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Narain Karthikeyan @ Telefonica Nissan Series 2003

6th October 2003

Barcelona - Race One

Tata Carlin Team driver **Narain Karthikeyan** was bumped off the pole position for today's first World Series Nissan race in Barcelona by Renault F1 driver, Franck Montagny, who took the unusual step of using a second set of new tyres to catch up to the young Indian's pace. Series leader, Montagny, clearly wanted to sacrifice race two in order to grab the pole and go for a win in the first race and **Karthikeyan** is his greatest threat as he lies second in the Championship battle.

Tata Carlin Team mate, Frenchman Bruce Jouanny, lined up directly behind **Karthikeyan** in 4th place, alongside fellow countryman Ander Vilarino.

Conditions for the first race were sunny but somewhat cloudy as the drivers lined up on the start grid. **Karthikeyan** and Jouanny had drawn the short straw, starting on the dirtier side of the circuit and Ander Vilarino took full advantage of his position to follow a fast-starting pole man, Franck Montagny through to the first corner, leap-frogging past **Karthikeyan** on the way.

Team mate Bruce Jouanny's race was over almost before it had begun, an altercation with Heikki Kovalainen taking him out on lap one. Out in the lead, Franck Montagny was unstoppable - **Karthikeyan** wasn't close enough to threaten him and Ander Vilarino was making no headway, allowing the rising F1 star to settle down to take an easy race win, fastest lap and the Championship win. By any accounts, Montagny has had a commanding assault on the 2003 series and his tactics in yesterday's qualifying in order to take **Karthikeyan** off the pole proved to be pivotal to the results of the race.

Karthikeyan shadowed the leading pair for most of the race but a small mistake around lap 10 threw the young Indian into a gravel trap but he recovered the car and got back on track behind Jean Christophe Ravier for 4th place. He then came under enormous pressure from Enrique Bernoldi but gradually pulled away, finishing four seconds ahead of him but off the podium for fourth place.

Last season Franck Montagny finished second in the series - which is the position that **Narain Karthikeyan** now holds. This year, he has won nine of the 13 races and signed a contract as a test driver for Renault Formula One. **Karthikeyan** will be rueing the circumstances that knocked him from a provisional pole position to fourth today but will also be looking at the long game - a seat in F1. **Narain Karthikeyan** has long ago proved his prowess as a top

international driver and World Series Nissan is the waiting room for the highest Formula in the world.

After the race, **Narain** was reflective, *"Nobody can deny that Franck has done a good job this year - he used last season as a springboard to achieve what he has done this year. I can't feel too bad to be in the same place that he was then and I hope that he makes it through to a permanent F1 race seat. Being up against the best drivers is what top-level competition of this kind is all about. Franck is only qualified 8th for the second race so my fight will be with Vilarino. We have a pit-stop to make so tactics are going to play a big part but as always, it's about getting a good start and having the speed lap after lap."*

- 01 FRANCK MONTAGNY
- 02 ANDER VILARINO
- 03 JEAN-CH.RAVIER
- 04 **NARAIN KARTHIKEYAN**
- 05 ENRIQUE BERNOLDI
- 06 HEIKKI KOVALAINEN
- 07 BAS LEINDERS
- 08 POLO VILLAAMIL
- 09 BRUNO BESSON
- 10 FELIX PORTEIRO
- 11 STEPHANE SARRAZIN
- 12 JOSE M.PEREZ-AYCART
- 13 PAUL EDWARDS
- 14 DIDIER ANDRE
- 15 BRUCE JOUANNY
- 16 SANTIAGO PORTEIRO
- 17 ANGEL BURGUENO

Barcelona - Race Two

Conditions were good for the second race of the day in the World Series Nissan Championship in Barcelona, Spain, with air temperature of around 30 degrees and no hint of rain.

Ander Vilarino was on pole with Tata Carlin Team driver, **Narain Karthikeyan**, alongside him; Enrique Bernoldi and Bas Leinders took the second row of the grid with **Karthikeyan'** s team mate, Bruce Jouanny,taking 5th spot alongside Jean Christophe Ravier; 2003 Champion, F1 driver Franck Montagny, could manage only 8th place having qualified on used tyres after using both new sets in heat one in order to knock **Karthikeyan** off pole.

Karthikeyan had a good start, kept Bernoldi firmly behind him and followed Vilarino into the first turn, all three drivers close together. Bruce Jouanny lost a

place at the start to Ravier and two more on the first lap. Montagny soon moved up from 8th spot into 5th but his main work of the day was already done with a confident win in race one.

Ravier managed to take Bernoldi and the gap between the race leader and him was around 4 seconds when **Karthikeyan** dived into the pits for an early tyre change. The Tata Carlin Team are well known for their fast pit stops and the aim as always was to get **Karthikeyan** out a split second faster than the leader and then **Karthikeyan** would do the rest on track and give the team their first race win. Although there is a speed limit in the pit lane, there is none on the approach entry and **Karthikeyan** needed to be on the absolute limit before hitting the brakes hard at pit entry. Fortune was not with the young Indian today and a slow moving back- marker blocked his progress on the approach and it was now going to be a struggle to get out fast enough to defend second place from Ravier. This was achieved and when the race settled down again, **Karthikeyan** was just 1.5 seconds behind the leader with Ravier 2 seconds adrift from him.

The next incident was to effect **Karthikeyan'** s team mate, Bruce Jouanny. Ravier' s engine dropped some oil over the racing line and without warning the following cars struggled to keep on the track. Jouanny spun out and Enrique Bernoldi now took up the fight, hounding **Karthikeyan** as he kept his sights firmly on the leader, trying to force an error which would give him an opportunity to take the lead. But it was not to be. All three drivers drove superbly putting 9 seconds between them and the next placed man, Jean Christophe Ravier, who had caused Jouanny' s demise but managed to keep his car going to the end. Next up was Franck Montagny and Stephane Sarrazin.

Narain Karthikeyan took his place proudly on the podium for the fourth time this year but the coveted top spot had yet again eluded him – not because of any error in a determined and highly spirited drive – but because a slower car had wrecked his opportunity in the pit stop.

It was a good solid weekend for **Karthikeyan**; two front row qualifications; one fourth place and a podium finish and an extension in his second place in the Drivers' Championship to F1 Renault star, Franck Montagny.

- 01 ANDER VILARINO
- 02 **NARAIN KARTHIKEYAN** + 0' 02"037
- 03 ENRIQUE BERNOLDI + 0' 02"606
- 04 JEAN-CH.RAVIER + 0' 11"016
- 05 FRANCK MONTAGNY + 0' 11"299
- 06 STEPHANE SARRAZIN + 0' 29"360
- 07 PAUL EDWARDS + 0' 47"29
- 08 HEIKKI KOVALAINEN + 0' 48"053
- 09 SANTIAGO PORTEIRO + 1' 06"273
- 10 JOSE M.PEREZ-AYCART + 1' 06"847

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11 ANGEL BURGUENO + 1' 07"182
12 DIDIER ANDRE + 1' 07"649
13 BRUCE JOUANNY
14 POLO VILLAAMIL
15 BAS LEINDERS
16 FELIX PORTEIRO
17 BRUNO BESSON

*** END ***