

Ireland wins title in style

Ireland wins title in style

Sunday, May 03, 2009

A1 Team Ireland and Adam Carroll completed a dominant weekend with victory in this afternoon's A1GP Brands Hatch Feature race to win the 2008/09 A1GP World Cup of Motorsport championship.

Ireland had been in control all weekend, claiming two pole positions yesterday which were both converted into wins today.

Carroll took the lead from the start to take a comfortable victory, eventually crossing the finish line 10-seconds ahead of the Netherlands Jeroen Bleekemolen. Neel Jani ended third, securing second the runner-up spot in this year's championship.

Portugal's Filipe Albuquerque came home in fifth to give them third place in the final championship rankings.

How the Feature race unfolded:

After an aborted start when South Africa's Alan van der Merwe stalled on the grid, the race finally got underway with Carroll getting off the line to lead into Paddock Hill Bend.

As the field came through the first corner an incident involving China, USA and India left China and India in the gravel and out the race and brought out the safety car as the cars came round to complete the first lap. USA's John R Hildebrand Jr limped back to the pits for a new nose cone but rejoined the race.

The order behind the safety car was Ireland from Monaco, Netherlands, Switzerland, Portugal, New Zealand, Australia, France, Great Britain and Italy.

Ireland had a good run out of the final corner on the restart to come across the line 0.653-seconds ahead of the chasing pack. Further down the field Mexico's Salvador Duran took tenth from Italy's Vitantonio Liuzzi.

By the end of lap five Carroll had built up a 1.424-second lead before New Zealand's Earl Bamber spun Black Beauty into the gravel and out of the race at Westfield.

As the pit window opened for the first round of stops race-leader Ireland was the first to dive in, closely followed by Portugal. Another slick pit stop from the Irish crew saw Carroll safely back out in the lead.

Switzerland and Netherlands came in a lap later with Monaco opting to stay out a lap extra. The strategy didn't work, however, as Clivio Piccione fell to fifth after the stops.

Mexico had a good stop to get out in front of Australia with the order on lap 15 now Ireland 6.956-seconds from Netherlands, Switzerland and Portugal.

Great Britain's Dan Clarke was flying on home soil, placing his car perfectly on the inside of Paddock Hill Bend to take seventh from John Martin.

He then began attacking Mexico for sixth while Netherlands started to close the gap to Ireland up ahead.

On lap 26, Germany's Michael Ammermuller rolled to a halt bringing his season to an early end. Ireland was now being held up by USA's Hildebrand as Carroll came round to lap the American car.

A few laps later, Malaysia Aaron Lim ran wide and crashed out at Druids bringing a disappointing end to his weekend just as the second mandatory pit window opened.

Ireland was the first to come in again to get a new set of tyres as the second pit stop window opened, along with South Africa, Lebanon, Indonesia and Mexico. Great Britain and the Netherlands made their stops a lap later with orange car remaining in second despite Ireland having a slightly slower stop this time around.

John Martin kept the pressure up in Jackeroo, giving Australia the fastest lap, with a 1m 12.754s, which he beat a couple of laps later recording a 1m 12.698s.

Ireland was in control at the front but there was a great battle for third with Switzerland holding off Monaco and Portugal.

Great Britain's Dan Clarke was also putting pressure on Mexico for sixth.

As the lap wound down, Carroll never looked under threat, and he brought the Celtic Tiger across the line to take victory by 10.156-seconds from the Netherlands and Switzerland, and with it sealed the team's maiden A1GP title. Ireland had been in control all weekend, claiming two pole positions yesterday which were both converted into wins today.

Ireland's Adam Carroll said: "It was a perfect weekend for us, it's what we needed to come here to do, it was the plan so it really did come through. We knew by the pace we set in Portugal that if we came here and everything worked out ok we would be really hard to beat, and that was the way it worked out so it couldn't have been better.

"I didn't get a great start again, it's really hard to start from pole, but I knew if I stayed where I was there wouldn't be any bumping in to each other.

"In the second pit stop the team was nothing to do with why we were slow, the guys did their job but had to hold me because Switzerland was coming in and if they had let me go it would have been very dangerous so we lost some time.

"The team is just unbelievable, they are the best team on the face of this earth in motorsport and I believe that fully. Their commitment is second to none and we are the best in this pit lane. These guys left on Friday night after 29 hours in the pit lane, that says it all."

After an amazing season of A1GP racing the title went right down to the final race with A1GP Chairman, Tony Teixeira, presenting A1 Team Ireland's seat holder Mark Gallagher and an elated Adam Carroll with the A1GP World Cup of Motorsport trophy in front of the cheering crowds.