



Corvette Is King Fifth Year Running

C6.R Wins Petit Le Mans, Laguna Seca and Championships

THE C6.R SWEPT THE ALMS GT1 championships in its first season, capturing the drivers, team and pit crew championships and capping off its debut year with a convincing 1–2 victory at Laguna Seca. Olivier Beretta and Oliver Gavin in the No. 4 car, the “1” in that equation, scored their seventh win in eight races to capture the driving crown, beating out teammates Ron Fellows and Johnny O’Connell.

“I didn’t take any risks because my main focus was to finish the race, to score points and to win the championship,” said Beretta. “I was trying to be very calm and to wait for the right spots to overtake. I was thinking

about all the effort the crew had made this year. They really deserved the championship and I didn’t want to make a mistake.”

Despite playing it safe, the No. 4 car led a Corvette effort that was anything but boring. Aston Martin, Saleen and Maserati gave the American marque a battle, and halfway through the four-hour race the C6.Rs were running fourth and fifth. Fellows then passed four of his rivals, including a spectacular pass of the No. 57 Aston Martin in the track’s legendary Corkscrew, in a move that Gavin praised as, “the lap of the year.”



If You’re Happy and You Know It ... Olivier Beretta (left) and Oliver Gavin celebrate their Petit Le Mans victory.

“It was one of the best races of the season,” said Gavin afterwards, “seeing five GT1 cars all on the same lap and battling it out through the Corkscrew.”

The No. 3 car yielded the lead when a balky rear wheel held up a pit stop three-quarters through the race.

“I saw I was ahead of the No. 3 car going down the pit lane,” reported Gavin, “and I thought, ‘I must be in the lead!’ I knew we still had to get ahead of the Aston Martin, but they would have to make another pit stop. [Our] car was fantastic today, absolutely hooked up. Nobody could touch us!”

Gavin and Beretta, known as “the two Ollies,” have come a long way since their first pairing in a C5-R in 2004 when they were often overshadowed by the dynamic duo of Fellows and

Clockwise From Top Left Ray Gongla spots for the No. 4 car at Petit Le Mans. While Gongla was named GT1 Mechanic of the Year, Dan Binks and the No. 3 crew (center, from Petit Le Mans) won the Pit Stop Challenge, beating the No. 4 C6.R crew by less than a second. Their usual stellar performance could not keep the No. 3 car in Petit Le Mans, however; beset by handling problems early on, a valvetrain issue forced its retirement from the race. A young fan (right) observes the action in her autographed cap. The No. 4 car charges to victory at Petit Le Mans (lower right). Said winning team member Oliver Gavin: “It’s been hard, it’s been hot, it’s been everything you would expect of Petit Le Mans. Aston Martin pushed us all the way. At times the track got very slick and everyone in the class was struggling, [but] the team did a fantastic job. As always, the C6.R performed brilliantly.” Sunset at Laguna Seca (lower left) brings an end to the 2005 ALMS season.



CORVETTE RACING PHOTOS BY RICHARD PRINCE

O’Connell. Although they appear to be opposites — Gavin, the fair-haired Brit who lives just outside of London, and Beretta, the olive-skinned native of Monaco — their shared racing background (along with sometimes partner Jan Magnussen) makes them a natural fit.

“The three of us have a similar driving style, and that may be because we’ve all driven single-seaters in Europe,” said Gavin. “We’ve driven Formula 1 cars, ... Formula 3, so we know what that type of car feels like. I think that’s the way that we go about setting up the C6.R.”

Gavin and Beretta are quick to praise each other’s skills, but the relationship has gone beyond work. “We’ve become good friends,” says Gavin, “and we talk about our interests outside of racing. He is the best teammate I’ve had in terms of being able to get on with him. When I

come into the pits and hand the car over to Olivier, I have every confidence he’ll do a brilliant job.”

“Olly is a very clever racer, fast and smart,” says Beretta. “When I came to Corvette Racing in 2004, he ... told me ... what I had to do to drive the Corvette quickly. The more we race, the better we work together.”

Victory eluded the two Ollies in the first three events, but by June they were standing in the winners circle along with Magnussen at Le Mans. When the ALMS resumed in North America, they were unstoppable, winning seven times, capturing five poles and recording the fastest lap in eight races. Their chief competition, defending champs Fellows (who won the Most Popular Driver award) and O’Connell scored three wins in 2005, captured two poles, and finished as runners-up in the title chase.

“After a season like this one,” said O’Connell, “Ron and I will train hard and come back hungry.”

The 2006 campaign will feature two new cars that will include refinement of the underbody aerodynamics and engine specifications as permitted by the series regulations.