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17th July 2016 - Italian GT Championship, Mugello

Nicolas Costa went in to the **Mugello** round of the **Italian Super GT Cup** with a slender two point lead in the driver's Championship and a hefty time handicap after he and team-mate **Amir Krenzia** scored a 1st and 2nd at the Misano round last time out. **Bar Baruch** and **Jia Tong Liang**, who completed the team's whitewash at Misano with their first Championship win in race two, were in 6th place as the Mugello weekend got underway.

With Friday's free practice sessions marred by rain the VSR drivers did little useful running before launching themselves into qualifying on Saturday morning. Baruch and Krenzia were first out in the Lamborghini Huracáns and at the end of the twenty-minute session had set the 3rd and 7th fastest times respectively.

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Costa took the flag first in race one after some spectacular driving in the closing stages

As the lights went out Baruch was quick to take advantage of a sleepy start from front-row man Zaugg and slotted into 2nd. Krenzia held off Mantovani for 7th, surviving a hairy moment with two wheels in the gravel, and finally succumbing to the Italian on lap four. A drive through penalty for the leader promoted Baruch to first place and the Israeli led comfortably, consistently pulling away from Zaugg, until just after the pit window opened when a stricken Ferrari caused the Safety Car to appear on track. It was perfect timing for the Krenzia-Costa car which was in the pits already to change driver and meant that the large handicap they had to serve was largely negated. A lap later Baruch came in to handover to Liang. Due to their own not inconsiderable handicap they lost the lead and fell down to 3rd place. When racing resumed it was a fifteen minute sprint to the chequered flag and Costa was in 8th place with a bunch of backmarkers separating him from the cars at the head of the field. An astounding first lap saw him catapult up to 4th place. Two laps later he was in 3rd with just seconds separating him from D'Amico and Desideri fighting up front. He caught the duelling pair quickly and with two minutes left on the clock made his move on Desideri to claim 2nd. After surviving a wild and desperate counter-attack from the Italian Costa began hounding D'Amico. On the penultimate lap he shoved his Huracan down the inside of the Raton driver, holding his line as the VSR Lamborghini squirmed around under braking. At the exit of the corner he ran wide but didn't give up and had the inside as the circuit switched direction. Moving into the lead of the race he pulled away over the

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final lap to take the chequered flag with a 2.0 second gap to the rest of the field.

Elation soon turned to heartbreak as Costa was given a thirty second penalty for a marginal yellow flag infringement and the final classification showed him and team-mate Krenzia in 5th place with the sister car of Liang and Baruch promoted to 3rd.



Baruch & Liang finished 3rd in race one and 4th in race two at Mugello this weekend

For Sunday's race the qualifying times had been sent by Costa and Liang. Costa went fastest straightaway and then dived into the pits for new tyres but a problem prevented him from improving on his best lap and while he was limping around Desideri stole his pole, beating him by just one tenth of a second. Liang qualified on row three.

As soon as the field was released Costa wrenched the lead of the race from Desideri with a perfect move, tucking his Lamborghini into the Italian's slipstream as they flew down the straight and then jinxing out as they dove into the first corner. The VSR driver was never headed and pulled out an eight second gap to Desideri, one of his main championship rivals. Both cars had the same handicap to serve in the pits. Costa pitted a lap earlier than Desideri and the second half of the race saw Krenzia dicing with Kasai. The VSR driver held the Japanese man behind him for several laps before conceding in the final ten minutes. He took the flag in 2nd place, just 3.8 seconds behind the winner. Liang and Baruch recovered from 6th to finish in 4th just shy of another podium.

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Krenzia & Costa claimed a fine 2nd place in race two

The weekend's results leave the Championship standings very close with just over twenty points separating the top six drivers (including Costa, Baruch and Liang) and three rounds still to go. The Italian GT Championship now takes a break for the summer and will be back in action at Vallelunga in September. The VSR Lamborghini's will be on track again in a fortnight's time for the Spa-Francorchamps round of the European Lamborghini Blancpain Super Trofeo Championship.

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