



Ferrari of Ontario

SPONSORED BY



FERRARI OF ONTARIO & RISI COMPETIZIONE ACHIEVE TOP FIVE ENDURANCE SUCCESS ON DEBUT OF F458 ITALIA GRAND-AM AT DAYTONA!

Daytona, Florida, January 29, 2012. Ferrari returned to Daytona International Speedway this weekend with significant style and commitment for the Rolex 24 at Daytona's 50th anniversary running of the twice-round-the-clock race.

It brought from Italy its new Ferrari 458 Italia Grand-Am specification GT3 challenger and, in the hands of Toni Vilander, Andrea Bertolini and Olivier Beretta, the No. 63 Risi Competizione with Ferrari of Ontario and American Canadian Racing entry took on the might of the historic Porsche brand and achieved a very satisfying fifth place finish in the GT class.

With 45 competitors in the production-led category, and a total grid of 59 cars, the race promised much and delivered tenfold. There was tight racing and flag-to-flag competition throughout, and the No. 63 challenged for a podium finish in the final hours of the race. The winning Magnus Racing Porsche ultimately displayed a greater top speed and a more developed fuel economy than the new Ferrari, however, and the marque, its drivers and the whole Risi Competizione with American Canadian Racing partnership was pleased with the end result.

"It's an honor to come and race here," said Team Principal Giuseppe Risi at the end of the race. "It's an honor to be part of the 24 Hours at Daytona which is a name that's so synonymous with motor racing around the world. It's a great venue, the track plays a great part in Ferrari's history and I'm very happy to be involved with Ferrari and the track today."

"We brought two cars here to race which had relatively little development for this very specific test – the banking alone is unlikely to match anything else the car will face in its racing life. We had a superb line-up of the best drivers available and they all did a fantastic job representing Ferrari and its North American dealer network. It's obviously extremely disappointing that the No. 62 suffered the engine problem in the first part of the race, and that we weren't able to bring both cars home to the finish."

Despite there being 14 full course caution periods which interrupted the race's green-flag running, the No. 63 ran free of any mechanical issues, and was only slightly delayed in the pits at the very beginning of the event due to a malfunctioning fueling hose. Inconvenienced rather than troubled by the way the early yellows fell, the Risi Competizione with American Canadian Racing team was delighted to get a 'free pass' just before midday today (Sunday) which enabled the car and its driving team to truly challenge its nearest rivals more equally. All three drivers rose to the challenge and drove superbly, maintaining a steady and quick-lapping pace which even put them at the top of the GT time sheets at one point. The many pit stops (31 in total for the No. 63) meant there was some see-sawing of position throughout the race, but the car was never out of the top six GTs once dawn broke.

Ferrari's most recently-signed driver, and overall winner at Daytona in 2000, Olivier Beretta, reflected after the race: "First of all I want to thank everyone at Risi Competizione. I knew all the mechanics' faces from races in the past but I hadn't worked with them and they did a superb job. Our engineer and every mechanic was great and it's a shame we didn't win, which was the target, but we proved that the car was super-competitive.

"We lost a bit of time here and there during the race, and at the end the Porsches were quicker in a straight line and I was in a tow. I didn't have fresh air, just warm air and the brakes weren't working at their best. I was trying to push hard, but avoid any mistakes, and we ended up fifth. Everyone has seen the Ferrari is fast but we have to remember the Porsches have been racing here for many, many years and we just arrived a few months ago."

Four time FIA GT1 World Champion and Scuderia Ferrari F1 development driver, Andrea Bertolini commented: "I think we all did a good job and we were really consistent and pushed hard in the dark to make up some time and challenge at a high level in the class. If you consider we're here for the first time, I think everyone at Ferrari, in the Risi team and at Michelotto should be proud of this result.

"The car is completely new and it's been well developed but this maybe wasn't the best track for it although it was very consistent and quick in the infield. At the end, after 24 hours we were on the same lap as some very experienced Porsche teams and highly developed cars so I think this will be one of the strongest cars in the Grand-Am series in the future. I want to thank Giuseppe, all the guys on the team and our engineers Mark and Roberto who did an excellent job as we were all here as first-timers. Now we have to come back and finish the job by winning in the future."

Double FIA GT2 Champion and Risi regular in North American racing, Toni Vilander, smiled through the exhaustion of the event: "I must say that it was a hard race! It's totally different to any other 24-hour races I've done and the traffic, the infield, the re-starts, the 12 or 13 hours of darkness all together take the energy out of you. At some points we were quite quick but we made a few mistakes and, to be realistic, I don't think we had a real chance to win this year. We couldn't match the Porsches; it's one thing to be on the same lap with wave bys but it's another thing to race against them. It was our first time here and I don't know how many times they've done it but it's a lot! We learnt a lot and, if and when we come back, we will be quick when it matters."

The No. 62 entry of Gianmaria Bruni, Giancarlo Fisichella and Raphael Matos had made steady progress through the GT field from their back-of-the-grid starting position and were beginning to make an impact on the race when, in the fifth hour, the car experienced a sudden lack of power. Bruni brought the car back to the garage where it was determined that the car would be unable to continue. The full cause of the problem will be investigated in due course.

Former Indycar driver and winner of the Rolex 24 at Daytona GT class in 2008, Raphael Matos, spoke on behalf of his team mates when he said:

"I think giving all the problems we had – starting from the back and having a flat tire early in the race – we were just recovering and climbing up the charts. The car was very solid and handling very well and it's just a shame we couldn't finish the race. It's an important race for Ferrari and Risi Competizione with American Canadian Racing, but at least we still had the No. 63 car running and our team mates did a fine job for us."

