

## **RACE REPORT:** 25<sup>th</sup> August 2024

*Fanatec GT World Challenge Asia by AWS, Round 5 – Okayama, Japan*

### **Bian and Liberati victorious for Lamborghini in Japan**

The final Japanese round of the GT World Challenge Asia Championship was run at Okayama this weekend. Bian and Liberati continued in the number 6 Pro-Am entry whilst the number 63 Lamborghini was run in Silver-Am for father and son duo Johnson and Gavin Huang from Chinese Taipei. There was no change for the ANR number 563 car, entered in Silver-Am with Mizutani and Nemoto at the wheel.



6 – Bian / Liberati (photo by Kako Photography)

After solid performances in testing and official practice Bian qualified fifth in class and started on row five for race one with Mizutani and Johnson Huang sixth and tenth in Silver-Am respectively. Bian slipped down to eleventh overall at the start of the first race, losing out to Porter during the chaotic first lap. An off for Hirobon's Nissan quickly promoted Bian back to tenth and he gained a further place when Sathienthirakul was given a Drive Through for a false start. The tight and twisty Okayama track didn't favour overtaking and the positions were unchanged when the pit window opened on lap sixteen. Bian dived in immediately and was followed by Mizutani who had held sixth in class. A lap later the Huang's swapped over and by lap twenty Liberati was the fastest man on track, running fourth in Pro-Am and seventh overall. On lap twenty-seven the top four Pro-Am cars all passed Fong and Liberati was sixth. A short full course yellow to retrieve Santoso from the gravel briefly slowed the cars and racing resumed with five minutes to go. At the chequered flag the top six cars were covered by less than two seconds. Liberati finished fourth

in Pro-Am and sixth overall, Nemoto bought the 563 home sixth in Silver-Am and Gavin Huang took the flag tenth in class.



#63 – Huang / Huang (photo by Kako Photography)

A close second qualifying session saw Liberati just two tenths off the pole, taking a place on row two for Sunday's race. Nemoto and Gavin Huang were fifth and tenth fastest in Silver-Am. Threatening skies greeted the grid at the start of race two and it was Liberati who got the jump on everyone, moving up to the front before the first corner. After a one lap Safety Car to retrieve a Mercedes from the gravel lightening and thunder heralded the beginning of the rain. By lap five drivers were spinning in the slippery conditions and Huang stopped for wets. Two laps later Liberati and Nemoto pitted for rain tyres and a lap later the rest of the leaders followed suit. The pit window opened on lap fourteen and Liberati held a lead of just under five seconds over Stolz. Nemoto and Huang ran third and tenth in Silver-Am. Gavin Huang pitted on lap sixteen and handed over to his father whilst Liberati and Nemoto waited a further two laps. Bian exited the pits with Ibrahim just behind him but drove a commanding stint in the difficult conditions. He held off several wild challenges from Ibrahim and then gradually pulled away. With ten minutes to go Bian had built a five second gap and from there on had an untroubled run to the chequered flag to take overall and Pro-Am victory for himself and team-mate Liberati. Mizutani narrowly missed out the 563's first podium, finishing fourth in class and the Huang duo were tenth in Silver-Am.



#563 – Mizutani / Nemoto (photo by Kako Photography)

The final round of the GT World Challenge Asia Championship takes place in three weeks time at Shanghai.

END