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JDC-Miller MotorSports earns 2nd podium with Simpson and teammate Goikhberg in Phenomenal Fuel Saving Effort at Road America

The No. 99 Red Dragon™ scored another dramatic finish yesterday at Road America with Stephen Simpson taking the checkered flag in second position. Misha Goikhberg started the two hour and forty minute race from the ninth position. The Road America track is over four miles long, so the pit stops were scheduled for every 19 laps depending on yellow flags. The first yellow flag caution period fell right at the first pit window and the JDC-Miller MotorSports team brought Misha into the pits for service. This caution also provided the perfect opportunity to complete the driver change. Stephen Simpson took over the reins and returned to the track in 10th position, just behind Team Penske driver Juan Pablo Montoya. Simpson battled the slower Montoya for the pass; however, Montoya continually (and illegally) blocked Simpson's attempts. Finally, Simpson got by Montoya and then began to hunt down Ryan Dalziel in the Patrón Nissan NISMO. Gaining track position, Simpson passed Dalziel for 8th position. He then set his sights on Dalziel's teammate, Pipo Derani in the #22 Patrón NISMO.

Derani's pace was quick and GTLM and GTD traffic cost Simpson track position in his quest for Derani. It wouldn't matter, as the yellow flag flew again for the off-course excursion by the No. 52 AFS prototype. The team had a quick decision to make that would potentially determine their race finish...do they take advantage of this yellow flag for fuel? Would they be able to make it to the end with just one more stop or was it too soon? They decided to put the call into Simpson's hands, explaining their situation and that of their competitors. Simpson made the call to stop; he also requested fresh tires. The team completed the service and the Red Dragon returned to the racetrack in 10th position. They were now out of fuel sequence from the leaders and if there were enough cautions, they would be able to finish the race with potentially a very good result. The team knew they would need extended caution periods to get to the end...or the other option would be a huge fuel saving challenge for Simpson.

They went with the latter, requesting the impossible from Simpson...to race hard and save his track position, but to also save as much fuel as possible...it would be crucial for the end of the race. There were 40 minutes remaining and Simpson had enough fuel to make it 37 minutes. He needed another seven miles worth of fuel to get to the end. As the race leaders eventually pulled into pit lane for fuel, Simpson masterfully maximized his fuel mileage. Lap after lap he was gaining positions and saving fuel. The crew encouraged his efforts with rewarding news telling him how much fuel he had saved, and encouraging him to continue the progress. With approximately 8 laps to go, he had jumped to fourth position and needed to make up less than half a lap of fuel. While the situation was looking good, it was a nail biter until the end. The No. 31 car behind him had made a late race stop for fuel and was catching Simpson...quickly. With less than five laps to go, two more cars pulled into the pits for a splash of fuel and Simpson catapulted to second position!

Simpson had done the impossible—he had saved enough fuel to finish, the crew unleashed him with a lap to go and told him he could chase down the race leader, Colin Braun, for the victory. Stephen pushed hard but there was not enough time; he would have to settle for a very impressive second place finish. The winning CORE Autosport car and the Red Dragon took the checkered flag and made their final gasps just a few turns later as they both ran out of fuel before returning to the podium. Track officials quickly towed the Red Dragon and Stephen Simpson back to victory circle where he was given a celebratory greeting by his teammate and GAINSCO's Circle of Champions. It was an incredible effort and an amazing finish by the JDC-Miller MotorSports team.

Additional notes:

JDC-Miller MotorSports earned their first IMSA WeatherTech pole position this weekend with the new track record in the No. 85.

JDC-Miller MotorSports driver Simon Trummer set a new track record (with a damaged car – rear suspension) with fastest race lap.

JDC-Miller MotorSports driver Stephen Simpson finished third in the Continental Tire Sports Car Challenge race on Saturday and second in the WeatherTech Championship Sunday.

Stephen Simpson: “I feel great! I was hoping for enough time and fuel to get The Red Dragon in victory lane again, but I’ll take the podium. It was a heck of a race. It was really a race within a race there. I knew that decision to come in on that final yellow...we were going to be tight, but we just didn’t know how tight. And as it played out we were nearly two laps short with 40 minutes to go. The team did a great job keeping me updated on my fuel saving, and I did everything I could to get us there and it worked. With just a lap to go they told me I was free to go for it. At that point the 31 was on my tail less than three seconds behind me. I thought I could make a run at Colin (Braun) for the win, but we ran out of time and then out of fuel there at turn five after the checker. I’m proud of my guys on the stand, and I’m proud of my guys in the pits. Everyone executed very well today.”

Misha Goikhberg: “Stephen did a phenomenal job today. Wow—what a finish! We were on pins and needles, and we all know he is a master at fuel saving, but we asked an awful lot of him. Great day for the team, for GAINSCO Auto Insurance and for the points battle. Hearing the GAINSCO chant from their Circle of Champions at the podium was very special.”