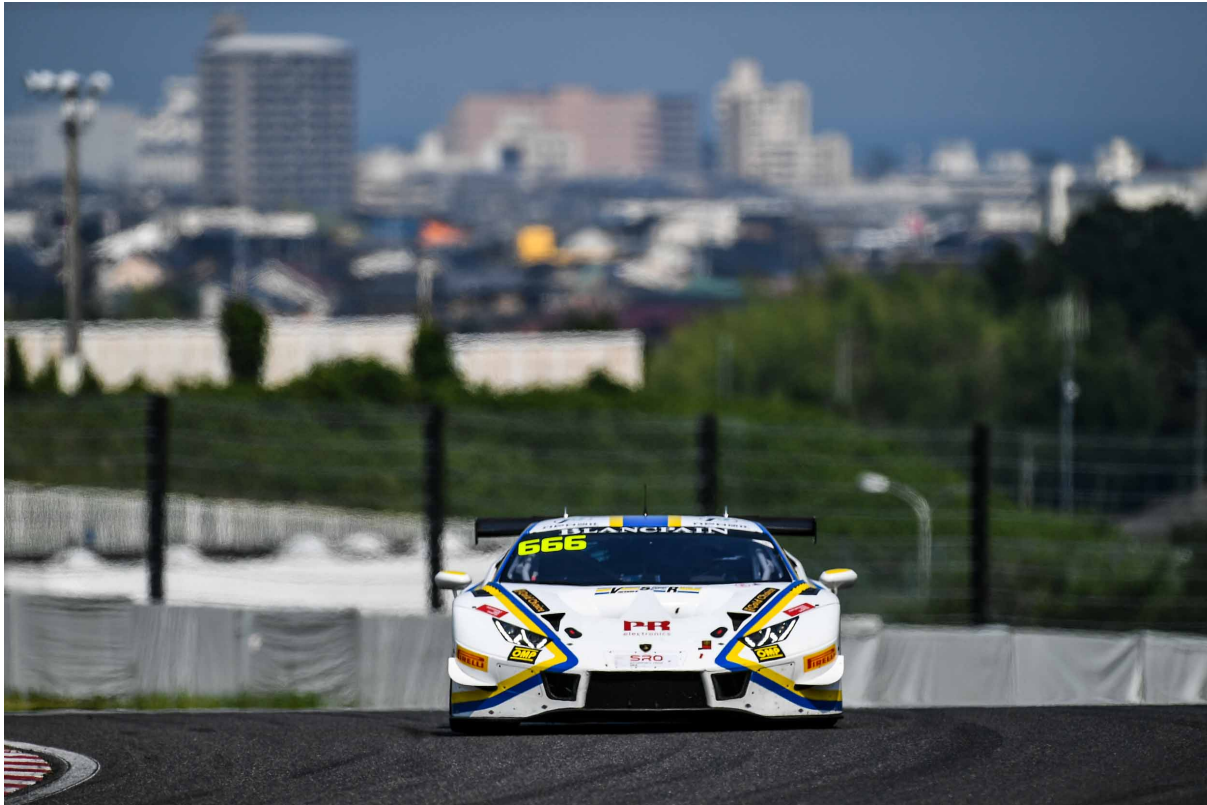
Second in the Pro-Am class of the Blancpain GT World Challenge Asia race on Saturday for Alex Au and Frederik Schandorff was their fourth consecutive podium finish. A DNF in race two leaves them second in the Championship, ten points adrift.



A field of twenty-eight arrived in Suzuka for a day's testing before the race weekend got underway. The track was wet but drying for Official Practice early on Saturday morning and it was Au who impressed, setting the seventh fastest time overall. By the time qualifying started the sun was once more burning its way through the clouds and the track was dry enough for slicks. Au qualified the car for race one and in a session disrupted by three separate red flag periods set the third fastest time in Pro-Am to take a starting position on the fifth row.

After a clean start the front runners all held position until lap four when Silver Cup driver Bruins, recovering from a poor grid position after a qualifying crash, passed Au for tenth place. The VSR driver was soon back in the top ten when Rump pitted from the overall lead with a puncture. At the end of lap twelve the pit window opened and Au bought the VSR Lamborghini in from third in Pro-Am and handed it over to team-mate Schandorff. The pair's main Championship rival, the number 918

Porsche, stopped at the same time and as they had a success handicap to discount Schandorff was able to exit ahead of them. The Dane was quick to up the pace, posting two consecutive fastest laps during the pit window, and had moved up to sixth overall by the time the pit stops were all done. On lap nineteen he overtook Nielsen's Silver Cup Mercedes for fifth and then became embroiled in a battle which would last until the chequered flag with Holzer at the wheel of the 918 Porsche. The German got to within a second of the Lamborghini but Schandorff kept him at bay and took the chequered flag in fifth place overall, second in Pro-Am, claiming the fourth consecutive podium finish for the VSR pairing.



Schandorff set the time in qualifying for Sunday's race and did enough for a sixth row start. A mega first lap saw him gain six places but he soon came under pressure from the gaggle of drivers behind. Couto was the first to attempt to attack the VSR Lamborghini but a drive through penalty for a jump start soon dropped him back. On lap five Van Gisbergen found a way past and one tour later Van Der Drift followed. Schandorff maintained seventh overall, fifth in Pro-Am, as behind him Ye, Moh and Kamimura took it in turns to try and overtake. The pit window opened on lap twelve and three laps later Schandorff pitted for Au to take over the car. The Safety Car was called out almost immediately after Au rejoined and racing resumed again on lap twenty. As the field jostled for position Au was pushed on to the grass and lost control of the Lamborghini, finishing his race in the gravel.

The Championship continues in a fortnight when the teams regroup at Fuji Speedway for the second Japanese round.

Photos by Fotospeedy

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