



GT4 European Series - Paul Ricard (France) - Matmut Évolution starts its victory counter!

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#News

With an impressive grid of 49 cars, the first round of the GT4 European Series, which took place at the Paul Ricard Circuit, kept all its promises. It was a ruthless fight in all three categories in this high-level championship, where about a hundred drivers of 20 different nationalities didn't do each other any favours. For Matmut Évolution, this was an encouraging start to the season, which heralds a series of hotly contested meetings. Among the 24 Silver crews entered, Etienne Cheli and Enzo Joulié (#9) did not miss a beat, by claiming a victory (Race 1) and a second place (Race 2) at the wheel of their #9 Toyota GR Supra GT4 Evo. In the Pro-AM category, the 100% female crew, Gabriela Jilková and Cindy Gudet (#66), did not miss out on the occasion to stand out by climbing onto the third step of the podium in the category for their first race together. The crew of the #9 has taken the lead of the Silver Driver classification, and Matmut Évolution that of the Team's classification. The next round will take the competitors to Italy, to the atypical track of Misano (17-19 May).



Jérôme Policand's team took their bearings as of the private test sessions, with Enzo Joulié and Gabriela Jilkova respectively setting the best lap in each session.

This trend did not change in the free practice sessions. Etienne Cheli and Enzo Joulié, reigning France GT champions, set the best time overall, while Gabriela Jilkova and Cindy Gudet were the fastest in Pro-Am.

The Pre-qualifying session went a little less well as they were testing out new setups. The #9 was seventh (P6 Silver), while the #66 made it into the Top 5 of the Pro-Am (P20 overall).

As is often the case, the two qualifying sessions are delicate exercises where everything can quickly change and the thousandths lost are transformed into drops on the grid.

After having made a few quick laps, flirting with the limits of the track, Enzo Joulié (#9) attacked and managed to take a 0.3s lead on his closest rival. Pole for Race 1 was won. In the second session, Etienne Cheli took the fourth time overall and Silver.

For the only 100% female crew of the field, Gabriela Jilkova (#66) placed P4 Pro-AM (P16 overall) in Q1, while Cindy Gudet installed herself in the same Pro-AM position in Q2 (P25 overall).



Race 1 - Enzo Joulié and Etienne Cheli (#9) take an impeccable win!

With 49 cars at the start and a temperature of 21°C, this first race of the season promised to be an exciting and hard-fought affair. At this track where the top speed can be reached on the 1.8km of the Mistral straight, and where tyres are under particular strain, managing the race and track limits are key elements.

Having taken an excellent start from pole position, Enzo Joulié kept the advantage in the lead, while Gabriela Jilkova (P16 and P4 Pro-AM) managed to avoid the mess at the Verrerie S, which required the arrival of the safety car.

While the leader set a good pace, Quick Gaby was performing particularly strongly and retook four places in a few minutes. Holding this offensive level, the Czech driver kept up her momentum, P11, until the driver change.

Before the relay, the #9 had a lead of more than 2 seconds. The pit stop was perfectly executed, which allowed Etienne Cheli to rejoin the track with an advantage of 3.9 seconds. Cindy Gudet, now running in the #66, was P10 and on the 3rd step of the virtual Pro-AM podium. This second relay was not for relaxing, for either of the two Matmut Évolution drivers.

Their efforts were rewarded as they crossed the chequered flag. Etienne Cheli crossed the line with a 6.8 second lead on his pursuers, and the strategy of running ahead paid off. Fighting until the end, Cindy Gudet held onto her 3rd place in Pro-AM (P14 overall) and gave the team their first podium of the season in the category.



Race 2 - Another podium for the Silver crew!

The following day by the end of the morning, they headed back to the track under an overcast sky. Paul Cheli (#9) was at the start on the second row (P4 Silver), while Cindy Gudet (#66) was sitting on the 13th row (P4 Pro-Am).

Very quickly, Cheli attacked and claimed 3rd place after 7 minutes of racing. A few moments later, he received a track limits warning, and fell back to P4. Cindy Gudet defended her wins by holding onto her 4th place in Pro-AM and did not relinquish an inch of track.

At the halfway mark, the driver change relaunched the fight.

Once more, the pitstop was perfect, allowing Enzo Joulié to read out P2. Setting off at a very fast pace, he set a string of fast laps, all the while Gabriela Jilkova headed off determinedly. Coming up on the leader, Joulié set the best lap time in the race. Managing the tyres was paramount, the objective was to hold onto and conserve the most points. The end of the race was electric, but the #9 managed to resist the assaults from the #78. Gabriela Jilkova, still P4 in Pro-AM class, was pushed at the chicane and has to concede three positions in the category, losing sight of another podium.



Etienne Cheli and Enzo Joulié, who will celebrate his 20th birthday at Misano, winners of the first race, finished second at the end of an intelligent race. The French took the Silver lead with 44 points (out of 52).

In their #66 Pro-AM Toyota GR Supra GT4 Evo, Quick Gaby and Cindy Gudet did not make any errors during this tricky race where many contacts and difficult to manage tyres disrupted the proceedings (P6 Pro-AM).

The next step for Matmut Évolution: the Misano circuit in Italy, from the 17th to the 19th of May!

