

Formula BMW Americas



Race – Round 1, Laguna Seca Raceway, May 17

Date May 17, 2008

BMW Junior and Rookie driver Gianmarco Raimondo (Autotecnica), 17, of St. Catherines, Quebec won the opening round of the 2008 Formula BMW Americas Championship, finishing 2.97 seconds ahead of fellow Junior driver Ricardo Favoretto (Eurointernational), 19, of Sao Paulo, Brazil. Raimondo led only the final five turns of the 17-lap race around the 2.38-mile Laguna Seca Raceway after a race-long battle with the more experienced Favoretto, but that was all he needed to secure the most important win of his young career. Quebecer and Rookie Mikeal Grenier (Apex-HBR Racing Team) finished third for an all BMW Junior top-three.

The race was only decided on the final lap with front row starter Favoretto inheriting the lead on lap 14 after polesitter and race leader Alexander Rossi (Eurointernational) dropped out with mechanical problems. Favoretto led the pair across the finish line on the penultimate lap as a hard charging Raimondo pushed too hard and went wide in turn four. Two turns later Favoretto slid off the track and Raimondo took the lead and the win.

Apex-HBR Racing teammates Maxime Pelletier and Alexandre Ruiz finished fourth and fifth respectively. Seventh place finisher David Ostella (Eurointernational) was credited with the race's fastest lap (1:28.790 minutes) on lap 14.

"I really didn't know what to expect today, but I had a pretty good start and kept up with Rossi and Favoretto early," said a very happy Raimondo. "As the race developed my tires began to come in and I began to get faster. I caught Ricardo (Favoretto), but I knew it would be very hard to get past him. The last lap was very intense and quite a surprise when he went off. Today I learned that passing is much harder than it looks so it takes a really good run or someone has to make a little mistake."

Favoretto said, "I made a mistake on the last lap, but also made a really big save to finish second. GMo (Raimondo) was fast and pressured me all race. Today was still a good start for the championship, but tomorrow I plan to turn it around and have a really good race."

Grenier said, "I started seventh and had a good start to get by Ostella and GMo. He was very fast through the downhill and I pushed too hard and went off. After that I tried to stay consistent. The car was very good today, but I was just a bit tired at the end. For tomorrow I learned that I have to be more patient."

Today's qualifying session was held from 11:15 – 11:40 am this morning. Even though the sun was almost at its highest point the day was a welcome 12 degrees

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cooler than yesterday when an unseasonably hot day made for very high track temperatures. Rossi captured the pole on his 13th lap to set a new qualifying record of 1:287.678 minutes. Eurointernational teammate Favoretto was only .034 seconds behind (1:27.712) and Raimondo qualified third (1:27.898). The top-three were all under the qualifying record set in 2004.

Friday's practice sessions saw Rossi, the only driver with previous experience at Laguna Seca, moved to the top of the time sheets with a lap of 1:29.068 minutes in the days' second session. The top-six in the field were separated by less than one second as the circuit became more familiar to the ten young drivers.

Overall points standings: Raimondo (30), Favoretto (24), Grenier (20), Pelletier (18), Ruiz (16), Goncalvez (14), Ostella (12), Vilarinho (10), Jovanovic (8), Rossi (7) Rookie points standings: Raimondo (30), Grenier (20), Ruiz (16), Ostella (12), Vilarinho (10), Jovanovic (8)

Licensing courses for the 2009 season are scheduled for July 28-29 and August 4-5. They will be held at the Formula BMW Racing Center at the Circuit de la Comunitat Valenciana Ricardo Tormo, in Valencia, Spain. Applications are now available at www.formulabmwamericas.com.

Race Results – Round 1 – 17 laps

1	Gianmarco Raimondo (J, R)	Autotecnica	25:44.451
2	Ricardo Favoretto, (J)	Eurointernational	25:47.421
3	Mikael Grenier (J, R)	Apex-HBR Racing Team	25:52.409
4	Maxime Pelletier	Apex-HBR Racing Team	25:57.689
5	Alexandre Ruiz (J, R)	Apex-HBR Racing Team	26:01.265
6	Jorge Goncalvez	Apex-HBR Racing Team	26:01.661
7	David Ostella (R)	Eurointernational	26:07.386
8	Giancarlo Vilarinho (R)	Eurointernational	26:28.775
9	Veilbor Jovanovic (R)	Jensen Motorsport	- 2 laps
10	Alexander Rossi	Eurointernational	- 3 laps

J = BMW Junior
R = Rookie

Background:

Formula BMW is the world's leading entry-level class in Formula racing. In 2008 the series will be held across Europe, Asia Pacific and the USA. Up-and-coming drivers are given the opportunity of entering motor racing with the high-tech, standard FB02 race car.

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This racing car has been seen on the grid since 2002 and has set standards particularly on the safety technology front. The single-seater is propelled by a 140 bhp BMW engine up to 230km/h and exceeds the FIA safety requirements for its class. BMW Motorsport has developed the FORS Formula Rescue Race Seat especially for Formula BMW. The HANS safety system is also mandatory.

BMW Motorsport Director, Mario Theissen: "Formula BMW offers talented young drivers more than just a car. In the Education and Coaching Program we have designed especially for them, they learn everything they need to know to hold their own in the big wide world of motor racing. Formula BMW has shot out of the blocks to become the top entry-level class for Formula racing worldwide."

Note to editors:

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