

CLASSIC DRIVER

Round One of the 2007 FIA GT Championship

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The 2007 FIA GT Championship got under way last weekend in China. The new 2-hour format proved a success, however the much-fancied entries from Maserati and Aston Martin were beaten by the German All-Inkl.com Racing Murciélago, gaining the car its first FIA GT win. The top seven cars were all on the same lap at the finish, covered by just 15 seconds

With the Championship now in its tenth year, the Zhuhai round was the first in a new era of two-hour races, with two obligatory pit stops including driver change. The result of the changes was that the slightest slip would be punished, and that only the fastest cars with the least problems would win the race. As ever, GT2 cars would run in the same race as GT1, with separate European GT3 races to feature later in the season.

One of the features of the opening round was the appearance of several new **Corvettes**, notably the Carsport Holland C6 of 2006 runner-up Jean-Denis Deletraz/Mike Hezemans. Fastest in practice was the **Maserati MC12** of Thomas Biagi, just 5 thousandths of a second ahead of Hezemans. The fastest **Aston Martin DBR9** was 6th, the Nr 23 Aston Martin Racing BMS car of Fabio Babini.





No less than five **Maserati MC12s** started the race, however polesitters Bartels/Biagi were seriously hampered by the entry of the safety car near the end of the race and the Playteam Sarafree MC12's race ended prematurely when a miscalculation on refuelling interrupted Alessandro Pier Guidi and Andrea Bertolini (2007 champion) when in a good position.



The safety car came onto the track on lap 46 to allow the repair of a raised kerb that had caused the retirement of one competitor, and this spoilt the MC12's plan, allowing the **Corvettes** and the **Lamborghini Murciélago** ahead. At the re-start, the vastly experienced Bouchut kept the lead ahead of Philipp Peter, sharing the Nr 19 **PSI Experience Corvette C6** with FIA GT newcomer Luke Hines, and previous years' front runner, the **PK Carsport Corvette C5** of Bert Longin and Anthony Kumpen.



First across the line in GT2 was the **BMS Scuderia Italia Porsche 997 GT3 RSR**, however, the car was later excluded due to its ground clearance being too low; a result, claim the team, of the damaged track breaking the car's front splitter. Its exclusion meant that **AF Corse Motorola Ferrari F430 GT2** cars took first and second, Dirk Müller and Toni Vilander enjoying their first victory. Stéphane Ortelli and Gianmaria Bruni, whose car had been delayed due to a puncture, were second, with **Scuderia Ecosse's** Mullen and Enge driving a similar car third.

Overall Results -

- 1 Bouchut/Mucke Lamborghini Murcielago
- 2 Peter/Hines Corvette C6R
- 3 Kumpen/Longin Corvette C5R
- 4 Babini/Davies Aston Martin DBR9
- 5 Hezemans/Deletraz Corvette C6R
- 6 Thomas BIAGI Maserati MC12 GT1

2007 FIA GT Calendar -

- 06/05 Great Britain - Silverstone
- 20/05 Romania - Bucharest
- 24/06 Italy - Monza
- 08/07 Germany - Oschersleben
- 29/07 Belgium - Spa-Francorchamps
- 08/09 Italy - Adria
- 23/09 Czech - Republic Brno
- 30/09 France - Nogaro
- 21/10 Belgium - Zolder

Editor's Note: *The next round is at Silverstone in May, where teams will be battling for the prestigious **Royal Automobile Club Tourist Trophy**. There will be a reprise of the last year's [Supercar Tour](#) - that we hope to be participating in - so watch this space for details on how to join in. As we said last time, it's a tremendous start to a thoroughly enjoyable weekend.*

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