



United Autosports Aims To Snatch British GT Championship Title In Finalé

- Bell & Guasch remain in title hunt after storming recovery in three-hour Donington race that ends in near darkness
- Bintcliffe & Palmer non-start race after accident in qualifying



Matt Bell (GB) and Mike Guasch (USA) will start the 10th and final round of the Avon Tyres British GT Championship next month in “full attack” mode for the Anglo-American United Autosports team.

Bell and Guasch, who had led the championship from rounds three to eight, salvaged seventh place in their #23 Molecule Audi R8 LMS in today’s (September 25) “GT500” three-hour race at Donington Park (GB).

Their eighth top-10 result of the season came after a storming fight back following an early collision dropped the duo to the tail of the field. They go in to the two-hour finalé at Silverstone (October 8) 11-points off the championship lead but with 37.5pts up for grabs for the race winners.

Qualifying the previous day had seen the top-10 covered by one-second, Bell having to settle for a second row start after briefly holding provisional pole-position to end just 0.133secs off “pole”.



Avon Tyres British GT Championship (after nine rounds):

- 1 Geddie/Geddie, 121.5-points
- 2 Griffin/Cameron, 113.5pts
- 3 Matt Bell & Mike Guasch, 110.5pts
- 23 John Bintcliffe & Jay Palmer, 23pts

Upcoming . . .

American Le Mans Series debut at Road Atlanta (USA) on October 1 . . . Final round of the British GT Championship at Silverstone (England) on October 8 . . . final two FIA GT3 European Championship races, Zandvoort (Netherlands), October 15-16 . . . Macau GT Cup (China), November 20 . . .



Race (duration 180mins)

Qualifying: 4th #23 Bell, 1m 30.448s; 13th #24 Bintcliffe, 1m 32.050s. Weather: Dry, overcast.

Race Result: 7th (#23) -1 lap P1; Did Not Start (#24) – accident damage from qualifying. Weather: Wet, overcast, damp, drying, dry.

Three mandatory pit-stops of 109 seconds minimum duration during which a driver-change must take place with the “two-driver” teams running a maximum drive time of 100 minutes was the order of the day in the “GT500” around the 2.4873-mile “Grand Prix” course.

Earlier rain showers had left the track wet so the 23-car field began on wet tires – despite the rain having stopped – Guasch slipping a place to fifth after the green light at Turn 1 (Redgate) then to sixth after 15mins just ahead of title rivals Jim Geddie/Glynn Geddie (#10 Ferrari).

But with less than 30mins gone and with a drying “line” appearing, Guasch and the fifth placed #21 Ferrari collided at the Old Hairpin, the American immediately pitting with front bodywork damage.

Guasch rejoined in last place having lost two vital laps before handing over to Bell who took on “slick” tires and fuel on 45mins. A series of fast laps as the track continued to dry brought the #23 Audi up to 18th at one-third distance – but 12 places behind their main title rivals – Matt the fastest man on track.

The race resumed after the first safety car period (70mins) with Bell ninth, after a number of cars decided to pit during the caution, the hard-charging Briton gaining a further three places by mid-distance.

Bell pitted from fourth place on 96mins with Guasch resuming 10th after the team's second compulsory stop moments before a second full course caution. A solid stint from the American saw him up to fourth when he made a third and final scheduled pit-stop with 49mins remaining, Bell resuming ninth and once again setting a string of fastest race laps – ultimately clocking the second fastest lap of the race.

A final safety car period with 15mins remaining allowed Bell to get within 8.684secs of sixth place but it was seventh for the #23 Audi at the checker. The #21 Ferrari (Griffin/Cameron) placed third in the race and thus demote Bell/Guasch a place to third in the championship standings with the similar 458 Italia of Geddie/Geddie (#10 Ferrari) recording fifth place to retain the title race lead.



#23 Molecule – Audi R8 LMS

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

“I was disappointed with my qualifying performance – I made a mistake on my best lap costing at least a tenth pushing too hard but importantly we had a good car for the race and started from row two. Unfortunately Mike made a small mistake in the wet and hit another car which put the hood up on the car so he had to pit for repairs. After that, it was just a case of pushing as hard as I could and regaining as many places as possible. Today has probably the hardest drive I have ever had – it was pretty difficult with some heart in mouth moments trying to overtake as the car was not right after the collision. Our result leaves Mike and I with a mountain to climb due to our main competition finishing ahead of us.”

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

“Saturday was a challenge in that we needed to change the set-up between practice. Taking off the ‘dive planes’ set me back – Matt was able to adapt more quickly. I started the race in the rain on wets and had good pace. I braked a little late and ran up the back of the Ferrari, my front right corner into his rear left spinning him around. The hood flew up so I went straight to the pits and the guys put it back together the best they could in the minimum amount of time. Our pace was there today, we were just unfortunate.”

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* Bell, Bintcliffe, Guasch & Palmer biographies plus team & car profiles are available on the United Autosports website <http://www.unitedautosports.com/>

* A comprehensive library of Editorial Copyright Free photographs can be downloaded at www.flickr.com/unitedautosports/sets

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