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PERFECT TAN DOMINATES OVAL THRILLER AT LUCAS OIL RACEWAY

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May 23, 2015 | Series News



Neil Alberico fought his way from sixth on the opening lap to third for Cape Motorsports with Wayne Taylor Racing. With the result the Californian thereby closed to within eight points of championship leader Santi Urrutia (Team Pelfrey), whose day ended early after clipping the Turn Three wall. The equally hard-fought Team Championship also is finally poised after nine of 16 races, with a pair of top-four finishes enough to propel locally based Juncos Racing into a seven-point lead over Cape Motorsports.

Tan, who qualified on the pole for the fifth time this season, took off into the lead at the start like a scalded cat. Teammate Dalton Kellett tucked into second place, only for his car to snap sideways between Turns Three and Four on the opening lap. The Canadian did well to maintain control, but not before losing several positions.

Owen took advantage of Kellett's slide to sneak past Florian Latorre (Cape Motorsports) for second, while fellow Canadian Daniel Burkett squeezed ahead of Cape teammate Alberico in fourth. Garrett Grist (Juncos Racing) ran sixth ahead of the unfortunate Kellett, who was later involved in an incident with Timothe Buret (Juncos Racing) in Turn Three on Lap 28. Raoul Owens (Team Pelfrey) also was caught up in the skirmish.

Tan's commanding five-second lead was erased by the ensuing full-course caution, although the 20-year-old Malaysian quickly reestablished his advantage over Owen at the restart.

Instead, all eyes were on the battle for third between Latorre and Alberico, who had earlier found a way past Burkett. The pair battled side-by-side for lap upon lap before Alberico finally made the pass stick on Lap 63, earning himself the RePlay XD Move of the Race Award. Alberico soon pulled clear, leaving his teammate to come into the clutches of Grist, Victor Franzoni (M1 Racing) and Jose Gutierrez (Juncos Racing).

As Latorre and Franzoni faded in the late stages, teammates Grist and Gutierrez became embroiled in a tense battle for fourth. In the meantime, race leader Tan was looming closer in their mirrors, and the second-placed car of Owen began to inch closer to the leader.

A thrilling final few laps ended with Grist, who had won the corresponding event last year, just holding onto fourth ahead of Gutierrez, who earned the Quartermaster Hard Charger Award for advancing six positions over his grid placing. Owen, meanwhile, closed right up onto Tan's tail but was unable to make a challenge for the lead and had to settle for second - for the second race in a row.

Other contingencies included the PFC Award to the winning team, Andretti Autosport, and the Staubli Award to Franzoni, who finished sixth.

The Pro Mazda Championship Presented by Cooper Tires will continue with a double-header event on the streets of Toronto, Ont., Canada on June 12-14.

Weiron Tan (#22 Andretti Autosport): "That was a really incredible race. We made a good start and pushed on from there with very consistent times. We pulled quite a big gap before the caution came out. Once it went green, it was just a matter of being consistent, to not force myself to make any mistakes, to make clean passes on traffic and finish the race. I was really hoping for the race to finish! The Andretti team gave me a really good race car; we've been fast since we got here. This will help me in the championship, since every bit helps, and now we look forward to Toronto! We need to score some really good points and hope the championship comes to us."

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Pro Mazda On Facebook

A screenshot of a Facebook post from the 'Pro Mazda Championship' page. The post features a photo of three men standing in front of a large, ornate silver trophy. The man on the left is wearing a black polo shirt, the man in the middle is wearing a black polo shirt with a name tag, and the man on the right is wearing a white polo shirt with a name tag. The trophy is a large, multi-tiered silver cup with a checkered flag on top. The background shows a crowd of people and a race track. The post text reads: 'Nice photo of our Mazda Road to Indy FreedomFest race winners before the 500 - Jake Eidson (USF2000), Jack Harvey (Indy Lights) and Weiron Tan (Pro Mazda)!'. Below the text is a link that says 'Voir la traduction'. The post has 2,807 likes and is from May 26 at 15:45. The Facebook logo is visible in the bottom left corner.

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