

TUESDAY 8 MAY 2007

virgo ferrari 430 GT2
with dunlop support

VALENCIA PODIUM CATAPULTS SIMONSEN TO JOINT LE MANS SERIES GT2 CHAMPIONSHIP LEAD



 **Another almost perfect performance** in the second round of the 2007 Le Mans Series at Valencia last Sunday saw Allan Simonsen and team mate Rob Bell back on the podium.

His second place in the hotly fought GT2 class combined with a 3rd at Monza three weeks earlier has put the Virgo Motorsport duo on equal points standing with ex-F1 driver Alex Caffi and Denny Zardo.

As expected the Valencia circuit was tougher than Monza – a twisty combination with a relatively narrow track made passing difficult. Three less GT2 cars would appear (19 at Monza) and with the arrival of several new prototypes, the track was certainly packed with traffic.

The circuit suited the Porsches well and that was reflected by the German marque grabbing the first three GT2 grid positions. Not to be discouraged, Simonsen qualified the Ferrari 430 GT2 in 4th place, the best of the six competing Ferraris.

Rob Bell started the 1000km race maintaining 4th position after the first hour behind Lietz in the IMSA 997, followed by Dirk Werner (Farnbacher) and Marc Lieb before handing over to Simonsen.

By the third hour the Virgo pairing were up to 2nd behind Lietz, 26 seconds in front, with Pompidou a similar gap behind. Fuel and tyre stops would see the battle see-saw until a decisive moment in the final hour when the lead Porsche was hit by the Sauliner Courage prototype, sending Lietz' co-driver Raymond Narac heavily into the tyre barriers.



oz tarmac rally events
+ targa tasmania evo-9



british GT
ucb ferrari 430



australian GT
ccc ferrari 360 GT



sandown + bathurst
v8 supercar enduros

The lead then went to Werner in the Farnbacher car but a pistor to hand-over to Pierre Ehret shortly after put Lieb on top, barely holding a two-second edge over Robert Bell in the Virgo Ferrari.

With time (and fuel) running out, the Ferrari was forced to run a leaner fuel map, and then a scare for Bell at the fast right hander, put paid to their challenge – but only just!

The event was won outright by the 2nd Peugeot 908 HDi FAP of ex-F1 pairing Pedro Lamy and Stéphane Sarrazin.



Climbing the podium steps. Simonsen's 2nd place at Valencia now makes him equal leader in the GT2 class.

"The team has been great once again and Rob put in a great drive," said an upbeat Simonsen.

"It was pretty busy out on the track and you don't get a rest anywhere with 45 other cars around you. The diesel Peugeot's are very fast, low and quite silent so I'm spending a fair bit of energy concentrating on my mirrors. Anyway, it's good practice for the 24 Hours!

"GT2 has a huge field of 16 entries compared to 7 in GT1, 12 in P2 and 11 in P1 so to come 2nd and 19th outright is very encouraging.

"We've got a lot of cohesion going on at Virgo now and we're climbing the podium

nicely. The Ferrari should run well at Nurburgring and both Rob and I like the track so we should be up for a win. The Dunlops are working really well and the car is a treat to drive. Marc (Lieb) and Xavier (Pompidou) are great drivers – don't forget Mark is back to back GT2 champion and the pair won everything in 2005 – so we're benchmarking very well."



The Virgo Ferrari had a great run a Valencia despite the traffic congestion



Bell out, Simonsen in – having a two-driver squad has its advantages at pitstops

2007 LE MANS SERIES - ROUND 2 VALENCIA, SPAIN, MAY 4-6

P1 N°77 Marc Lieb/Xavier Pompidou Felbermayr-Protron Porsche 997 GT3 RSR

P2 N°96 Allan Simonsen/Rob Bell Virgo Motorsport Ferrari 430 GT2

P3 N°78 Alex Caffi/Denny Zardo Scuderia Villorba Ferrari 430 GT2

2007 LE MANS SERIES - STANDINGS

1= Allan Simonsen 14

1= Rob Bell 14

1= Alex Caffi 14

1= Denny Zardo 14

3= Alessandro Bonetti 12

3= Fabrizio De Simone 12

3= Sergio Hernandez 12

4= Marc Lieb 10

4= Xavier Pompidou 10

Round 3 of the Le Mans Series will be held 29 June - 1 July at Nurburgring. In the mean time Simonsen will return to Australia for the next round of Australian GT Championship at Queensland raceway before dashing back to France for the official

test day and week-long lead up to the sports car classic – The 24 Hour of Le Mans.



ALLAN SIMONSEN

R A C I N G

