

Kyalami 9 Hour 2021 race review

 By [Naresh Maharaj](#)

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Nine hours is a long time for a single car, shared by three drivers, to go around the 4.522km Kyalami track and prove its endurance. That's what the Intercontinental race was all about this past Saturday. The weather played its part with cloudy cool conditions as the small, yet appreciative crowd took in the epic battles around the anti-clockwise track with six right turns and ten left turns. And just in case you are wondering, the circuit is by no means flat. It has an elevation of 43m.



Photo credit: Naresh Maharaj

The mean-looking and noisy cars blasted off and raced to Crowthorne corner, then it was an uphill sweep through Jukskei and Barbeque. Then throttle down to Clubhouse in around 240kmph. Then hard breaking as the drivers headed into The Crocodiles and the Esses, literally bringing the cars to their slowest. Leeukop was next as the engines revved up again to speeds of around >260kmph to Mineshaft and then to Ingwe corner and to the start-finish line.

I timed the best lap at one minute 40seconds. But this race, as many will tell you, is not all about speed. It's about endurance. It's not a sprint but a long, epic run. At the end of the long day at 10pm, it was the AKKA ASP Team Mercedes-AMG, driven by Timur Boguslavskiy, Jules Gounon and Raffaele Marcielo that took the deserved honours in the 2021 Intercontinental GT Challenge, the final race of the season.

I say deserved because they started from pole, set the fastest lap and held it all together with their pit plane crew to take the chequered flag.



The Italian team of the prancing horse, the Ferrari 488 GT3, driven by Alessandro Pier Guidi, Miguel Molina and Come Ledogar finished second, much to the cheers of the crowd.

Home favourite Kelvin Van der Linde, along with Markus Winkelhock and Patric Niederhauser, in an Audi R8, jumped to the final podium place. The top four teams completed 307 laps at an average speed of 154kmph. Audi Sport took the manufacturers title. Stradales Motorsport's Lamborghini Huracan raced by Arnold Neveling, Michael Van Rooyen and Charl Arangies finished in eight position after 179 laps. Their best time around the arduous track was one minute 43seconds.

The Into Africa all South African team could only muster ninth position, with another much loved local driver in Tschops Sipuka bringing the Lamborghini Huracan GT3 Evo home after 262 laps, with the team's best lap timed at one minute 49 seconds on lap 168. Xolile Letlaka and Phillip Kekana also shared the driving duties as history was indeed made with this all Black SA drivers' team.



The car had a mishap on Friday on a wet and slippery track and crashed. But the team must be given huge praise for working around the clock to ensure the Huracan was race ready. Somewhat disappointing as the crowds expected lots better from the all SA team.

Other local heroes to cross the finish line were Marius Jackson, Mo Mia and Mikael Pitamber in an Audi R8 LMS GT4, finished in 10th position with 143 laps done whilst the Scuderia Scribante team in a Lamborghini Huracan GT3 EVO raced by Silvio Scribante finished 12th.

So after much thrills and spills, the 2021 Intercontinental GT final race of the season was finally done and dusted. The race returns to Kyalami in December, hopefully this time in front of larger crowds.

ABOUT NARESH MAHARAJ

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