

Another solid 4th place finish for Justin at Road Atlanta

BRASELTON, Ga. - Lyonel Kent, of Knoxville, Tenn., earned his second career SCCA Pro Racing Mazda MX-5 Cup victory with a win Saturday at Road Atlanta, part of the Classic Motorsports Mitty presented by Mazda. Brad Rampelberg, of San Jose, Calif., made a last lap pass to finish second, ahead of Atlanta's Mat Pombo.

Driving the No. 13 ALARA Racing/Bulldog Productions Mazda MX-5, Kent held off the other two podium finishes on the final lap of the 27-lap, 68.58-mile race. Pombo, looking for a hometown win in the No. 01 PFM Pombo Racing/Range of Motion ATL/Carbotech Mazda MX-5, jumped to the inside of Kent in turn seven and forced the pair two wide. Rampelberg, who won one week ago at Virginia International Raceway, took advantage of the battle to pull to the bumper of Kent and get past Pombo.



Lyonel Kent captured his first win of the season at Road Atlanta.

Kent held off a move to the inside by Rampelberg in the No. 4 AMG Racing/Mazda/Cobalt Brakes Mazda MX-5 on the last corner to take his second win in three events, going back to the season finale of a year ago.

"I like leading, and I was glad to be up there," Kent said. "People were taking looks, but everyone was keeping it clean out there. I've got to thank ALARA Racing and Bulldog productions, this car was just wonderful. The BFGoodrich tires lasted from start to finish.

"Mat Pombo drove a heck of a race. He got by me a couple of times, but we didn't really fight. If he poked his nose in, I let him have it, and he did the same for me. It was a little bit of give and take and we were hoping to check out with maybe a three or four car draft and have some breathing room, but that didn't happen and there was excitement in every corner."

Kent started the race third on the grid and remained there entering the first corner of the race. After briefly dropping behind Nick Evans in the No. 28 Team MER/Mazda/Sparco Mazda MX-5 on lap three into four place, Kent jumped back to third nearly a second behind the first two cars piloted by Pombo and Justin Piscitell.

By lap seven, Kent had moved into second place and began catch Pombo. At the start of lap nine, Kent was on the bumper of Pombo and the race was on.

Kent crossed the timing stripe in the lead for the first time completing lap 10, taking up the point in the three-car breakaway that, at the time, included Pombo and Piscitell. Kent led lap 12 before giving way to Pombo on lap 13, and then reclaiming the lead on lap 14.

By that point, the lead group was six cars deep and none of the top cars had a clear advantage.

Officially, the last of the three lead changes came on lap 14, but Kent and Pombo exchanged the lead multiple times throughout the final 13 laps.

While Kent and Pombo battled at the front, Rampelberg steadily climbed from his eighth position on the grid to falling in line with the leaders. Rampelberg moved into fifth on lap seven, fourth on lap 14, and third on lap 20.

Rampelberg sat in third until his move on the final lap.

"The AMG guys gave me a car that was set up for the long run, so we really wanted to be racing for 45 minutes," Rampelberg said. "We knew if we could stay clean, we'd be there at the end. Going down

into six, Mat went to the inside of Lyonel, and Lyonel came down on him and they went side-by-side into seven. I had to pick my partner coming out of seven, got a run past Mat, and I was in second.

After entering the race as the polesitter at his home track, Pombo's goal was a win. Despite an early breakaway, an easy race wasn't in the cards.

"It was one of those things where I was trying to analyze what to do the entire race," Pombo said. "I felt like I could get away and then they'd run me down on the backstraight.

"On the last lap we went side-by-side through a third of the track, and when we went through seven, I knew that usually leaves it open for the third place guy. That's what happened, I couldn't make the pass before then like I needed to. It was fun. We're still learning this car, and we've got a lot of confidence heading into the rest of the season."

Piscitell, of Weston, Conn., started second and ran with the lead pack for the entire race before bringing the No. 89 DAMG Worldwide/Team MER MX-5 home in fourth position. Michael Cooper, of Syossett, N.Y., also worked his way to the lead pack from his seventh starting position and finished fifth in the No. 84 AMG Racing/Bromante Landscaping & Design MX-5.

Kent's teammate, Ara Malkhassian, finished sixth in the No. 11 ALARA Racing/Bulldog Productions MX-5. A pair of Team MER teammates, Nick Evans (No. 28 Team MER/Mazda/Sparco MX-5) and Jeff Mosing (No. 30 Team MER/RaceNowForAutism/Frank's Int MX-5), finished seventh and eighth.

Dean Copeland (No. 7 Copeland Motorsports/Insynch Radios MX-5), last weekend's race runner-up, finished ninth. Jesse Combs (No. 77 Coolgas.com MX-5) placed a third ALARA Racing car in the top-10.

Mark Carpenter turned the race's fastest lap, running a time of 1:41.115 (90.431 mph) around the 12-turn, 2.54-mile circuit, before being forced to pit lane for repairs after spinning off the track in turn five on lap 15. He would finish in 18th, one lap behind the leaders.

After two races, Rampelberg leads the season championship with 120 points, followed by Piscitell (104). Cooper (103) and Pombo (103) are tied for third, with Copeland (99) completing the top five.

Kent was docked 10 points following the race for a blocking infraction on the penultimate lap and sits 12th in the championship with 65 points.

The SCCA Pro Racing Playboy Mazda MX-5 Cup returns to action at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca, May 21-23.

Television times for this race will be posted at www.mx-5cup.com when available.

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