

GRAND PRIX DE FRANCE HISTORIQUE

At the highest level

Raising historic motorsport to its very highest level, that was the challenge which the FFSA, the Nevers Magny-Cours circuit and HVM Racing pulled off together during this sweltering weekend. In an easy-going atmosphere, the second Grand Prix de France Historique lived up to its promises, both on and off the track.



In the news on Saturday

The first seven races were held on the opening day, including the eagerly awaited race for former F1 cars, while a wide range of activities enabled visitors to enjoy the event to the full. Among the many highlights, the emotion aroused by Jacques Laffite's laps driving his 1979 Ligier F1 stands out, along with the different demonstrations, displays and autograph sessions which took place throughout the day on Saturday, leading up to the concert and firework display at the end of the evening.

In the news on Sunday

Among the eight races held on the second day, the triumph of the young Italian driver Matteo Ferrer-Aza in the race for F1 cars was particularly striking. In a double nod to history, he had the foresight to claim victory at the wheel of the Ligier JS11 with which Jacques Laffite so often achieved fame in Grand Prix races 40 years ago. A win which was all the more welcome during a weekend when the Ligier team celebrated its 50th anniversary in the company of its most famous drivers, such as Jean-Pierre Jabouille, Patrick Tambay, Philippe Alliot, Erik Comas and Yannick Dalmas, who all honoured the Grand Prix de France Historique with their presence.



RACE BY RACE

FIA MASTERS HISTORIC F1

Race 1: The highlight on Saturday, the first F1 race of the weekend brought together 22 iconic single-seaters from the 1970s and '80s. Starting from the front line of the grid, the English driver Martin Stretton (1983 Tyrrell 012) and Soheil Ayari, who was invited to drive a Ligier JS17 with a V12 Matra engine, immediately shot away in the lead, gradually outrunning Matteo Ferrara-Aza, who was competing in another Ligier (an ex-Laffite JS11 from 1979). At the mid-point in the race, the three drivers were still running in the same order, before – five minutes before the finish – the race was interrupted and the results of the threesome were confirmed for good. Behind them, the remaining places in the top 5 went to Michael Cantillon in the ex-Rosberg Williams FW07C and James Hartley's ex-Watson McLaren MP4/1.

Race 2: The second Formula 1 race during the Grand Prix de France Historique started without the winner from the first day, the English driver Martin Stretton, who had been let down by the gearbox on his Tyrrell. James Hartley took advantage of a rather turbulent start to the race to claim the lead ahead of Henry Fletcher (March 761). On the next lap, Fletcher made a mistake from which there was no coming back, when he collided with Ayari. After the race was stopped for a short time, another Ligier – Ferrer-Aza's JS11 – took the lead. From then on, the young Italian driver took control of the race and held on to a short lead ahead of Hartley and Michael Cantillon until the finish.

HSCC INTERNATIONAL HISTORIC F2

Race 1: With some 33 single-seaters lined up together at Nevers, the Formula 2 grid offered the best that could be desired in the category. Despite a few mechanical failures during testing, a very substantial array of cars started the first race behind the English driver Martin O'Connell. At the wheel of his 1977 Chevron B40, he dominated the start of the race, but was forced to retire after six laps. Alain Girardet (March 77B) claimed his place, before David Tomlin in turn took his Rondel Motul M1 into the lead. Behind the English driver – on his way to victory – his Swiss rival finally had to concede



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FFSA



second place to Mike Wrigley (March 782) near the end of the race. The French driver Robert Simac took sixth place with the first 1600-engined F2.

Race 2: After winning the race on Saturday, the British competitor David Tomlin set off again on Sunday afternoon at a cracking pace, closely followed by his countryman Matthew Wrigley (Chevron B42), who was soon overtaken by Laurent Vallery-Masson (March 77B), even though the latter was a novice in F2. Halfway through the race, the boss of HVM Racing was still in second place, while Martin O'Connell, who had climbed up from last place to fourth, was once again forced to retire. The top three places seemed firmly established, but the safety car had to join the track two-thirds of the way through the race, resetting the dial before a final sprint over two laps. The order remained unchanged and the three drivers crossed the line within a second of each other!

FIA MASTERS SPORTS CAR

On Sunday, the time came for a battle set to be played out over 60 minutes. The magnificent pre-75 prototypes opened the proceedings in the wake of the Greek driver Leo Voyazides' Lola T70 Mk3B, while the quick British driver Henry Fletcher (Chevron B26) took it on himself to lead the charge. Just before the 25-minute point, marking the start of the period during which pit stops were allowed, a short interruption wiped out the gaps between the top five drivers. Once any changes to the drivers had been made, the race started afresh with Simon Hadfield, Martin O'Connell and Andrew Wolfe taking over from Leo Voyazides, Henry Fletcher and Jason Wright. Setting very similar lap times, the three drivers were still only ten seconds apart within quarter of an hour of the finish, until Hadfield, with a five-second penalty, found himself under threat from Wolfe ... who ended up crashing out on the final lap! The Italian driver Mandredo Rossi di Montelera (Abarth PA1) took advantage of this to claim a place on the podium.

TROPHEE F3 CLASSIC

Race 1: As with the other single-seater grids over the weekend, there was a mouth-watering line-up of cars in Formula 3. Starting in pole position, the young driver from northern France, William Westerloppe (aged 25) displayed his talent at the start of the



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race, driving a newly restored Ralt RT3. Chased by Matthieu Châteaux and Frédéric Rouvier, however, he came off the track before the halfway mark and lost six places. From then on, the race was between Châteaux, who had a solid lead ahead of Rouvier, who was in turn soon facing pressure from Tristan Gommendy. Starting from the back of the grid after being stripped of his record time during qualification, the LMP2 driver kept up the pressure during the final laps but was unable to wipe out the two-second gap established by the imperious Châteaux.

Race 2: The magnificent victor of the first race, Matthieu Châteaux was back on track in the lead for the second round. At the halfway point, he had a lead of just four seconds over Frédéric Rouvier and scarcely any more over William Westerloppe, Tristan Gommendy and Davide Leone. An unruly group with barely seven seconds between them! The Italian subsequently fell behind, leaving the first four drivers to fight the race to a conclusion which looked less and less certain. But after leading from start to finish, Châteaux held on to his position until the chequered flag came down. A full two seconds behind, Rouvier claimed second place after staving off a final challenge from Gommendy.

TROPHEE FORMULE RENAULT CLASSIC

Race 1: In the spotlight for this second edition of the Grand Prix de France Historique, the Formula Renault grid was made up of some twenty single-seaters from the 1980s and '90s, with a vast majority of Martinis. What could be more natural in the region around Nevers! Fabrice Porte, starting on pole, and Florent Cazalot took turns in the lead at the start of the race, before various incidents interrupted the race and then brought proceedings to a stop shortly after a collision between Fabrice Porte and Marc Klein. Restarted for good, the race finished with a sprint, victory going to the Swiss driver Christian Vaglio-Giors, who took the lead one lap before the finish. Cazalot admitted defeat by less than a second.

Race 2: Narrowly beaten in the race on Saturday, Florent Cazalot immediately took the initiative in the second race and was in the lead at the halfway point, closely followed by the Swiss competitor Christian Vaglio-Giors. The French driver pressed home his advantage and was first over the line, driving his turbocharged Martini from 1988.



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Unlucky the previous day, this time Fabrice Porte finished third, ahead of Bruno Mottez and Arnaud France, while Stéphane Gosset claimed victory among the naturally aspirated Formula Renaults.

CHALLENGE FORMULA FORD HISTORIC

Race 1: With 44 cars taking part in the qualifying sessions, the Formula Ford grid (which also featured some 1000cc F3 racers) looked most impressive! François Belle (Lola T540) proved quickest in testing, but the start of the race saw the advantage pass to Alain Girardet (Crosslé 25F) and then to Geoffroy Rivet (March 703). After a period behind the safety car, the driver of the March F3 renewed his efforts and finished by gaining a decisive lead over the Swiss driver, who was nonetheless the winner among the contenders in Formula Ford. Unsurprisingly, François Belle took the remaining place on the podium.

Race 2: After an unruly start, which required the immediate intervention of the safety car, the young driver Vincent Rivet settled into the lead at the wheel of his little March F3 from 1970. Immediately behind him, Alain Girardet was the most insistent, but had to concede defeat to his eternal rival, François Belle. The three men remained in this order until the finish, never splitting up. Given the victory of one of the Formula 3 cars invited to join this grid, François Belle and Alain Girardet shared the first two places among the Formula Fords.

GENTLEMEN DRIVERS

Known as the 'Gentlemen Drivers' grid, this race brought together an exceptional group of cars, with its share of pre-66 GTs, including no fewer than four Shelby Daytona Cobras. Held over 90 minutes at the end of the day, the single race in this category over the weekend naturally confirmed the Cobras' supremacy. None more so than that of the car driven by the British competitors Julian Thomas and Calum Lockie, which, after proving quickest in testing, crossed the line as the winner, ahead of its sister car, driven by Leo Voyazides and Simon Hadfield. After a heroic drive right to the end with his 'little' Lotus Elan, Andrew Haddon would have slotted in between them, were it not for a 10-second penalty.



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PRE 66 TOURING CARS

The same drivers, but in different cars ... After monopolizing the first two places in the 'Gentlemen Drivers' race at the end of the day on Saturday, Thomas/Lockie and Voyazides/Hadfield were back at it on Sunday, after trading their Daytona Cobras for a pair of Ford Falcons. During this one-hour race, the two cars crossed the halfway mark together, ten seconds or so ahead of the Cortina Lotus of Letts/Letts. Once the drivers and changed over, the duel between the two Falcons became all the more forceful, Calum Lockie and Simon Hadfield putting on a show with a series of fierce battles. Hadfield brought the duel to a close, winning by less than four seconds. Another British entrant, Mark Martin, took the final place on the podium with his Cortina Lotus.

TROPHEE LOTUS

Race 1: Another exceptional group of cars: to honour the 65th anniversary of Team Lotus, no fewer than 42 drivers of Lotus Sevens and Caterhams took to the track to do battle in this race. After achieving the best time in testing, Pascal Métayer dominated the first few laps, before leaving it to his great rival Xavier Jacquet to lead the proceedings. As expected, the final result was decided between them on the very last lap, with Métayer having the final word, just four tenths of a second ahead. The driver and preparation specialist Claude Rucheton came home third, a place long held by Alain Szyndelman.

Race 2: The privilege of bringing the Grand Prix de France Historique to a close fell to the numerous drivers competing in the Trophée Lotus. Predictably, right from the start a fresh duel ensued between Xavier Jacquet and the previous day's winner, Pascal Métayer. This unrelenting fight turned to Métayer's advantage by halfway through the race, before his rival regained the upper hand a few laps later. By dint of lapping the slower drivers, Jacquet successfully protected himself against his rival at the very end of the race. After another closely fought duel, Dominique Vulliez seized third place from Philippe Gaso.

For all the results go to www.gpfh.fr



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