

Formula BMW Americas



Date
Subject

March 22, 2009

Gabby Chaves Earns Sweep of Opening Formula BMW Americas Weekend

Gabby Chaves (Eurolinternational) had about as good a weekend as a race car driver can hope for as the 2009 Formula BMW Americas Championships opened this weekend in Puebla, Mexico. Chaves won poles for both events and never trailed in either race, again going wire-to-wire to win Sunday's Round 2 at the 2.09-mile Miguel E. Abed road course.

Starting from pole, Chaves made a strong launch from the standing start to hold off his Eurolinternational teammate Giancarlo Vilarinho heading into the first turn, then inherited a large cushion when Vilarinho suffered a mechanical problem at the halfway point. Gianmarco Raimondo (Autotecnica) earned a solid second place, but could not challenge the Colombian-American Chaves, who won by 4.898 seconds.

"This was a great way to start the season for me and my team," Chaves said. "I was able to get a good start and when Giancarlo had his problem I ended up with some more room to breathe. Now I get to celebrate, then get back to my physical training and get ready for Virginia and our next race."

Raimondo came from fifth on the grid to score his first podium of the season, getting past his teammate Alex Ellis and Jensen Motorsport's Freddy Zebede in the first two laps to slip into third. He climbed to second on Lap Seven when Vilarinho retired and built a solid advantage over the battle for third place, that was eventually claimed by his Autotecnica stablemate Ellis.

"This was a better run for us today and one that we needed to get back into the swing of things," Raimondo reported. "The car was good and we had a good race, but I just couldn't get close enough to Gabby at the end."

Ellis made a strong late-race run to score his first Formula BMW Americas podium finish, slipping past James Kovacic (Team Apex) in Turn 14 on the last lap of the race to score third. Kovacic was promoted to third on Lap Seven, and held Ellis at bay for the next seven orbits of the Puebla road circuit, and seemingly had the spot clinched when Ellis fell off the pace with three laps to go. But the Canadian stormed back to close the gap and sealed the deal on the last lap, running the fastest lap of the race to do it.

"I had made a mistake and dropped back, but as I was coming back I noticed that he (James) was leaving the door open a little in Turn 14," Ellis recalled. "So on the last lap I knew I had to go for it and I got it. This was a lot more competitive than I expected and I am happy with a podium finish."

Kovacic held on for fourth and is second in the point standings after two races, while Daniel Vela finished fifth for the second straight race.

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The series will be back in action on the final weekend of April as the Formula BMW Americas Championship heads to Virginia International Raceway April 24-26.

Round 2 Race Results - Puebla

Pos	Car #	Name	Team	Gap
1	2	Gabby Chaves	EuroInternational	-
2	50	Gianmarco Raimondo	Autotecnica	4.898
3	14	Alex Ellis	Autotecnica	10.629
4	20	James Kovacic	Team Apex	12.378
5	5	Daniel Vela	EuroInternational	16.510
6	24	Freddy Zebede	Jensen Motorsport	32.046
7	18	Joao Victor Horto	Team Apex	32.794
8	42	Michael Lewis	EuroInternational	50.214
9	6	Wilson Philippe	Euro Junior Team	57.677
10	21	Robert Garcia	Robali Motorsports	1:19.912
11	9	Giancarlo Vilarinho	EuroInternational	8 Laps
12	19	Martin Sala	Team Apex	8 Laps
13	13	Barrett Mertins	Jensen Motorsport	Excluded

#13 Car excluded for weight violation

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Championship Standing after 2 of 14 Rounds

Pos	Car #	Name	Team	Points
1	2	Gabby Chaves	EuroInternational	42
2	50	James Kovacic	Team Apex	22
3	14	Daniel Vela	EuroInternational	16
4	20	Giancarlo Vilarinho	EuroInternational	15
5	5	Gianmarco Raimondo	Autotecnica	15
6	24	Alex Ellis	Autotecnica	14
7	18	Michael Lewis	EuroInternational	13
8	42	Joao Victor Horto	Team Apex	10
9	6	Freddy Zebede	Jensen Motorsport	9
10	13	Martin Sala	Team Apex	4
11	21	Wilson Philippe	Euro Junior Team	3
12	9	Robert Garcia	Robali Motorsports	0
13	19	Barrett Mertins	Jensen Motorsport	0

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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.

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, Sebastián Buemi and Timo Glock.

Note to editors:

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