

SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS

Belgium
August 27-29
GP2
Round 8/10



AT A GLANCE

- Race 1 **Pastor Maldonado**
- Race 2 **Sergio Perez**
- Pole position **Jerome d'Ambrosio**
- Fastest laps **D Valsecchi/Perez**

Perez (l) and Van der Garde took race-two 1-2 for Barwa



Record-breaker Maldonado on brink of title

Pastor Maldonado's sixth feature-race win of 2010 was hard-earned - for a change - and the Venezuelan ace has one eye on the title

Maldonado broke a GP2 record with his 10th win

QUALIFYING

D'Ambrosio elevated and elated

The crowd at Spa got drenched, windswept and frozen during qualifying, but were briefly rewarded with a home one-two of sorts, as 'former' Belgian Michael Herck (DPR) and proud Belgian Jerome d'Ambrosio (DAMS) locked out the front row.

Heavy rain and crashes led to a long, disjointed session with four stoppages. Herck's remained the quickest effort at the end, but the stewards dropped him three places for speeding under yellows, which gave pole to d'Ambrosio.



Herck believed he'd got top spot

Another weekend, another feature race win for Pastor Maldonado. Yawn? Not this time: some of the Venezuelan's Saturday victories this year have been runaways, but Spa was a tough day at the office. Not only did the championship leader have to work hard to get to the front, but the Rapax racer survived a major scare on the final lap. The start went well for pole man and local favourite Jerome d'Ambrosio, who took the lead unchallenged for DAMS while Maldonado had to fight to keep second from Oliver Turvey (iSport). It went less swimmingly for Racing Engineering's Dani Clos and ART's Sam Bird, who were eliminated in a mid-field accident on the way out of La Source. The

safety car came out to let the marshals do their duty, but not before Sergio Perez (Addax) managed to sweep past the struggling Turvey and claim third on the run up to Les Combes. On lap four racing resumed and the top three headed off into a race of their own. Perez was first to pit on lap eight, with d'Ambrosio and Maldonado responding next time around. Glued together on the way in to pitlane, it would be a DAMS versus Rapax pitstop race. Rapax won it - narrowly. Its release of Maldonado into d'Ambrosio's path was borderline, but it worked. Both drivers emerged clear of Perez, who was then slapped with a penalty for speeding in the pits. Unfortunately for Perez and Addax, this is just the sort

of mistake that has made things easy for Maldonado this season. Most of the field stopped early, but Coloni duo Alvaro Parente and Vladimir Arabadzhiev, as well as Trident's Johnny Cecotto, didn't. Parente, replacing Alberto Valerio in what may or may not be a one-off, was in no hurry to come in. As the laps ticked by and the Portuguese maintained a gaping lead on a clear track, it became clear that the man who won this race last year was going to use every lap available in the pit window. His tyres were in good nick, the car was proving quick in the dry and any fickle Ardennes weather at this stage would probably hand him victory. Rain was indeed threatening, with drizzle hovering menacingly around

RACE RATING

★★★★★

Plenty of feature-race dicing plus tension-inducing rain spots. Needed a last-corner move for the lead

the circuit as the perennially-underfunded 2005 British Formula 3 champion made merry at Les Combes. A reprieve for Maldonado: he was far enough ahead of d'Ambrosio's team-mate Romain Grosjean that all he needed do was wait for Parente to stop and he'd claim another win. With a few laps remaining Maldonado's handling went awry and he began to struggle in the left-handers; the team later found broken rear suspension that the driver was at a loss to explain. Having been in control of the gap to d'Ambrosio, Maldonado suddenly found the Belgian on his tail. With five laps to go d'Ambrosio completed his move at the Bus Stop and took what should have become the lead and a home win every bit as delightful as a healthy portion of *frites et mayonnaise*. But it wasn't to be, for a

lap later d'Ambrosio was banging his steering wheel in frustration as his engine blew at Les Combes. A reprieve for Maldonado: he was far enough ahead of d'Ambrosio's team-mate Romain Grosjean that all he needed do was wait for Parente to stop and he'd claim another win. On lap 23 of 25 Parente ducked in for fresh rears and emerged comfortably in second. In fact, he was close enough to the still-ailing Maldonado to think about reeling him in. He gave it his best shot, galloping up to the Rapax driver's gearbox on the final lap and putting the Bus Stop crowd on the edge of their seats (or damp, mossy rocks) as the pair roared up to the last corner. Parente might have had a go if he was the young and tempestuous sort, but

Dani Clos broke his back in race-one smash



thought better of it. Second would do for him under the circumstances - he'd come through from 16th on the grid in his comeback race, after all. Had the race been even one corner longer, though, the smart money would have been on the Coloni driver to win. Sunday's sprint was less

tactical and peppered with safety cars, but there was plenty of proper racing on display as Perez followed up yet another unhappy Saturday with yet another why-couldn't-you-drive-like-that-yesterday, reversed-grid victory. It took him just a few seconds to get to the front after starting second behind Arden's Rodolfo Gonzalez. He muscled past the Venezuelan on the first run up to Les Combes and held the lead for the rest of the race. The safety car intervened three times but Perez's team-mate Giedo van der Garde made the most of a great start and the few available racing laps to work his way up to second by the

end, closely followed by a similarly-aggressive Parente. That made it two podium finishes for the Coloni driver - a tidy reminder of his abilities. Gonzalez held it together to finish fourth, one place ahead of Turvey, who did his usual trick of dropping backwards at a fine rate of knots in the races. Maldonado had parked it at Les Combes on the first lap after picking up a broken wheel in a first-corner midfield incident, but he was still smiling afterwards. He'll need far more disasters than that to let this championship slip away now. ☹️

THE INSIDE LINE

"It's Herckful," says denied polesitter's father

You'd expect Romanian-born Michael Herck to be incensed after losing his first GP2 pole position to officialdom, but he took it fairly well. But his less-than-

patriotic Belgian father Andre was apoplectic. "We always have these sorts of problems here! Michael had to lose pole so [home driver] d'Ambrosio could have it!

"I am proud for my son to be Romanian. He used to race on a Belgian licence, but did the Belgian federation ever issue a press release about his achievements? No! Not one! We hate Belgium!"

RESULTS

GP2 Series, Spa-Francorchamps (B), August 27-29, round 8 of 10

GRID	POS	NAME	TEAM	TIME	GRID
1	D'AMBROSIO	2:15.942			
2	MALDONADO	2:15.967			
3	TURVEY	2:16.176			
5	GROSJEAN	2:16.525			
7	PEREZ	2:17.005			
9	BIRD	2:17.008			
11	VALSECCI	2:17.254			
13	BIANCHI	2:17.632			
15	FILIPPI	2:17.339*			
17	ZAUGG	2:19.137			
19	LEIMER	2:19.870			
21	CECOTTO	2:18.592*			
23	V.D.GARDE	2:23.104			

RACE 1 - 25 LAPS, 108.802 MILES					
POS	NAME	TEAM	TIME	GRID	
1	Pastor Maldonado (YV)	Rapax	52m27.763s	2	
2	Alvaro Parente (P)	Scuderia Coloni	+0.243s	16	
3	Romain Grosjean (F)	DAMS	+4.766s	5	
4	Charles Pic (F)	Arden International	+13.815s	6	
5	Luca Filippi (I)	Super Nova Racing	+16.085s	15	
6	Oliver Turvey (GB)	iSport International	+21.117s	3	
7	Sergio Perez (MEX)	Barwa Addax Team	+21.713s	7	
8	Rodolfo Gonzalez (YV)	Arden International	+27.375s	12	
9	Giedo van der Garde (NL)	Barwa Addax Team	+30.834s	23	
10	Johnny Cecotto Jr (YV)	Trident Racing	+32.342s	21	
11	Christian Vietoris (D)	Racing Engineering	+32.772s	8	
12	Fabio Leimer (CH)	Ocean Racing Technology	+33.642s	19	
13	Marcus Ericsson (S)	Super Nova Racing	+34.932s	24	
14	Jules Bianchi (F)	ART Grand Prix	+40.297s	13	
15	Adrian Zaugg (ZA)	Trident Racing	+41.390s	17	
16	Luiz Razia (BR)	Rapax	+45.553s	20	
17	Max Chilton (GB)	Ocean Racing Technology	-1 lap	18	
18	Daide Valsecchi (I)	iSport International	-1 lap	11	
19	Vladimir Arabadzhiev (BG)	Scuderia Coloni	22 laps-spun off	22	
R	Jerome d'Ambrosio (B)	DAMS	20 laps-engine	1	
R	Michael Herck (B/RO)	DPR	18 laps-acc damage	4	
R	Fabrizio Crestani (I)	DPR	2 laps-accident	10	
R	Sam Bird (GB)	ART Grand Prix	0 laps-accident	9	
R	Dani Clos (E)	Racing Engineering	0 laps-accident	14	

RACE 2 - 18 LAPS, 78.337 MILES					
POS	DRIVER	TIME/REASON	GRID		
1	Perez	41m51.924s	2		
2	van der Garde	+2.574s	9		
3	Parente	+3.583s	7		
4	Gonzalez	+4.826s	1		
5	Turvey	+7.060s	3		
6	Grosjean	+8.037s	6		
7	Ericsson	+8.740s	13		
8	Valsecchi	+9.472s	18		
9	Zaugg	+10.282s	15		
10	Razia	+10.587s	16		
11	Chilton	+11.630s	17		
12	Bird	+12.171s	23		
13	Herck	+12.553s	21		
14	Crestani	+13.269s	22		
R	Pic	11 laps-accident	5		
R	Arabadzhiev	9 laps-electrical	19		
R	d'Ambrosio	8 laps-electronics	20		
R	Vietoris	6 laps-accident	11		
R	Cecotto	5 laps-accident	10		
R	Bianchi	4 laps-accident	14		
R	Filippi	2 laps-acc damage	4		
R	Leimer	1 lap-accident	12		
R	Maldonado	0 laps-acc damage	8		
NS	Clos	injury			

CHAMPIONSHIP TABLES		
POS	DRIVER	PTS
1	Maldonado	87
2	Perez	60
3	Clos	43
4	van der Garde	39
5	Bianchi	39
6	Turvey	30
7	Pic	28
8	Bird	26
9	Valsecchi	21
10	Razia	20
POS	TEAM	PTS
1	Rapax	107
2	Barwa Addax	99
3	ART Grand Prix	65
4	Racing Engineering	61
5	iSport	51
6	Arden	32

KEY R=Retired. *Grid penalty.
Race 1 Winner's average speed: 124.345mph. Fastest lap: Valsecchi, 1m58.285s, 132.455mph.
Race 2 Winner's average speed: 112.160mph. Fastest lap: Perez, 1m57.014s, 133.894mph.

REPORT GP2 SPA

“Unfortunately, I made a grandmother start”

The self-deprecating Romain Grosjean has a laugh about his poor feature-race getaway

Richard Asher reports