

Race Report: 26th April, 2026

2026 Italian GT Sprint Championship, Round 1 – Imola

VSR get Sprint title defence off to winning start at Imola

VSR's Italian GT Sprint title defence got off to a dream start with GT3 rookies Georgi Dimitrov and Simone Riccitelli taking a lights-to-flag victory in Saturday's opening race at Imola. With a record grid of thirty-four GT3 cars from seven different manufacturers competing their achievement was all the more impressive. On Sunday Paul Levet and Marcus Paverud as well as Dimitrov-Riccitelli completed a successful weekend for VSR by finishing in the points.



#19 – Paul Levet and Marcus Paverud (photo by Fotospeedy)

Riccitelli was the star of the opening qualifying session, setting the third fastest time in his first GT3 outing. Two red flags, intense traffic as well as track limit infringements rendered the session difficult for the other two VSR cars with Zanon setting the sixteenth fastest time and Paverud ending up twenty-third. The second session featured only one red flag, at the half-way point, but this time the interruption didn't affect the VSR cars. Michelotto was second fastest, Levet just behind him in third on his GT3 debut and Dimitrov eighth quickest.



#63 – Georgi Dimitrov and Simone Riccitelli (photo by Fotospeedy)

The grid for race one was set by the slowest time of each car and the VSR Lambo's lined up for the opening race of the season with Riccitelli on pole after the disqualification of Frassinetti for a technical infringement. Zanon took a place on row six and Paverud started from the ninth row. Riccitelli kept the lead at the start but behind there was chaos with a huge crash which left debris everywhere. Paverud boxed with a puncture, slipping down to twenty-ninth, and Zanon was spun around at the first chicane, retiring with significant damage as the race continued under Safety Car. Racing resumed after fifteen minutes and Riccitelli shot away at the restart as behind him Perera got the better of Klingmann. Paverud made up four places on the first green flag lap and then got involved in a fight with Frassinetti which saw them swap places several times. The pit window opened on lap nine. VSR pitted Paverud first and Levet took over at the wheel of the number 19. Riccitelli boxed from the lead on lap twelve and Dimitrov jumped in to the 63 Lambo. When the pit window closed Dimitrov held a slender one second lead over Segu with Marciello closing on them both. Levet was up to sixteenth and battling hard with the Audi's of Aka and Di Folco. Setting the fastest lap of the race on lap fourteen and again on lap fifteen Dimitrov started to pull away. With ten minutes left to go Dimitrov held a ten second lead and Marciello had taken second from Segu. Levet ran in fourteenth having passed Geraci and then on lap twenty-one the Safety Car was called out for Ferati's BMW stuck in the gravel. The track went green for one final lap and Dimitrov made a faultless restart to keep ahead of Marciello's BMW and take the chequered flag first.



#66 – Mattia Michelotto and Ignazio Zanon (photo by Fotospeedy)

With the fastest drivers from qualifying starting Sunday's race the VSR cars lined up at the front with Michelotto on row one, Levet on row two and Dimitrov on row three. At the start Dimitrov rocketed into third making a crucial pass on Marciello's BMW as Michelotto held second behind King and Levet was hustled down to sixth. On lap four Marciello passed Dimitrov to take third from the VSR Lambo as Levet fought to find a way past Forenzi. The pit window opened on lap thirteen just as Michelotto slowed with a puncture. Levet pitted for Paverud and was followed in by Michelotto who limped into the pits to give the 66 to Zanon. Dimitrov was next in, handing the 63 to Simoncelli for the run to the flag. With the pit window closed and all the success handicaps from Saturday discounted, Paverud was running fourth, fighting with Klingmann for the final podium spot, Riccitelli was ninth and Zanon twenty-sixth. On lap twenty-one Scholze hit Zanon who was forced to retire, the incident causing the Safety Car to come out and the field to bunch up. The race restarted with five minutes left and Paverud was quick to pass Bankcy for third which briefly became second when Perera was penalised for a short pit-stop. On the penultimate lap Frassinetti barged past Paverud and was followed through by Rodriguez, demoting the VSR car to fourth as Riccitelli moved up to sixth.

2026 Italian GT Sprint Championship

Imola: 24-26 April

Vallelunga: 22-24 May

Mugello: 24-26 July

Monza: 9-11 October

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