

Buggyra ZM Racing fall just short of victory in Estoril 12 Hours

The Buggyra ZM Racing crew of Aliyyah Koloc, Adam Lacko and David Vršecky endured a rollercoaster 12 Hours of Estoril, classified in 2nd place in GT4.

TALLINN, ESTONIA, July 10, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The trip to the north of Estoril featured a unique double-header style format, starting with a six-hour points-scoring qualifying race held on Friday afternoon, before the longest continuous race of the season on Saturday, a 12-hour flag-to-flag encounter.

All three drivers showed strong pace throughout the weekend, which totalled a staggering 18 hours of competitive racing across the two days but fell short of the GT4 class victory. Nevertheless, the team scored more championship points ahead of the final round of the year, the 24 Hours of Barcelona.

Free Practice and Qualifying

The weekend began strongly for the #416 crew, who set a combined fastest time of 1m45.942 during the official timed free practice session, setting a total of 19 laps. That form continued into qualifying, which followed the standard three-part format, and which set the grid for the six-hour race. The combined time of Koloc, Vršecky and Lacko was just five-hundredths of a second slower than the practice time and was just under a full second quicker than the second-place Mercedes-AMG GT3 from Atlas BX Motorsport.



Friday Qualifying Race (6 Hours)

Vršecky was at the wheel as the lights went out, but the #416 lost out to the faster-starting Mercedes on the run towards the first corner. The positions remained the same throughout the opening hour, which was impacted by a lengthy Code 60 period, with Vršecky trailing by just under a second as the race entered its second hour. Vršecky then handed over to Koloc at the end of his stint and the #416 remained firmly in contention before moving into the lead of the class at the end of the fifth hour. The order stayed that way with Vršecky ahead and engaged in a ferocious battle for top honours with the other Mercedes. The battle went all the way to the line, with the #416 finishing just one second ahead at the flag. Unfortunately, the crew was demoted to second after the stewards deemed Vršecky responsible for a dangerous crossing of the line.



"It was very strange to have a qualifying race that lasted six hours, but it was a good warm-up for the 12 Hours," Koloc said post-race.

"We fought hard with the other Mercedes, so it was really close, and, in the end, David drove really well and was one second ahead of the other car, but unfortunately we got a 30-second penalty.

"I didn't agree with the penalty, I see what they mean but 30-seconds for that was nothing. And we think there was a false start from another competitor so there was a lot of inconsistency in the decisions. "But the battle on the final lap was very entertaining, very exciting and very hard to watch. It's just a shame what happened after."

Saturday Race (12 Hours)

Precious little time separated the end of the qualifying race and the 12 Hours on Saturday morning, which began at 11am local time. From second on the grid, the #416 Mercedes held

onto its position during Lacko's double stint and subsequently moved into the lead of the GT4 class in the second hour by just over eight seconds. That lead ballooned to nearly 20 seconds, as Koloc also did a double stint, before the team encountered mechanical trouble in the eighth hour, with Lacko at the wheel.

That forced the car back into the garage where repairs were made before it returned to the track, eight laps down on the leading GT4 car.

All three drivers demonstrated a never-give-up attitude and continued to push on in the remaining four hours, but a further overheating issue in the car meant that Vršický didn't reach the finish. Still, the car was classified as runner-up for the second day in a row.

"It was a pretty long and brutal day, there was a lot of action, and we lost a wheel at one point," Koloc said. "And then in the last 12 minutes, the car stopped and apparently there was a fire. So, we weren't able to see the chequered flag, so after 12 hours of racing, it's really disappointing. But it's a good experience for us, ahead of the 24 Hours of Barcelona.

"Going into that race, we will be two points behind in the points standings, so it will be a really tough race, it's really close with the other competitor, so we will fight until the end."

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