



## Sales and Wittmer Win Wild and Unpredictable Sebring Race



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The second round of IMSA's Continental Tire Sportscar Challenge, at Sebring International Raceway, proved to be a dramatic and unpredictable race. This was certainly true of the battle for TCR, especially within the three-car Compass Racing squad which saw each of its Audi RS 3 LMS cars in the lead at various points throughout the two-hour event.

Britt Casey Jr. took pole position in the team's No. 77 TRUMPF Audi and led the field for the first stint, with the team cars of Rodrigo Sales (No. 74 Pfaff Audi) and Roy Block (No. 75 AlphaClone Audi) in second and third respectively. Sales suffered a flat tire in the opening laps, necessitating a quick pit stop for a replacement and a fuel fill. Shortly thereafter a yellow flag was thrown, allowing Sales to cycle through as some cars, including the No. 77, pitted for fuel and tires. When the green flag flew, Block was leading. Sales and Casey Jr. made their way through the field, resulting in an inter-team battle for the lead.

In GS-class, the No. 76 Misahara McLaren of Paul Holton had a strong battle at the front of the resurgent GT4 ranks, stopping for fuel and tires under the caution. With fresh tires, Holton was able to drive through the field to third position.

At about the halfway mark, a second yellow flag was called. The No. 75 car pitted first, which proved to be a brilliant call, as a yellow flag came out on their in-lap, moving them into first place after the stop, with Pierre Kleinubing now at the wheel, Tom Long behind in second and Kuno Wittmer in third. In the McLaren, Matt Plumb took the helm and cycled back to 12th.

Unfortunately, Kleinubing was called for a drive-through penalty, putting Long into the lead with Wittmer in second. With just one lap to go, Long suffered a fuel pick-up issue, allowing Wittmer to take the lead and the win. Kleinubing was fourth and Long fifth.

"I feel terrible for my teammate," said Wittmer. "If it was any other TCR, I wouldn't care, but I feel terrible because they had pace, they qualified on pole and they deserved to be there. Unfortunately, they didn't get the result at the end, but we'll take it. I mean, this is a championship, you fight tooth and nail for it. Rodrigo qualified well, which is amazing because we worked through some issues with the car and had no practice. We just stayed in it. We stayed patient and we kept fighting, fighting, fighting."

Plumb brought the McLaren home in seventh, which was a respectable finish for the car. "We're running a lot heavier now than we were last year, and you can see that in the lap times over the stint," noted Plumb. "But this result moves us up into ninth place in the championship, and if we have good results in the next few rounds we'll be back in the hunt."

"It sure was an exciting race, with never a dull moment," exclaimed Team Principal Karl Thomson. "Whilst we're gutted for Britt and Tom, we're thrilled for Kuno and especially Rodrigo, who's doing a tremendous job in his rookie season. And of course Roy and Pierre would have been right there in the fight without the penalty, so that's frustrating. Bringing home a seventh-place for the McLaren may not seem great, but it's good for championship points and we know this is a long, hard-fought season."

The result move Sales and Wittmer to the top of the TCR standings, with Casey Jr. and Long in second. Block and Kleinubing are fifth.

The next round of IMSA's CTSC is at Mid-Ohio May 3rd to 5th. In the meanwhile, the Sebring race will be broadcast on FOX Sports 1 on Sunday, March 25th at 10:30am.