

Formula BMW Americas



Date
Subject

March 21, 2009

Gabby Chaves Goes Wire-To-Wire To Win Formula BMW Americas Opener

Gabby Chaves (Eurolinternational) led from start to finish to win the opening round of the 2009 Formula BMW Americas Championship in Puebla, Mexico, but Saturday afternoon's race was nowhere near as easy as the opening sentence makes it sound.

Polesitter Chaves paced all 14 trips around the 2.09-mile Miguel E. Abed road course, but he had to go hard the entire way as his Eurolinternational teammate Giancarlo Vilarinho filled his mirrors on every lap. The two stayed within three carlengths of each other for the whole event, but Chaves was able to hold off his stablemate to score his first win of the year.

"The race was very hard and I had to battle the whole way to get the win," Chaves said. "It was a great way to start the season and I am happy to get a victory for Eurolinternational, but we have more work to do tomorrow."

Vilarinho started second and made life difficult for Chaves as the two Eurolinternational drivers pulled out to a bit of a gap over a hard-charging James Kovacic (Team Apex) who had moved to third after starting sixth. Vilarinho kept the pressure on, but could not get close enough to challenge Chaves and settled for the second spot.

"I kept working really hard, but couldn't quite get there," Vilarinho lamented. "The track was tricky and it was tough to get a run anywhere but we are happy with such a strong start to the championship. I think I learned a couple of things that we can work on at the start of the race and try to get a better result!"

Kovacic made a strong move from the third row on the grid to vault into third place on the second lap of the race as the Australian poured past the inside of Michael Lewis (Eurolinternational) into Turn One. Lewis fought back valiantly in his pursuit of the Team Apex machine, coming agonizingly close on a number of occasions, but Kovacic was equal to the task to earn his first podium finish.

"This is a great result for our team and for me coming to Formula BMW Americas and I am very happy," Kovacic reported. "I really like these cars. They are very challenging and demanding to drive and Michael was really pushing me. I'm tired, but glad we were able to get on the podium."

Lewis held on for fourth while his Eurolinternational teammate Daniel Vela used a strong move in Turn One on the eighth lap to secure the fifth spot. Joao Horto and Martin Sala teamed up to make a late run in the waning laps, securing sixth and seventh places in the final order for Team Apex.

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The second round of the championship will take place tomorrow at Puebla, with Chaves starting from pole again by virtue of his qualifying effort on Saturday morning. Vilarinho will start second while Alex Ellis (Autotecnica) and Freddy Zebede (Jensen Motorsport) will make up the second row.

Round 1 Race Results - Puebla

Pos	Car #	Name	Team	Gap
1	2	Gabby Chaves	EuroInternational	-
2	9	Giancarlo Vilarinho	EuroInternational	1.993
3	20	James Kovacic	Team Apex	12.973
4	42	Michael Lewis	EuroInternational	13.266
5	5	Daniel Vela	EuroInternational	21.768
6	18	Joao Victor Horto	Team Apex	23.057
7	19	Martin Sala	Team Apex	27.130
8	24	Freddy Zebede	Jensen Motorsport	27.231
9	14	Alex Ellis	Autotecnica	48.907
10	6	Wilson Philippe	Euro Junior Team	1:24.258
11	13	Barrett Mertins	Jensen Motorsport	2 Laps
12	50	Gianmarco Raimondo	Autotecnica	10 Laps
13	21	Robert Garcia	Robali Motorsports	13 Laps

Background:

Formula BMW is the world's leading entry-level series in formula racing. In 2009 the three Formula BMW series – Formula BMW Europe, Formula BMW Pacific and Formula BMW Americas – will be held in the key motor sport markets of Europe, pan-Asia and the Americas. Formula BMW will be regularly held on the undercard of Formula One. The series gives young racing talents the chance to enter professional motor sport in a safe racing car – the Formula BMW FB02.

The FB02 has been in use since the 2002 season. It is powered by a 140 hp BMW engine that takes it to a top speed of up to 140 mph. It ranks among the safest vehicles in its category and exceeds the FIA safety regulations that govern this class of car. Innovations such as the FORS (Formula Rescue Seat) were developed by BMW Motorsport specifically for Formula BMW. Following Formula One, Formula BMW was the first single-seater series outside the US in which the HANS system was made mandatory.

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Formula BMW drivers have the opportunity to take part in an Education and Coaching Program that runs parallel with the racing season. The program includes driver coaching at the races by professional race drivers, attending a Formula One test, fitness courses, tuition in driving technique and strategy, as well as seminars on sponsoring and sport management.

Among the 20 drivers expected to compete this season in Formula One, there are now five Formula BMW graduates: Nico Rosberg, Adrian Sutil, Sebastian Vettel, Sébastien Buemi and Timo Glock.

Note to editors:

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Press Contact:

Formula BMW Americas Press Officer: Eric Mauk Tel. +614.529.7000 x104, +614.264.1254 mobile E-Mail: eric.mauk@partner.formulabmw.com

BMW NA Motorsports Press Officer: Bill Cobb, Tel. +1.215.295.3115, +1.215.431.7223 mobile, E-Mail: bill.cobb@partner.formulabmw.com.

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