

Podiums for Audi drivers in Blancpain GT Series Asia Thailand scorchers

- Brace of second places puts Marchy Lee and Shaun Thong second in championship
- Eight podiums across all GT3 classes for Audi in rounds 3 and 4
- Audi R8 LMS Cup leader Picariello stuns on series debut

Buriram, May 21, 2017 – Audi drivers helped themselves to a number of GT3 podiums at rounds 3 and 4 of the Blancpain GT Series Asia this weekend at Thailand’s Chang International Circuit. The Audi Hong Kong pairing of Marchy Lee and Shaun Thong’s second place finishes in each round see the duo second in the championship standings on 61 points, just two points off the top.

Mitch Gilbert and Aditya Patel of OD Racing team are just three points further back, third overall, after they recorded a dramatic third place finish in round 4, bouncing back from an early retirement in Saturday’s round 3.

Audi R8 LMS Cup championship leader, Alessio Picariello, was also one to stand out on his series debut, with the young Belgian and his J-Fly by Absolute Racing partner Jeffrey Lee grabbing two podiums in the Pro/Am class over the weekend. Team Audi R8 LMS Cup’s Alex Yoong and Alex Au fought hard to finish third overall and second in the Pro/Am class in round 3, but then had to retire after contact with another car on the first lap of round 4.

In the amateur class, the Japanese KCMG duo of Naoto Takeda and Takuya Shirasaka won round 3, but were also unable to finish round 4 after a collision, leaving them second in the class championship, just two points off the GT3 Am lead.

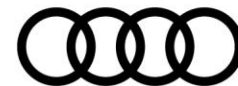
“Congratulations to all of the Audi drivers and particularly to the podium finishers for their truly electrifying performances in Thailand,” commented Bernd Goeres, Director of Audi Sport customer racing Asia. “They showcased the competitiveness and the agility of the Audi R8 LMS GT3 on a fast, technical track, as well as their own determination right to the finish line.”

Round 3

As the mercury soared, round 3 got off to a dramatic start when Gilbert was shunted by a rival on the opening lap, dropping him down the order and forcing him to pit for repairs. Patel later was forced to retire the car, neither driver having had the chance to show the ability that had secured championship lead for the pair coming into the Thailand double-header.

The race was interrupted by a safety car period following a multiple-car incident which Marchy Lee skilfully avoided, gaining positions after the restart to hand his Phoenix Racing Asia-run Audi R8 LMS GT3 over to Thong in third.





Despite the five second success pit stop penalty, courtesy of their third place finish at Sepang, Thong rejoined the field a whisker ahead of Yoong.

Fans were then treated to an epic battle between Thong and Yoong to the flag, with Thong and Lee taking second overall ahead of Au and Yoong. Picariello was classified fourth, third in the Pro/Am class, after an impressive series debut with teammate Jeffrey Lee, while Cup drivers Rick Yoon and Martin Rump took fifth for KCMG by Champion Racing, setting the fastest lap of the race for good measure.

Round 4

Sunday's round 4 saw a faultless start from pole by Picariello, shaking off his rivals and charging off to pull a gap. However, a four-car incident, which ended the races of Yoong and Rump, brought out the safety car and erased the young Belgian's advantage. However, the 23-year-old nailed the restart with a wheel-perfect launch and once again set about pulling a gap.

After the driver changeover, Jeffrey Lee drove well, fighting hard to maintain the advantage against intense competition and maintaining second position right up until the final 10 minutes of the hour-long race, eventually crossing the line fifth overall, enough to secure the third podium step in the Pro/Am class.

Marchy Lee took over from Thong fourth in the running order ahead of Gilbert, who drove the second stint after Patel. Gilbert closed in on the Hong Kong driver but Lee was having none of it, defending well and then setting his sights on Jeffrey Lee up ahead.

With just five minutes on the clock, Marchy Lee dived up the inside of the J-Fly by Absolute Racing driver to go third, picking off the second place Ferrari just moments later. As the furious rival fought back, Gilbert took advantage to plough past and up to third. But the drama was not over yet, with a white-knuckle final lap in which the pair fought every inch of the way. After a gargantuan effort, Marchy Lee showed the form that has made him one of Asia's most successful racing drivers to claim second place.

Rounds 5 and 6 of the inaugural Blancpain GT Series Asia season will be held on June 24-25 at Japan's Suzuka International Racing Course, two weeks after the Audi R8 LMS Cup visits the iconic circuit for the very first time.

For additional details, visit www.audir8lmscup.com

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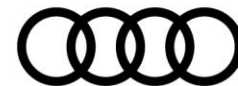
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