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## **Narain Karthikeyan @ Telefonica Nissan Series 2003**

### **Race One Lausitz 20th July - 17 Laps**

Tata Team Carlin driver, Narain Karthikeyan, was just over half a second slower than pole sitter, Heikki Kovalainen, but faced the start lights for race one from the fourth row of the grid probably frustrated that his first qualifying challenge was not matched by the brilliance of his second which elevated him to the front row.

The most important thing in a driver's mind from this position on the grid is to stay out of trouble in the first corner and to survive the first lap. Some contact is almost inevitable and as the cars screamed into turn one, unlike his unfortunate team mate, Bruce Jouanny, Karthikeyan held his position, avoided collision and came through in sixth place thanks to the demise of Santiago Porteiro who spun out in front of him. Jouanny had a coming together with William's F1 test pilot Marc Gene, picked up a traffic cone under his car and found himself against the tyre wall and unable to reverse back onto the track due to a broken gear selector cable. His race was over.

Series Leader, Franck Montagny, dispensed with his less experienced team mate, pole man Heikki Kovalainen, to take the lead once again in the series on his way to notching up his seventh win of the year. The rest of the field held station behind him - Kovalainen, Sarrazin, Leinders, Vilarino & Karthikeyan. With nobody making any mistakes, it was impossible to overtake and the pack wound round the twisty infield track almost in original grid order.

Karthikeyan's 6th place was not spectacular by his standards but it was enough to keep his all important second place in the drivers' Championship points.

#### **Race One Result:**

- 01 FRANCK MONTAGNY
- 02 HEIKKI KOVALAINEN
- 03 STEPHANE SARRAZIN
- 04 BAS LEINDERS
- 05 ANDER VILARINO
- 06 NARAIN KARTHIKEYAN

## **Race Two Lausitz 20th July - 25 Laps**

The second race of the day at Lausitz was a 25 lap event with a compulsory pit stop to change tyres which gives the drivers a chance to gain as well as lose position. Tata Carlin driver Narain Karthikeyan shared the front row with pole man Heikki Kovalainen after a stunning drive in the final minute of qualifying from the experienced Indian. Series leader and everyone's biggest threat, Franck Montagny who won the first race of the day was directly behind Karthikeyan on the grid in fourth place lined up next to Bas Leinders.

Karthikeyan made no mistake at the start and followed Kovalainen through into second place with a fast-starting Franck Montagny chasing hard in third. Kovalainen, whose Gabord Competition car has been the pace maker all weekend, pulled out a gap of 3 seconds on Karthikeyan who was busy defending his position against Renault F1 driver Montagny who was just ½ second behind him.

Montagny was trying everything to get past Karthikeyan but when he did, it wasn't without incident. Montagny's car hit Karthikeyan from behind, sending him into a spin, in the process of demoting him. Karthikeyan recovered but was now six seconds down as Montagny began to close the gap on his team mate ahead, by ½ second per lap.

When Montagny pitted to change tyres, Karthikeyan moved back into second place and then into the lead when Kovalainen made his obligatory stop.

As Karthikeyan pitted a fast charging Jean Christophe Ravier stole his place and held 3rd as Karthikeyan exited pit lane. Montagny meanwhile was within 6/10th of Kovalainen who had resumed the lead after his stop. The series leader got right onto the gearbox of Kovalainen but must have made an error - forced or otherwise - and dropped back by two seconds leaving Kovalainen in the clear - for the moment at least.

It was now down to Bas Leinders to make Karthikeyan's job difficult as he hounded him for 4th position but he was unable to do anything about the young Indian and finished behind him in 5th place on the road. When the flag dropped, the drama was far from over. Kovalainen had received a 25 second penalty for a start infringement and Montagny's driving - which robbed Karthikeyan of what could have been a race win now that Kovalainen was out of contention - was under investigation from the Stewards.

Karthikeyan's team mate, Bruce Jouanny, had a solid race finishing 10th on the road from 16th on the grid but leaves the German circuit with no points after a disappointing weekend's racing.

With at least a podium finish in race two and a solid result from race one, Karthikeyan retained his second place in the Drivers' Championship as Stéphane Sarrazin, who got to within two points of him, was out of the final race of the day.

**Race Two Results**

- 1st Kovalainen
- 2nd Montagny
- 3rd Ravier
- 4th Karthikeyan
- 10th Jouanny