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Signatech Alpine Elf concludes a brilliant adventure in Bahrain

- The Signatech Alpine Elf team finishes fifth in LMP2 to wrap-up the 2019-2020 FIA World Endurance Championship season.
- Despite a fuel consumption issue, André Negrão, Pierre Ragues and Thomas Laurent used an aggressive strategy to battle for the win just until the final 15 minutes of the race.
- Alpine now shift its focus to 2021, when the carmaker created by Jean R edel e will return to Endurance racing's elite category.



The Signatech Alpine Elf team was hard at work on Monday ahead of its final participation in LMP2. After two and a half days of rebuilding and servicing, the Alpine A470 was ready for practice on Thursday.

Immediately on pace, the Philippe Sinault led team handed the qualifying duties to Pierre Ragues and Thomas Laurent and the Frenchmen did well to qualify fifth overall and third in LMP2.

With the sun at its peak, Andr e Negr o got behind the wheel and as usual put in an excellent start. The Brazilian picked up a position with an outstanding outside move on the n 37 Jackie Chan Racing entry before filling up the mirrors of the category leader.

After his first stop, Andr e Negr o was stuck in the pitlane traffic but he didn't give up despite the lost time and pushed even harder before handing over to Pierre Ragues.

The driver from Normandy was doing a terrific job when the team detected a fuel consumption problem, which reduced the planned number of laps per stint. Far from throwing in the towel, the team adapted its strategy in sending Thomas Laurent out, which allowed the n 36 Alpine to reduce the gap. Pierre Ragues was next in the car before the return of Andr e Negr o for a stint marked by a safety car period.

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The field was tightly bunched at half-distance as the sun fell in the land of a thousand and one nights. Signatech Alpine Elf chose to pit at the restart to try an undercut move. This tactic saw the Brazilian, then Thomas Laurent and Pierre Ragues join the battle for the win as the n°36 Alpine A470 came back on top of the category.

Once in the lead, the crew hoped for another caution to hold on to first place just until the chequered flag. Despite a perfect job from both the mechanics and the drivers, the gamble didn't pay off in the end and the trio had to make a final splash and dash stop with 15 minutes remaining in the race.

Thomas Laurent crossed the finish line in fifth place, assuring the team fifth place in the championship. Despite this frustrating result, Signatech Alpine Elf leaves LMP2 with its head held high with three victories in the 24 Hours of Le Mans as well as seven pole positions, eight wins, 24 podium finishes and two world titles in just five seasons in the FIA WEC.

Signatech Alpine Elf will now spend the winter preparing its future LMP1 entry and will return to competition in the elite category under the name of Alpine Endurance Team at Sebring (United States) from March 13-19, 2021.

Quotes

Philippe Sinault, Team principal Signatech Alpine Elf

"This race encapsulates what has been a frustrating season for us. We would have liked to complete our success story with a podium or a victory in the last race of our LMP2 adventure. This was within our reach because we were competitive straight away in Bahrain. We quickly managed to find the ideal compromise between performance and tyre degradation required by this track and we confirmed it with our good qualifying runs. André made one of his amazing start to allow us to stay in contact with the leaders. Pierre also did a solid job in running with the top endurance drivers while Thomas was incredibly quick and closed the gap to the leaders. Unfortunately, a fuel consumption issue forced us to run less laps per stint than expected. We didn't know how to fix the problem during the race, so we opted for a more aggressive strategy during the safety car period. This allowed us to take the lead, but we were exposed in the absence of another neutralization and we had to make a splash-and-dash with fifteen minutes to go. But we have no regrets because we showed all of our fighting spirit just until the end. This race concludes a complicated year during which we have shown an excellent level of performance despite a clear lack of luck. This also ends a wonderful chapter that we will build on to meet the formidable challenge that awaits us in 2021!"

André Negrão

"Our pace was as good as our rivals, but our fuel system issue made us use more fuel than expected, and obviously more than our rivals. We gave everything we had to put in a good race for this last appearance of Alpine in LMP2. It was a strange season in more ways than one and our fifth place in the championship doesn't really reflect our target nor our potential, but it was a real pleasure to be part of this great team that is Signatech Alpine Elf."

Pierre Ragues

"Given the team's dominance in LMP2 over the last few years, we all wanted to end this chapter on a high. Unfortunately, this finale was symbolic of the season, as we lacked a bit of good fortune to convert our excellent speed and aggressive strategy into a solid result. It came down to a race incident that never happened, but no regrets as we all wanted to finish on a positive. Despite the frustration, we have to remember our good performances in 2020 after a complicated beginning to the season and I would like to thank the whole Signatech Alpine Elf team for all our fantastic adventures together."

Thomas Laurent

"Despite a disappointing result, we ended the year on a good note as our performance level was excellent. We could have done much better than the classification reflects. We were right in the mix and I had a lot of fun behind the wheel as the laptimes showed. Pierre did a superb job as did André throughout the race. The team also excelled in the pits and we were able to run at the sharp end

of the order even if luck was unfortunately not on our side. I want to remember the positive points though and I learned a lot from the team during this long season.”

Classification

8 Hours of Bahrain – LMP2

1. Jackie Chan DC Racing n°37 247 laps
2. JOTA n°38 +1.894s
3. Racing Team Nederland n°29 +16.718s
4. United Autosports n°22 +28.191s
- 5. Signatech Alpine Elf n°36 + 1 minute**
6. Cetilar Racing n°47 + 16 laps

FIA LMP2 Teams Trophy

1. United Autosports n°22 – 190 points
2. JOTA n°38 – 152 points
3. Jackie Chan DC Racing n°37 – 136 points
4. Racing Team Nederland n°29 – 130 points
- 5. Signatech Alpine Elf n°36 – 109 points**
6. Cool Racing n°42 – 103 points
7. Cetilar Racing n°33 – 72 points
8. High Class Racing n°33 – 47 points