

## **ALGARVE PRO RACING BACKS UP LE MANS CLASS WIN WITH PRO-AM VICTORY AT MONZA**

**Algarve Pro Racing backed up its LMP2 Pro-Am win in the 90th edition of the 24 Hours of Le Mans with a class victory in the 2022 FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC) 6 Hours of Monza (8-10 July).**

After a hard-fought race, Algarve Pro's Steven Thomas, James Allen and Rene Binder had the honour of stepping out onto Autodromo Nazionale Monza's iconic rostrum, extending a sensational run of form that includes their Le Mans triumph and podium finishes at Spa and Sebring, and tightens the team's grip on the WEC LMP2 Pro-Am title.

Second in Pro-Am and a fixture of the top ten for the duration of FP1 on Friday afternoon, Algarve Pro entered qualifying as the lead Pro-Am entrant, having gone fifth fastest in FP3 with a best time of 1m39.250s.

Allen was selected to qualify the #45 ORECA 07 prototype and the Australian posted two improvements on a single set of Goodyear tyres, topping out on a 1m39.122s to get inside the top five in the overall LMP2 classification and third in Pro-Am before the red flags curtailed the ten-minute session.

However, it was Thomas who started the race proper and, in a fantastic getaway, he made up places and ended a typically busy opening lap third in LMP2 and first in Pro-Am, although fast-moving Pro drivers soon arrived on the scene and shuffled the American Am back down to eighth.

Still at the head of Pro-Am, Thomas held his own against the pursuant #34 Inter Europol Competition, #83 AF Corse and #35 Ultimate entries before a Full Course Yellow provided some respite and an opportunity to serve a cheap fuel stop.

All LMP2 teams shadowed Algarve Pro's call during a second neutralisation and, while Thomas lost track position on heavily compromised tyres that were down to the carcass, he still held the initiative until the latter half of the first hour, when Ultimate and AF Corse got the better of him.

Allen was installed at the top of the first hour and his task was to bridge the sizeable 27-second gap to the Pro-Am-leading Ultimate and AF Corse machines, and the difference stood at 14 seconds at the next scheduled stop on lap 50.

However, the deficit continued coming down as the laps ticked by and Algarve Pro was within ten seconds of P2 in Pro-Am when a third-hour Safety Car condensed and shuffled the pack.

The Ultimate team made big gains by boxing just moments before the pit lane was closed, but Algarve Pro pulled the trigger and switched Allen for Binder at the first available opportunity, in doing so leapfrogging the #83 AF Corse car for second in Pro-Am and 12th in LMP2.

Binder consistently matched the fastest of the LMP2 Pro contenders for pace and a spin for Ultimate put the Austrian ace within five seconds of the class lead until

Algarve Pro's seventh stop on lap 126, when Allen was re-placed at the controls of the #45 ORECA.

Algarve Pro continued pushing towards Ultimate in the fight for Pro-Am honours and the gap hovered around the one second mark lap-after-lap during the fifth hour.

However, the Portugal-based team led by virtue of Ultimate pitting out of sequence to bolt on fresh tyres during a Full Course Yellow with just over an hour to go.

Both teams still required one final fuel stop to see the chequered flag and the prospect of victory lit a fire under Allen's backside, as he inched away from his challengers on triple-stinted Goodyears to follow Algarve Pro's class win at the 24 Hours of Le Mans with victory in the FIA WEC 6 Hours of Monza.

**James Allen (#45 Algarve Pro Racing ORECA 07 LMP2):** "I'm super happy for everyone at Algarve Pro Racing to get the result in the FIA World Endurance Championship 6 Hours of Monza. Steven (Thomas) had an amazing start to take the Pro-Am lead. The tyre issues he experienced were unfortunate but he did well to manage them. We had a lot of work to do, but everyone was perfect in the pit stops and the strategy was on point. As a result, we were able to get into the lead of the class. We were aggressive on tyre strategy and ended up having to triple-stint the last set, but they thankfully survived and we were able to win the race. I'm so grateful for everybody's hard work and I'm happy to be going to Fuji in the championship lead, too."

**Rene Binder (#45 Algarve Pro Racing ORECA 07 LMP2):** "It was a tough but ultimately successful race for

Algarve Pro Racing and I'm delighted to come away from the FIA World Endurance Championship 6 Hours of Monza with my third win at the 'Temple of Speed', which is one of my all-time favourite circuits. There was so much pace in the car that I was able to trouble the LMP2 Pro crews. I'm a little disappointed that I couldn't get back in the car to finish the race, but it was the right decision with it being such a short fuel-fill in the last stop. There's a bit of a break before the final two rounds of the season at Fuji and Bahrain, but I hope we can continue in this way to the end."

**Steven Thomas (#45 Algarve Pro Racing ORECA 07 LMP2):** "The 24 Hours of Le Mans had all the drama of rebuilding the car from scratch for the race and then going from the back of the grid to the victory, but this one also had its fair share of adversity. I picked up two places at the first chicane and led LMP2 Pro-Am for the first stint but then the tyres started coming apart and it was simply about staying on-track and getting the car to the end so James (Allen) and Rene (Binder) could do their thing. Driving an LMP2 that wouldn't stop or wouldn't turn with tyres that were right down to the cords was perhaps the hardest thing I've ever had to do in a racecar.

"However, we have mechanics nailing each of the stops and engineers who are completely on top of strategy to get us to the front. It seems like there's always drama in racing, which makes it fun and all the more satisfying. The best thing about Algarve Pro Racing is how every single person is working with one purpose – to win – and I'm confident we can carry this form to Fuji, which might be more of a level playing field because my fellow Am drivers may have less experience of the circuit."

**Algarve Pro Racing Team Principal, Stewart Cox,** said: “It’s fantastic to follow the victory in the 24 Hours of Le Mans with another Pro-Am win here at Monza. If I’m completely honest, we made it hard for ourselves because the car was on three-and-a-half-stint tyres at the end of the race. The splash-and-dash we had to make in the final hour just gave us no time to change tyres or switch James (Allen) for Rene (Binder), but there was so much pace in the car that it proved not to be an issue, even though most teams fitted fresh tyres with about an hour to go. All-in-all, we’re in a rich vein of form at the moment and I can see it continuing in the remaining two rounds at Fuji and Bahrain if we improve our strategy calls a little bit.”