

VHC Endurance French Championship and Challenge The V de V Nogaro 4 Hours

"Energy restored"

The V de V series visited Nogaro on 23-24 September, with a four-hour "VHC" race and a two-hour race-within-a-race for those who didn't want to stay on the track that long. With 23 cars lining up for the start, the grid was fuller than it has been at recent events, and included four Corvettes, one of which was in the two-hour race driven by Stéphanie Sabates partnered with veteran racer Eric Héjary. Laurent Dutoya started on pole in his Elva MK8 with every intention of holding on to his advantage.



Dutoya takes his Elva to Victory
Photos: Hugues Lerché



Four Corvettes took part



Jean-Claude Barthe's, Bernard Salam

The race got underway in a light rain that saw most competitors opting for wet tyres, except Serge Krikhoff in a 3.0 RSR Porsche. Krikhoff has been engaged in a season long scrap with the Allemang family Ford Falcon, which only managed sixth in qualifying.

The Elvas were not comfortable on the wet track and to make matters worse, Laurent Dutoya, following an error by the safety car, jumped the start, earning a drive through. This allowed both Bernard Moreau's Polybaie Porsche and Héjary's Corvette to take control. Unfortunately, Moreau encountered clutch problems that left him stranded in his garage for several laps. Héjary set off into the distance and pulled out a lead of 53 seconds on Denis Allemang in the Falcon after an hour. A third American machine made up this provisional podium in the shape of the Ford GT40 driven by Jean-Marc Bachelier, sadly destined to retire after two and a half hours.

Meanwhile, the Dutoya's made up for lost ground and, ten minutes after the mid-way point, retook the lead, now with Pierre Dutoya at the wheel. The first two hours were won by Serge Krikhoff, who did well to hold off the thirsty second-placed Falcon, while Sabates and Héjary held on to third place.

During this time, the second Meca Moteur's MK 8, driven by Yann Le Calvez and Philippe Tissandier moved into second place in the ongoing race, pursued by the nimble and steady Alpine M63B of Gérard Besson, Marc Peccolo and Francis Dougnac, while the third Elva in the team, driven by Sylvain Guanzini and Marc Alloënd-Bessand hit a few problems that left them two laps down.

Bernard Salam and Jean-Claude Barthe (Porsche 3.0RSR)

ran steadily throughout. Their reward was fourth place at the end, and first in Group 3 ahead of the two local Porsches, of Eric Belousoff/Alain Rueda and the Caszalot family, who finished despite a few problems with a jammed throttle.

The battle of the 2-litre Porsches - back after a long absence - was dominated for a long time by Damien Kohler and Jean-Jacques Renault, but problems with the fan belt sent them into retirement a little after two hours of running. This left the field open for Sébastien Moraes and Lionel Delandès in number 24 and past Champion Séverine Moreau, with Carol Quiniou, in number 25, to go head to head, seeming almost to dance with each other. 25 took the honours in this graceful contest.

The end of the race was heart-stopping, with Miguel Langin aboard Moreau's Porsche, which had been going flat out throughout the race, making it onto a podium that had seemed promised to the three Elvas until eight minutes from the flag. Marc Alloënd-Bessand pitted, drenched with sweat and exhausted, but his crew told him to hang on for just another quarter of an hour. Sadly, he ended up going off after a mistake. Thus the Dutoya brothers won the race at a canter in their second V de V victory in only two outings with the series, ahead of Le Calvez and Tissandier.

The Moreau/Langin Porsche took first in Group 4 in front of the Miroux brothers' Datsun, joined in mid-race by Philippe Trivier, after his Datsun retired right at the start. The Still Racing Corvette, driven by Fredy Stebel, Jean-Claude Andruet and Alberto Francioni completed the Class podium.

The Besson Alpine also profited from Alloënd-Bessand's exhaustion and ended up third in the Sport Prototype Class.

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