

Group C fever grips Le Mans and it's coming to Silverstone

After an absence of many years, Group C sportscars came back to Le Mans and they did so in style! Providing the spectacle were 30 fantastic Group C machines that took to the grid in glorious sunshine to compete in the historic support race organized by Motor Racing Legends. The 10-lap sprint race makes up one of the four-round Group C Racing series for 2008.

Fittingly, it was the Jaguar XJR V12 driven by Justin Law that took victory, exactly twenty years on from the famous Jaguar v Porsche duel that ended in the win for Jaguar and a marked a shift in the balance of Group C power.

Law rolled back the years and led from lights to flag after securing pole position in qualifying on Thursday. In an impressive display he never looked threatened, although second placed Mark Sumpter in his Porsche 962, only back backed off when it was clear that a win wasn't going to be possible.

An ecstatic Justin said: "It's awesome, I never expected this, I'm over the moon! I could see Mark in my mirrors all the time, so I just kept pushing as hard as I could."

Commenting on a fine second place, Mark added: "Justin had an advantage as he's been here before, but as the race went on I was getting progressively quicker."

It was less controlled behind the pair as an exciting battle unfolded between Fredy Kumschick (Spice SE GTP), Gary Pearson (Jaguar XJR 11) and Oliver Mathai (Porsche 962).

After running in a solid third place, it was Fredy who lost out in the final corners as a fast charging Gary, who started from 15th on the grid. Making a desperate last-lap-lunge, Gary just tagged Fredy, sending him wide and two-places down the order. The chief beneficiary of the coming together was Oliver, who had qualified ninth and enjoyed a superb race-long battle with Gary that was only settled in the final metres when Gary and Fredy touched.

The first four across the line accounted for first and second places in classes 1 & 2 (C1: Justin Law, Jaguar XJR 12 and Mark Sumpter, Porsche 962C. C2: Oliver Mathai, Porsche 962C and Gary Pearson, Jaguar XJR 11).

The Class 3 & 4 winners were Peter Schleifer, March 84G and Christopher Catt, Spice GTP Light.

It is obvious that even after the best part of two decades, Group C cars are engraved on the heart of the motorsport enthusiast, because the Le Mans spectators just couldn't get enough of these iconic racers.

The depth and quality of the Group C field is emphasized by the fact that the series runs examples of Le Mans winning marques such as Porsche, Jaguar, Mazda, Spice and Mercedes, as well as cars from Aston Martin, Nissan, Argo and Tiga.

The Group C experience doesn't stop at Le Mans. Motorsport fans can see and hear these marvelous machines at Silverstone next month as they again take a central role in the Silverstone Classic meeting, which takes place over the 25th, 26th & 27th July.

At Silverstone there are two races, a 30-minute sprint on Saturday and a 90-minute endurance, which includes driver changes and refueling on Sunday.

The endurance race is the David Leslie Memorial Trophy, dedicated to the memory of sportscar legend David Leslie and a fitting way to bring the racing programme at Silverstone to a close.