

Three Takeaways from Mobil 1 Twelve Hours of Sebring Presented by Advance Auto Parts

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*Racing Axioms Come to Forefront
in Jam-Packed Weekend*

By David Phillips, www.imsa.com

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. – There probably won't be many spectators inquiring about refunds on their tickets to the 2022 Mobil 1 Twelve Hours of Sebring Presented by Advance Auto Parts weekend.

After all, the massive throng was treated to an action-packed (if weather-shortened) FIA World Endurance Championship 1000 Miles of Sebring in addition to a full slate of IMSA action including the IMSA Michelin Pilot Challenge's Alan Jay Automotive Network 120, the 2022 Porsche Carrera Cup North America season-opening doubleheader and, last but not least, Round 2 of the 2022 IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship that featured plot twists from the drop of the green flag to the weekend's final checkered flag.

A few things to take away from the four-day extravaganza:

To Finish First, First You Have to ...

One thing we learned (again) is that while a race cannot be won on the first lap – or in this case the first hour – it can certainly be lost. Just ask Chip Ganassi Racing, whose Motul Pole Award-winning No. 01 Cadillac DPi-V.R was eliminated from contention before completing the first lap of the race, thanks to gearbox issues.

Or Andretti Autosport, whose No. 36 Ligier JS P320 posted the second-fastest qualifying effort in Le Mans Prototype 3 (LMP3) but only completed one lap in the race. Or defending GT Daytona (GTD) champion Wright Motorsports, whose Rolex 24 At Daytona-winning and Sebring class pole-winning No. 16 Porsche 911 GT3 R lost the better part of 15 laps after encountering differential problems barely 10 minutes into the 12-hour race.

Then there's the unfortunate case of DragonSpeed USA, whose No. 81 figured to contend for Le Mans Prototype 2 (LMP2) honors but was knocked out of the race less than three hours in when WeatherTech Championship/IndyCar champion Juan Pablo Montoya was pinched between a spinning LMP3 and a GTD car trying to avoid the mess. Just three laps after taking over the No. 81 from his son, Sebastian, who had catapulted the No. 81 into the class lead, all proud papa Juan Pablo could do was look over the mangled front end of the ORECA LMP2 07, the result of the collision that ended their day.

It Ain't Over till It's Over

Then again, we also learned (again) there's safety in numbers. Just ask CGR, whose No. 02 Cadillac DPi overcame a penalty and a couple of incidents in the final 90 minutes to take the overall and Daytona Prototype international (DPi) win, and severely lessen the blow associated with its sister car's early demise. Or Ferrari, which captured GTD honors thanks to the efforts of Cetilar Racing and the No. 47 Ferrari



488 GT3 after the GTD PRO pole-winning No. 62 Risi Competizione Ferrari 488 GT3 lost more than half a dozen laps in the early going with a power steering issue.

At the risk of sounding like an IMSA cheerleader, with a 53-car field on hand, the sheer diversity of cars and classes in the WeatherTech Championship was never more apparent than at Sebring. Those who decry the proliferation of spec racing machinery ought to embrace the amazing collection of marques and disparate designs and shapes in GTD and GTD PRO: front engines and mid-engines, turbos and normally aspirated, V-10s, V-8s and V-6s.

A quick perusal of fast laps for the GT categories reveals that nine of the 10 marques lapped within a second of one another, half within three-tenths of a second of the fastest lap. Although DPi features just two manufacturers, there is no mistaking the distinctive sounds of the Acura's 3.5-liter, twin-turbo V-6 and the Cadillac's normally aspirated, 5.5-liter V-8. But if evenly matched homogeneity is your thing, where driving skill and team execution are more at a premium than an unfair technical advantage, consider LMP2 and LMP3, where only a seasoned observer could spot the differences between a Duqueine D08, a Ligier JS P320 or an ORECA LMP2 07.

Race Is on in All Classes

In many respects, Sebring provided something of a reset in the various class

championship contests. Acura finished 1-2 in DPi at Daytona while Cadillac swept the top three in DPi spots at Sebring, although it must be said the No. 01 CGR Cadillac departed Florida with a mountain to climb in the wake of two seventh-place finishes. Similarly, JDC-Miller MotorSports finds itself nicely placed following podium finishes by the No. 5 Mustang Sampling Cadillac in both races.

Porsche monopolized the GT victory stand at the Rolex 24 but was supplanted by Corvette (GTD PRO) and Ferrari (GTD) at Sebring. Indeed, the best Porsche could manage was fifth place in GTD PRO by Daytona winners Pfaff Motorsports.

As for LMP2, the early demise of the Daytona-winning No. 81 DragonSpeed entry at Sebring, coupled with the No. 52 PR1 Mathiasen Motorsports ORECA's win, largely reverses the Daytona fortunes (where DragonSpeed won and PR1 Mathiasen finished P4), as Sean Creech Motorsport became the early LMP3 points leader thanks to the No. 33 Ligier's win at Sebring, the first points-paying round of the season for the class.

So, while nobody would have wished ill luck to befall the Daytona winners, the reversal of many fortunes means all of the classes are wide open following the conclusion of the "36 Hours of Florida." On to Long Beach in three weeks.

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