



## Racing Engineering - GP2 Belgium Feature Race – A disappointing day for Racing Engineering

Today's Feature Race at Spa Francorchamps saw both Giorgio Pantano and Javier Villa finish well down the field as both drivers made errors in difficult conditions that cost them any chance of a good result.



Shortly before the start of the race it began to rain resulting in all the cars switching to wet tyres and many opting for a wet-weather setup. The rain was still coming down at the start of the race so the opening lap was held behind the Safety Car in order to give the drivers a chance to get used to the track before facing the daunting Belgian circuit at racing speed.



As the Safety Car pulled off the track Giorgio was holding 4<sup>th</sup> place just behind Grosjean with Zuber chasing him but almost immediately the Repsol and Telefónica supported car began to pull away from the pursuing drivers. By lap 7 the first three cars were involved in a close battle for the lead with Giorgio 2.5 seconds behind and keeping a close eye on them, ready to take advantage of any mistakes. On lap 7 Senna pulled into the pits for his mandatory pitstop and the Racing Engineering team immediately called Giorgio in, the Spanish team did their usual very efficient stop and Giorgio was quickly back on the track in 14<sup>th</sup> place and right behind Senna.



When the other cars began to stop Giorgio moved up to 5<sup>th</sup> on lap 9 which was effectively 2<sup>nd</sup> as three of the cars ahead still had to pit. Suddenly it was announced that Senna had to take a drive-through penalty due to a pit lane incident which would promote Giorgio to 1st but before the Brazilian could take the penalty both the Safety Car and the Medical car were called onto the track following a heavy accident to Valsecchi. The drivers immediately lined up behind the Safety Car but, after 3 laps at the slow pace, Giorgio was suddenly seen to have a problem as his engine switched to safety mode, fortunately Giorgio was able to restart it again but he dropped eight places as a result.



The Safety Car pulled off after 5 laps and Giorgio was immediately fighting to regain places and within two laps he was running 8<sup>th</sup> but entering the La Source hairpin he mounted the kerb and spun on the wet surface dropping to 10<sup>th</sup>. Two laps later, as Giorgio desperately tried to get back into the points, he made another mistake when the Italian out-braked Rodríguez into La Source but he was travelling too quickly on the damp surface to avoid contact with di Grassi and the resulting damage to the front of his car saw him drop back to finish 21<sup>st</sup>.



For Javier Villa it was a race to forget, starting 21<sup>st</sup> the young Spaniard was soon involved in a battle with several cars at the back of the field but he was unable to make any significant progress up the field. Lying in 19<sup>th</sup> place when the Safety Car was on track he was adjudged to have passed another car and was given a drive-through penalty, by the end of the race he was in 18<sup>th</sup> place.

Both drivers will find it hard to score points in tomorrow's Sprint Race, starting from so far back but with the reliability that both drivers have had from the Racing Engineering team, the Spanish team consistently bringing both cars to the finish, both men will be giving their best.

**Alfonso de Orleans Borbón (team principal):** " *This wasn't what we had expected, it's a real pity for both our drivers. Their starting positions for tomorrow are not very promising, but we will try to make the best out of it and we continue with the chance to win the championship. Our boys would definitely deserve it, as they have once more prepared the cars perfectly, a big thank you to them.* "

**Javier Villa (driver car 11):** " *It was a very difficult race. Once again rain set in just before we started. The first few laps of the race on wet tyres were complicated as the track was very slippery. The earliest we could, we switched to dry tyres and then the rhythm was good. I received a drive-through penalty and then the gap to the front was too big to the rest of the field, so I could only finish my race.* "

**Giorgio Pantano (driver car 12):** " *We were not lucky today. When I was behind the safety car, the safety mode of the engine set in, as I didn't pay attention to the temperatures. I dropped back and at the restart I knew I was in P8, which I was ok with. However, in turn 1 I touched the curbs on the inside and spun. At the next restart I tried to overtake Rodriguez. In the same corner I touched on the inside, where it was still wet, and I had contact with di Grassi, as I couldn't stop the car.* "