



Zaugg out on his own in feature race. Inset: Duval won sprint



Robert Wickens, stunning in the wet, passes Ammermuller

THE A-TO-Z OF WINNING

Adrian Zaugg did a consummate job in wet conditions for South Africa at Eastern Creek, but France's Loic Duval reigned in a very tricky sprint race. By RICHARD ASHER

ADRIAN ZAUGG has never been a man to blow his own trumpet. So it's no surprise that he's not too clued up on playing the didgeridoo either. That's a pity. After such a stunning drive at Eastern Creek, he'd have been well within his rights to have a loud blast on the unusual winner's trophy he received last Sunday.

The Team South Africa driver chose a wet Sydney day to prove he can win A1GP races outside Zandvoort, and did so in crushing style. Winning strategy and relentless pace ensured nobody could get close to Zaugg in the feature race. It will go down as one of the most memorable performances in A1GP's short history.

Loic Duval also left the circuit

a happy man. The Team France man knew this would be his last chance for months to register an A1GP race win, and in a tricky wet-dry sprint race he finally broke his duck. He'll miss the rest of this season to focus on his Japanese racing, but he's left his team with a share of the championship lead.

With four rounds to go, the title looks set to go down to the wire. France, New Zealand and Switzerland continued to mix success with disaster in Australia, and their wild points worms converged once again. All anyone needs to do is get a few solid finishes and the championship will be theirs. But with four rounds and just three points covering the lead trio, there's no sign of that happening.

They'd better be careful though, because Zaugg is lying in wait. His home race in Durban is next, and he could yet be the snake in the grass.

SPRINT RACE
Duval had been the form man throughout practice, despite not landing in Australia until the rookie session was under way. Having travelled overnight after tests in Japan, he was instantly on the pace on Friday, and he kept up the form a day later by taking pole for the sprint race ahead of Switzerland's Neel Jani and Zaugg.

Duval easily converted pole into the lead at the rolling start, and set about building up a gap over Jani and Zaugg. As he sped off into the distance in a race that didn't require pitstops, you

got the feeling that this was finally going to be his day. Something big would have to happen to stop him.

The race was getting notably dull when something big did happen. Just after half-distance, with Duval leading by around three seconds, the leaders suddenly slowed for the usually-flat-out turn one. They'd run into a rain shower on the start-finish straight!

Within seconds the race had come alive. Jani was instantly on the defensive: "I couldn't brake, I had understeer and oversteer. I guess our dry set-up might not be so good as the rest when it's half-wet. I was lost!"

Zaugg passed him right away, only to have his own spin just a couple of corners later and drop several places.

Jani was able to hang on to second for another couple of laps before New Zealand's Jonny Reid relieved him of the position. A lap before the end Jani was off, having misjudged his braking for the hairpin behind the pits.

He made it back on track, but would finish 10th.

With a lot of slithering going on, it must have been tempting to pit for wet-weather tyres when the rain arrived, but with only six laps to go it wasn't worth it. Robbie Kerr, who'd run fifth from the start, found that out when Team Great Britain called him in for a gamble that didn't work at all. It was another frustrating turn of events for Kerr, who wound up 16th when he should have scored points.

Franky Cheng, meanwhile, slipped down the order from an early sixth as he survived a wild spin on the inside of turn one. Although he did his bit to entertain the sparse crowd, it was Ireland's Adam Carroll and Canadian Robert Wickens who were really starring.

After a troubled qualifying for both, the rain allowed their abundant natural talents to shine through. Wickens in particular seemed to find the grippy line long before anyone else, and both pulled off some



Jani ahead, as Zaugg moves to block Jimenez in feature start



Robbie Kerr with Australian motorbike legend Mick Doohan

breath-taking overtaking moves as they shot up through the field like the rest were standing still.

Before you could say 'these guys are bloody quick in the wet' they were up to fifth and sixth, behind Michael Ammermuller (Team Germany). The faster Wickens then got alongside Carroll, at which point Carroll's promising run came to an end as he spun off in the heat of the moment.

Wickens didn't stop to sympathise with his sister car, and went and drove around the outside of Ammermuller to take what would ultimately be third place when Jani had his spin. Wickens has now clocked up three podiums since arriving in A1GP four meetings ago – watch this kid.

And Duval? He barely seemed to have noticed the rain. He had the advantage of a healthy cushion and visibility, but still drove a superb race in conditions that encouraged mistakes. It was the kind of breakthrough dreams are made of.

FEATURE RACE
Reid timed his qualifying run to perfection on a track that was – unusually – getting slower as the session went on. That ensured he took the feature pole over late runners Jani, Kerr and Cheng. Duval wasn't so quick this time and was fifth, one place better than Zaugg.

But with Reid and Duval both having pulled out good points on Jani in the sprint race, the championship script said they had to hit trouble in the feature event. And so it proved – both

of them knew they were in strife before they even got to the dummy grid.

Duval had a serious clutch problem: "I felt it on my way around to the grid. I could feel the clutch was soft and I told the team about it. But in the time left there was nothing they could do." Thus Duval could do little to prevent stalling at the start of the warm-up lap. That meant he started the race last. At least from there he could avoid a repeat by simply rolling across the line from the parade lap, straight into racing!

Poleman Reid appeared to have a mechanical problem on his way to the grid too as he stopped out on track and was brought back on a truck. It turned out, though, that he'd simply stalled the car while trying a practice start. "I got pushed to the top of the hill and from there I could have got going again to make the grid, but I wasn't given the opportunity," reported the Kiwi, who had no choice but to start from the pitlane.

All this was great news for Jani, who effectively had pole position. On the grid it looked like it would be a wet-but-drying race, so most leaned towards a dry set-up with rain tyres. When a proper shower came to stay just before the green flag, it ensured the race would be wet all the way – but drivers would have to go with what they'd got. Carroll and Narain Karthikeyan (Team India) still tried slicks – but both changed their minds at the end of the increasingly wet warm-up lap.

Brazilian Sergio Jimenez had the best getaway on the slippery surface and briefly threatened to lead into the first corner, but he found the door firmly slammed by Jani, Kerr and Zaugg. Jani looked like the early favourite as he pulled out a couple of seconds' gap, but only because Zaugg couldn't see enough to get past Kerr. It took until the first round of pitstops for the real pecking order to become apparent.

Jani and Kerr were in as soon as the window opened, while Team South Africa took a potentially risky gamble on leaving Zaugg out. A safety car before his stop could have destroyed his race, but that didn't happen. Rather, he enjoyed the benefit of clear vision and air for four full laps.

Zaugg was so much faster than everyone else in this period that he was always going to emerge from his stop with a clear lead. That's how it turned out, with Jani left to try and hold off a success-hungry Kerr early in the second stint. Robbie looked faster at this point and was all over the Swiss, but then dropped a wheel off the track and never quite recovered.

Zaugg started his middle stint with a lead of almost seven seconds, and it only got bigger as he kept on lapping quicker than anybody else. He was more than 10 seconds clear by the second round of stops, and on a day when the safety car stayed locked away Team SA could take it easy.

The second stops had little effect on the rest of the top four either – for once nobody

THE TWO SIDES OF ADRIAN ZAUGG

TEAM SOUTH AFRICA ENGINEER FINDS IT HARD TO PREDICT HIS CHARGE

WHEN ADRIAN ZAUGG is good, he's sensational. Watch him on one of his good days and you'll be convinced he's got superstar potential.

Sunday at Eastern Creek was one of those days. So was his win in the Bilbao street race when he was in Formula Renault. And his Donington podiums in the middle of a brief 2006 Renault World Series stint. And, of course, his pair of A1GP wins at Zandvoort.

But it's puzzling that these performances don't come around that often. Zaugg's GP2 rookie season last year wasn't one to remember, though much of that was admittedly down to the (now treated) compartment syndrome that weakened his arms.

Even during the course of a race weekend, his successes seem to come out of the blue. It's routine to find him way down the timesheets in practice and apparently struggling, only to see him burst onto the

front row. Then he might fade or err in the race – or absolutely fly. What makes him such an enigma?

"The raw pace is definitely there but I'm not always sure what it takes to unlock it," says his A1GP engineer, Humphrey Corbett. "It's a case of getting the car to suit his style. It's mostly down to me giving him the right set-up, but sometimes also about him learning to adapt his driving when the grip isn't there."

"He likes it quite stiff for a good turn-in. That can shag out the tyres and he can get away with that in qualifying, in which I think he's the best in A1GP. But sometimes he needs to compromise in the races."

Even Corbett can be fooled by Zaugg's practice 'woes': "Often we think we're lost and then, bang, we're on pole. Adrian can usually feel if the car is going to be good on new rubber in qualifying. When he says that, I don't worry!"



Corbett with Zaugg: wonder if they're discussing new rubber?

had any pitlane madness and Jani, Kerr and Jimenez stayed just where they were as the gaps between them grew bigger and bigger. Jani was delighted just to get to the flag and score proper points again, Kerr faded further as he found his third set of tyres not to his liking, and Jimenez enjoyed a lonely run to fourth.

Team Australia's John Martin delivered about the best result the home crowd could have hoped for with a decent drive to a distant fifth place. He was happy with that after a not-very-good qualifying effort meant he started 14th. The British F3 Championship racer nearly threw it away with a lap to go though when, after an unforced error, he briefly lost sight of the race track as he slithered off and down towards the pond outside turn nine. But he scrambled back up the bank just in time to stop Wickens getting past him.

"I COULDN'T BRAKE, I HAD UNDERSTEER AND OVERSTEER. I WAS LOST"
NEEL JANI HAS A NIGHTMARE

Wickens has to get another mention for his outstanding work in the opening laps. Once again he worked out the grip level in no time and, by the end of lap one, he'd gone from 21st (he'd been stripped of his best qualifying lap for baulking Jimenez) to 10th. Once the race pace settled, progress proved much tougher and he really wasn't a match for Martin.

Cheng might have been a top-five candidate, but an early jump-start penalty left him battling on the fringes of the top 10. Duval looked set for a decent recovery as a long first

stint helped him move up to eighth, but it all fell apart when an optimistic move on Team USA's Jonathan Summerton went wrong and they clashed. Summerton was out and Duval earned a drive-through. The Team France man ultimately retired anyway, unable to find first gear after his second stop.

Reid's progress wasn't as impressive as Duval's – he just didn't have a great deal of pace in the conditions. Still, he made it as far as ninth. And, the way this championship is going, those two points may prove decisive. ■

Australia got its best result of '07-08 on home turf, with Martin



Aussie grid Sheilas. No shortage of volunteers to dry them down

RESULTS February 1-3, A1GP, Eastern Creek (AUS), round 6 of 10

SPRINT RACE – 14 LAPS, 34.188 MILES						FEATURE RACE – 42 LAPS, 102.564 MILES						CHAMPIONSHIP TABLE		
Pos	Country	Driver	Result	Qual	Grid	Pos	Country	Driver	Result	Qual	Grid	Pos	Country	Points
1	France	Loic Duval	20m18.536s	1m18.149s	1	1	South Africa	Zaugg	1h12m00.930s	1m18.922s	6	1=	New Zealand	96
2	New Zealand	Jonny Reid	20m27.734s	1m18.368s	4	2	Switzerland	Jani	1h12m20.490s	1m18.590s	2	1=	France	96
3	Canada	Robert Wickens	20m29.552s	1m19.197s	15	3	Great Britain	Kerr	1h12m26.124s	1m18.720s	3	3	Switzerland	93
4	Germany	Michael Ammermuller	20m30.465s	1m18.632s	7	4	Brazil	Jimenez	1h12m43.700s	1m19.235s	9	4	South Africa	79
5	USA	Jonathan Summerton	20m31.140s	1m18.464s	6	5	Australia	Martin	1h13m09.577s	1m19.611s	14	5	Germany	77
6	Australia	John Martin	20m32.746s	1m18.690s	9	6	Canada	Wickens	1h13m11.251s	1m20.775s	21	6	Great Britain	58
7	South Africa	Adrian Zaugg	20m33.059s	1m18.243s	3	7	Germany	Ammermuller	1h13m17.229s	1m19.516s	12	7	Netherlands	55
8	Brazil	Sergio Jimenez	20m48.796s	1m18.811s	11	8	Netherlands	Bleekemolen	1h13m18.085s	1m19.487s	11	8	Ireland	50
9	Netherlands	Jeroen Bleekemolen	20m52.007s	1m18.804s	10	9	New Zealand	Reid	1h13m23.377s	1m18.578s	1	9	Brazil	38
10	Switzerland	Neel Jani	20m52.342s	1m18.218s	2	10	China	Cheng	1h13m34.843s	1m18.825s	4	10	Canada	37

11 India – Narain Karthikeyan, 21m03.278s (Q13-1m19.004s); 12 Portugal – Joao Urbano, 21m04.667s (Q17-1m19.492s); 13 Italy – Edoardo Piscopo, 21m04.732s (Q20-1m19.975s); 14 China – Franky Cheng, 21m07.959s (Q5-1m18.370s); 15 Ireland – Adam Carroll, 21m08.836s (Q12-1m18.929s); 16 Great Britain – Robbie Kerr, 21m15.251s (Q8-1m18.649s); 17 Mexico – David Garza, 21m21.382s (Q19-1m19.785s); 18 Czech Republic – Tomas Enge, 21m21.569s (Q14-1m19.099s); 19 Lebanon – Chris Alajajian, 21m23.565s (Q22-notime); 20 Malaysia – Fairuz Fauzy, 21m39.416s (Q16-1m19.384s); 21 Indonesia – Satrio Hermanto, 21m41.178s (Q21-1m20.154s); R Pakistan – Adam Khan, 1 lap – accident (Q18-1m19.623s).
Winner's average speed 100.973mph. Fastest lap Duval, 1m19.350s (110.790mph).
Key Q=qualifying position; R=retired. Qualifying times for sprint race are best lap from first two qualifying segments; qualifying times for feature race are best lap from last two qualifying segments.

11 India – Karthikeyan, 1h13m36.344s (Q18-1m19.878s); 12 Pakistan – Khan, 1h13m40.426s (Q17-1m19.852s); 13 Ireland – Carroll, 41 laps (Q15-1m19.706s); 14 Italy – Piscopo, 41 laps (Q19-1m20.051s); 15 Czech Republic – Enge, 41 laps (Q8-1m19.232s); 16 Portugal – Urbano, 41 laps (Q16-1m19.733s); 17 Malaysia – Fauzy, 41 laps (Q10-1m19.252s); 18 Mexico – Garza, 41 laps (Q13-1m19.529s); 19 Lebanon – Alajajian, 41 laps (Q22-notime); 20 Indonesia – Hermanto, 39 laps (Q20-1m20.133s); R France – Duval, 31 laps – transmission (Q5-1m18.829s); R USA – Summerton, 20 laps – accident (Q7-1m18.976s).
Winner's average speed 85.439mph. Fastest lap Zaugg, 1m39.034s (88.794mph).
Championship points in each race, 15-12-10-8-6-5-4-3-2-1 for top 10 finishers, plus 1 for fastest lap. All drivers in Lola-Zytek.

NEXT ROUND Durban (ZA), February 24