



Monaco Sprint Race – A difficult day for the Racing Engineering Team.

With both their driver's starting towards the back of the grid, with Giorgio Pantano in 20th and Javier Villa in 24th, following their problematic Feature Race on Friday, Racing Engineering were not optimistic about their chances in the Sprint Race. Indeed this was the case; although Javier drove a steady, intelligent race avoiding the many incidents around him to finish 13th Giorgio was forced into retirement following contact with another car early in the race.

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The race got underway under dark clouds with the threat of rain to come but, despite a few drops of moisture, the field started on dry tyres. All 25 cars got away cleanly from the grid but as they funnelled into Ste Devote two cars made contact as well as Bakkerud hitting, and flying over, the back of Zuber's car. Both of the Repsol and Telefonica supported Racing Engineering cars made it through the debris although Giorgio was forced very close to the barriers. At the end of lap one Giorgio was 14th with Javier a few places further back in 17th after a positive opening lap.



Over the next few laps Giorgio was involved in a very close battle with Puglisi just ahead and Filippi right behind him, each driver looking for the smallest mistake from his two competitors. Javi was also closely involved in a tight dice with Hanley just behind him; both men were clearly very closely matched.



As Giorgio headed towards the chicane on the 8th lap he made a determined effort to pass Puglisi but the Racing Engineering driver made his move the Durango car pushed Giorgio against the wall on the exit from the tunnel and Giorgio was out on the spot with heavy suspension damage to the front right of his car.



Following a spin by Valerio, soon after Giorgio's retirement, the Safety Car was deployed and as it returned to the pits at the start of lap 12 and the cars began racing again Javier was laying in 15th place, chasing Kobayashi and still being followed by Hanley. For the next three laps the positions remained static but then Kobayashi retired with suspension damage and Javi moved up to 14th and was now chasing Filippi.



For the remaining laps Javi continued to press on, even cutting across the chicane with three laps to go, but he was unable to close the gap to Filippi to less than a second but he did manage to pull away slowly from Hanley to finish 13th 1.5 seconds ahead of the Campos car.



Although it wasn't the weekend the Racing Engineering team were hoping for there are a number of positives the Spanish team can take away. Once again the cars were totally reliable; the two non-finishes for Giorgio were as the result of contact with another driver. Additionally, as has been the case in the previous races both drivers were capable of setting very competitive lap times in qualifying and the race.



The GP2 circus now takes a month break before reconvening at Magny Cours on the 21st June.

Alfonso de Orleans Borbón (team principal): *"The positive point of the weekend was that once again the reliability was perfect. Our cars are having no mechanical problems, but were being hampered by others crashing into them. Once again the boys have done a fantastic job and I thank them for having well done during an exceptionally difficult weekend."*

Javier Villa (driver car 11): *"We knew that today it would be a tough race, I started from the back and wanted to know where we were. At the end I finished 13th, so we recovered 11 places. But that's not relevant; the important thing is that I was within a few tenths of the fastest lap. That's good news for the whole team to face the next testing session and the remaining races of the championship."*

Giorgio Pantano (driver car 12): *"I had good race, the car was good. Then I tried to overtake, but my friend from Italy, Puglisi, pushed me towards the wall at the exit of the tunnel. And that's it."*