



## Racing Engineering - GP2 Hockenheim Race 1 – Another win for Giorgio Pantano and Racing Engineering

In a race whose outcome was greatly influenced by heavy rain in the closing laps Giorgio Pantano extended his advantage at the top of the 2008 GP2 Drivers Championship with a hard fought second place in today's Feature Race at Hockenheim that ended up becoming his fourth win of the season after the French Romain Grosjean, who crossed the finish line first, got a 25 seconds penalty.

It was a clean start for all the drivers as Giorgio made the most of his pole position to lead the rest of the pack into the first corner at Hockenheim and the Italian held top spot at the end of the first lap as he was closely pursued by Grosjean. Over the next few laps the Racing Engineering driver swapped fastest laps with his French rival as they both pulled away from Buemi.

On lap 6 Giorgio set the fastest lap of the race so far, 1m 24.767s, as he extended his lead to nearly a second over Grosjean. Over the next few laps the Repsol and Telefonica supported car gradually moved further ahead and by lap 14 Giorgio was nearly 3 seconds ahead of the second-place driver with both men having a lead of over 30 seconds on the third-placed Buemi.

Lap 17 saw Giorgio make his mandatory pitstop in the Racing Engineering Dallara and, as ever, the Spanish team had their driver quickly on his way after changing both rear tyres. Giorgio resumed in first place and lap 20 he set a new fastest lap of 1m 24.713s and his lead over Grosjean was now one second as both men came up to lap Herck.

Giorgio and Grosjean now began a furious battle as they continued to pull away from Buemi at nearly a second a lap. Giorgio was able to keep the gap at around the one second mark but he couldn't afford to make any mistakes as the Frenchman was ready to capitalise on the slightest error.

With 5 laps to go the whole complexion of the race changed as it began to rain with steadily increasing force. Almost immediately the drivers were in trouble on their slick tyres with several running wide or spinning and several opted to pit to have wets fitted. With 4 laps remaining Giorgio ran wide but was able to keep his lead but only for a few seconds as another small error at the Mercedes Arena in the treacherous conditions saw him lose the lead to Grosjean. Mindful of his Championship position and the very tricky track conditions Giorgio decided not to try to regain the lead and he was so far ahead of the third-placed car he could afford to take things carefully. Some minutes later, the penalty to Grosjean meant Giorgio was declared the winner of the race so his leadership of the series is consolidated; he now has a 19 points advantage over the second-placed driver. Additionally Racing Engineering takes the top position in the Team series with an advantage of two points over the next outfit.

It was not to be a good race for Racing Engineering team-mate Javier Villa. Starting from 8<sup>th</sup> after moving up one place on the grid as a result of a penalty applied to Kobayashi, the young Spaniard made a very good start and was up to 6<sup>th</sup> almost immediately. Javi made an early pit stop on lap 11 and resumed the track behind Chandhok who had stopped a few laps earlier. The Racing Engineering Dallara immediately began a long, hard battle for nearly 20 laps with the Indian driver until with the race nearly three quarters run Javi found a way past. Almost immediately Javi closed in on Di Grassi in 5<sup>th</sup> and lap 34 saw him pass the Brazilian.

As the rain came Javi gained two more places at the expense of a spinning Senna and Buemi and as the race entered its last lap Javi was laying in a very impressive 3<sup>rd</sup>, by far and away his best performance in a Feature Race. Sadly it was not to be and with only a few hundred metres to go Javi crashed on the very slippery track, as several others had done, and all his hard work came to nothing as he finished 10th.

For tomorrow's Sprint Race Giorgio will start from 7<sup>th</sup> on the reversed grid and will be looking to gaining as many points as possible towards the Drivers Championship. For Javier, he clearly has the speed to run with the fastest drivers and he will be trying as hard as possible to make up as many places as he can.

**Alfonso de Orleans Borbón (team principal):** "A fantastic race from both our drivers, especially from Javi, who under these circumstances and extreme conditions, did a great job. Giorgio did a smart race and was intelligent to accept second when maybe first would have been too risky to attempt, and at the end it paid off with yet another victory. Once again, congratulations to the entire team. Everyone did a great job."

**Javier Villa (driver car 11):** "It was a complicated race, I did a good start moving up to 6th. Then I was behind Senna, who entered for the pit stop the same lap, I did. I lost some time at the pit stop and Chandhok overtook me on my out-lap. Then I was behind him, but I was able to overtake him and I had a very good rhythm. I passed Di Grassi and am sure without the rain, I could have passed Senna as well. However, mayhem started with 5 laps to go when heavy rain set in. I was in 3rd, when with 2 corners to go, I spun off as it started raining again in this part of the track."

**Giorgio Pantano (driver car 12):** "A great victory, thanks to the entire team for giving me a perfect car yet another weekend. We did a perfect start and a perfect race with a perfect pit stop. During the last laps it started to rain, I tried to manage the situation, but Grosjean was faster. Tomorrow I will try to score the maximum again."

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