

United Autosports Aims To Bounce Back After Bad Luck At Rockingham

- Guasch earns first career GT pole, maiden pole for UA and Audi in BGT
- Best combined qualifying positions of the season for Anglo-American team
- Bell & Guasch lose British GT Championship lead



Matt Bell (GB) and Mike Guasch (USA) will aim to retake the lead of the Avon Tyres British GT Championship in the penultimate race of the season after the Anglo-American “combo” suffered plain bad luck in the latest races today (September 4).

Bell and Guasch had led the championship since May in their United Autosports Audi R8 LMS but despite starting both of today’s two, one-hour races at Rockingham (GB) from the front row, now find themselves trailing by five-points in the 10 race series.

Guasch had earned United Autosports and Audi its first British GT Championship pole-position when the American clocked the fastest time midway through the 15mins qualifying session on Saturday but a problem at the start of Race One cruelly forced Guasch to start from the back of the grid.

Meanwhile Team Co-Owner Richard Dean “engineered” the #24 Teknavo Audi R8 LMS in the absence of regular engineer Paul Haigh who was unwell in a two-race weather-affected program.

Avon Tyres British GT Championship (after eight rounds):

- 1 Geddie/Geddie, 106.5-points
- 2 Matt Bell & Mike Guasch, 101.5pts
- 3 Griffin/Cameron, 91pts



Race 1 (duration 60mins)

Qualifying: 1st #23 Guasch, 1m 19.750s; 9th #24 Palmer, 1m 21.919s. Weather: Dry, overcast.

Race Result: 10th (#23), +1 lap. 14th (#24), +1 lap. Weather: Damp/overcast/wet.

Guasch was due to start from pole with Palmer ninth – equaling Jay’s best start position – but disaster struck both UA cars before the race had even started. Guasch was slow away from the “dummy grid” due to a brake malfunction so had to start from the back of the grid. Meanwhile Palmer spun on the installation lap, the two Audis completing lap one in 18th and 19th positions in the 20-car field.

Palmer served a drive-through penalty – for work (changing from wets to slick tires) being carried out on the car two minutes before the race start – then pitted again almost immediately for wet tires as it began to rain – Guasch quickly following suit.

With 15mins run, the #23 Molecule Audi was one of the fastest cars on the track in 13th, Palmer placed 17th having overshot the Dene Hairpin.

Bell took over the 12th placed #23 on 25mins – and took on ‘new “wets” – with Bintcliffe climbing aboard the #24 in 16th moments later.

The rain eased and had stopped with 15mins to run which saw Bell setting impressive times en route to a hard earned 10th place – four positions ahead of Bintcliffe who, like Palmer, drove solidly in the difficult conditions.



Race 2 (duration 60mins)

Qualifying: 2nd #23 Bell, 1m 18.831s; 8th #24 Bintcliffe, 1m 19.789s. Weather: Dry, overcast.

Race Result: 5th (#23), +6.333secs. 9th (#24), +79.367secs. Weather: Damp/overcast, drying.

Bell claimed his second front row start of the season while Bintcliffe produced his season best qualifying performance to put the #24 Teknavo Audi on row four. Matt briefly led before spending the majority of the opening 20mins placed third with John, spinning down from seventh 10mins in, running 10th and then ninth prior to his pit-stop.

Guasch and Palmer took over the #23 and #24 cars with 25mins remaining on the drying track placed fourth and 10th with all of the pit-stops completed.

Guasch pressed for second place in the closing stages but slipped two places to fifth with just four minutes remaining while Palmer took ninth at the flag.

#23 Molecule – Audi R8 LMS

Matt Bell (GB). Age: 21. Born: Newcastle-upon-Tyne, T&W. Lives: Barningham, N. Yorks, England:

“Claiming a front row start was a good result but I was still slightly disappointed with my performance as I believe I could have done better. We changed to a new set of wets when I took over from Mike in Race One and it definitely helped. I concentrated on catching as many cars as possible after our early race problems. It was good to score a point but obviously a great shame not to have bagged more. The track still had damp patches in the early stages of the second race which made the opening laps tricky. I made a mistake going into the chicane at the end of the opening lap and ran wide. It was a frustrating race and disappointing result. All in all not a great day.”

Michael Guasch (USA). Age: 53. Born: Palo Alto, California. Lives: Walnut Creek, California, USA:

“It was very nice to get my first GT career pole, the team’s first-ever pole and the first for Audi in BGT. The team has worked hard all season and it finally paid off. It had been eight weeks since the last race so it was real useful to have a test at Donington before arriving here but then things turned sour for us. Race One was very disappointing. I went to pull away for the final installation lap and the Audi would not move. I let out the clutch but it just drowned. I switched the engine on and off but still it wouldn’t move off the grid. I eventually got going but had to start from the back. I began on slicks, rolling the dice that it would dry up but it didn’t and it started raining so pitted for wets. In race two, I battled hard with a Ferrari after taking over from Matt but all the time was losing ground on the leaders. Four cars were nose to tail across the finishing line within seconds of each other. We lost out on scoring some points today and with it the championship lead but we are still in the running.”

Richard Dean (GB), Managing Director & Co-Owner of United Autosports:

“I’m disappointed because we had two front row starts, were fast enough to win in both races, but have little to show in terms of race results and have lost the championship lead. Mike, who was faster than the leader, had a huge battle in race two for second place. He got out-fumbled trying to make a pass after being held up. In Race One we should have started from pole, were undecided on tires but went with the majority and began on slicks. It ultimately proved to be the wrong decision. To compound matters, Mike couldn’t get off the line on the parade lap so he started from the back. That was a depressing scenario from what had been an excellent qualifying performance by both cars. Jay and John both battled hard in difficult track and weather conditions that neither had faced before in the Audi. So we must all regroup and now focus on retaking the championship lead at Donington.”

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