



## Racing Engineering - GP2 Barcelona Race 1

It was a good start for Racing Engineering in today's opening round of the 2008 GP2 Series with their new driver Giorgio Pantano taking an excellent fourth place less than four seconds behind the winner. For Javier Villa it was less successful although the young Spaniard drove hard to take a fighting 14<sup>th</sup> place.

Tension was high at the start as a second formation lap was necessary following a stalled car as the drivers lined up on the grid for the first time. At the second attempt pole-sitter Maldonado made a dreadful getaway and another car several rows further back stalled. These two incidents causing several drivers to loose position as they tried to avoid the stationary cars and as the cars completed their first lap Giorgio was laying sixth whilst Javier had lost out as he made a slow getaway from the grid and he found himself back in the midfield.

Lap two saw the pace car deployed as four cars left the track and immediately all the drivers dived into the pits for their mandatory pit stop. Some excellent work by the Racing Engineering team saw Giorgio resume in 4<sup>th</sup> but Javier found himself a victim of the crowded pitlane as cars were forced to queue up and he continued in 16<sup>th</sup>. Giorgio was now chasing Zuber as the pace car pulled off and for several laps sat right on the tail of the third placed car whilst pulling away from Valles at nearly a second a lap. The first four cars were soon quickly distancing themselves from the rest of the field with all four drivers lapping at a very similar rate.

Javier found himself involved in a race-long battle with Valerio as he quickly left the pursuing Ricci behind, he was able to push Valerio hard but he didn't quite have the speed to pass.

Back at the front by lap 20 Giorgio had dropped back to just over two seconds behind Zuber but he found he was able to comfortably hold his position and keep the 5<sup>th</sup> place Petrov some six seconds behind. As the race continued the front four settled into pattern, each lapping quickly but unable to close in on the car in front and the chasing pack unable to close in.

With no further changes of position Giorgio confidently reeled off the final laps to finish a very competitive fourth and score his first points with Racing Engineering. Javier continued to fight with Valerio looking for every opportunity to pass but he had to settle for 14<sup>th</sup> place at the chequered flag.

The Racing Engineering Repsol/Telefónica supported cars are clearly a very competitive package and both drivers will be looking for a good race tomorrow and Giorgio has shown he is in with a real chance of victory.

**Alfonso de Orleans Borbón (team principal):** "Its a bit of a pity, we could have had both drivers in the points. But due to the safety car Javi dropped too far back. I also personally think that we can work on making the cars better for tomorrow. I would like to thank all the boys for their great work in the pitstops."

**Javier Villa (driver car 11):** " I had problems at the start, the engine stalled. I was lucky the car was moving a bit, so the engine started up again. Maldonado, who stalled on pole, was in my way and I had to find my way around him. I was 16th and recovered to 12th when the safety car was employed. Both cars went in and I had to wait a bit until Giorgio stopped, this made me lose a bit of time. During the race I didn't have a good rhythm, and suffered from oversteer. Now I will work with Giorgio on improving our performance for tomorrow."

**Giorgio Pantano (driver car 12):** "It has been quite good. There were some problems with the rear tyres after my pit stop so I decided to hold my place as it was too risky to push and so it was better to keep position. I was a bit unlucky at the start and lost positions due to Maldonado stalling on grid, but it was a very good pit stop and I have to thank the team. Now we will work on scoring more points tomorrow."

Telefonica

