



ASTON MARTIN RACING

AFTER 3 HOURS – ASTON MARTIN MAKES SOLID START TO THE LE MANS 24 HOURS

The three factory Aston Martin LMP1 cars have ended the first three hours of the 77th Le Mans 24 Hours in fifth, sixth and 25th places respectively. With evening drawing in, Tomas Enge occupies fifth place in 007, Jos Verstappen is sixth in 008 and Peter Kox is 25th in 009.

Stefan Mucke started the race at 3pm in 007 from eighth place and stayed in the car for a triple stint, despite extremely warm temperatures at the start of the race. The German driver made excellent progress, stopping only for fuel and tyres as scheduled before handing over to Tomas Enge at 5:20pm. The car encountered no problems apart from a minor glitch with the radio.

Darren Turner started the race for 008 from ninth on the grid and shadowed his team mate for the early stages, handing over to former Grand Prix driver Jos Verstappen at 5:12pm after an impressive triple stint. “I think this has been the longest time I’ve ever spent in the car in one go,” said Turner. “I really enjoyed it, although the handling isn’t quite the way I would want it. On the whole though the car is feeling very good and I think we’ve shown promising pace. Physically it’s been quite tough and I’ve got a few aches and pains now, but it’s nothing I can’t cope with. It was good to take the start of the race: our priority was strictly to keep out of trouble and luckily we were able to pull away well from the cars behind us, so this wasn’t an issue.”

However the opening stages of the race were not quite as straightforward for the 009 car, which had to come in for an alternator change at just under the hour mark. This is quite a complicated process that involves removing the car’s bodywork, costing the crew plenty of time in the pits. Once the repairs were complete, Peter Kox took over from Harold Primat – who had started the race.

The car was also handed a stop and go penalty just before 5pm, obliging Kox – who was 43rd at the time – to come into the pits and switch off the engine for one minute before re-starting. The penalty was as a result of work that had taken place on the car whilst it was on the grid, to repair an electrical problem immediately before the start. Although the Aston Martin mechanics did an excellent job to fix the problem with just seconds to spare before the start, the crew could not escape a penalty.

While the race has barely begun, there have already been several incidents and accidents at the front of the field, ensuring that the 77th Le Mans 24 Hours is living up to its reputation as the ultimate test of drivers and teams.

The Vantage GT2 of Drayson Racing is currently eighth in class after a strong opening to the race.

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