

27 January 2012

Total UAE Touring Car Championship Report Papantonis, Zuhour and Khan winners at Yas Marina Circuit

Yas Marina Circuit, on Friday 27 January, hosted the DAMC organized Round 5 of both the Total UAE Touring Car Championship and the NGK UAE GT Championship, with some thrilling racing on the Northern Circuit configuration of the splendid Grand Prix venue.

In Race 1 of the Total UAE Touring Car Championship it was the usual suspects tussling at the front for top honours in Class 1, with Costas Papantonis finding good pace to score the first win of the day in the Gulf Petrochem backed SEAT Leon Supercopa. He managed to edge ahead of his closest rivals Ramzi Moutran (Memac Ogilvy Duel Racing SEAT) and Nader Zuhour in another SEAT.

Zuhour and Moutran battled it out nose to tail until the penultimate lap when, championship points leader, Zuhour spun while chasing Moutran. The latter claiming second place and Zuhour recovering to finish third.

Papantonis said afterwards, "It was an excellent race. I managed to get a good start and with the car going really well and I was able to take the win. I am very happy."

In the second race Zuhour bounced back in fine style to take the win from Papantonis, with Moutran third. Zuhour said, "It is good to win especially after the first race. For me the second race was pretty good, although I did make a couple of mistakes early on. But I managed to hold out to the finish and win. A good result for me here."

In the Class 2 battle reigning champion Umair Khan (Lap 57 Honda) was in top form and did the business to claim maximum points in both races. The absence of Aslam Moola (Emirates Racing Team Honda) made life easier for Khan, but dealt a major blow to Moola's title aspirations.

Khan reflected on his day on Yas island, "Not having Aslam [Moola] here definitely made life easier. I have to say that these were two pretty easy victories. The guys got caught up in their battle for second and I managed to edge ahead. This is a good start to the second half of my season."

Nabil Moutran scored the best result for a Renault Clio to date in the championship when he powered to second place in the Memac Ogilvy Duel Racing backed car and repeated the feat again in the second race.

Drive of the first race would have to go to Rupesh Channake (Lap57 Honda) who started from the back of the field and after an inspired drive crossing the to take third place in Class 1. He was third again in race two.

Moutran's two second places, in Class 1, also earned him maximum points in the Clio Cup 'race within a race', ending Alexandros Annivas winning streak in the Gulf Petrochem sponsored entry. In race one, Annivas was second, ahead of Willie Morrison who scored his first podium in the UAE. In race two the Moutran brothers, Nabil and Sami, were first and second respectively with Annivas third.

Bahar Mardini beat Maurice Faber in a close run Suzuki Swift Cup race.

The NGK UAE GT Championship, due to dwindling fields, was incorporated into the touring cars grid due and the AYH Motorsport run Ferrari 458 Italia shared by Rob Barff and Leon Price took top honours from Rafael Unzurrunzaga (Blue Jumeirah Team Mosler in the GTA Class. John Iossifidis and Yusif Basel shared the Gulf Racing Aston Martin to win the GTC Class.