



ASTON MARTIN RACING

ASTON MARTIN RACING QUALIFIES THIRD AT SPA

Spa, 9 May, 2009. Following a memorable victory at the opening race of the 2009 Le Mans Series last month in Barcelona, Aston Martin Racing will start the second round at Spa-Francorchamps in Belgium this weekend from third on the grid, thanks to a strong time from British driver Darren Turner in the 009 car.

The 007 car, crewed by Jan Charouz (CZ), Tomas Enge (CZ), Stefan Mücke (GER) was not able to complete today's qualifying session due to a mechanical problem on the out lap. This means that the car will be forced to start from the back of the grid tomorrow.

Turner – who shares the 009 Aston Martin Racing entry with Harold Primat (CH) and Miguel Ramos (PT) – posted a time of 2m02.488s on only his second-ever LMP1 qualifying session, which was held in dry but overcast conditions. Turner was also the quickest of the 009 trio during this morning's second free practice session.

"I'm really happy with third on the grid, which is a great team result," said Turner. "Everybody's worked very hard since the opening round in Barcelona, and it's good that we're making progress. It's not quite been a perfect weekend so far, but this has been very useful practice and we're learning more about the different parameters on the car all the time."

Tomas Enge was due to qualify the 007 Aston Martin, but the Czech driver suffered a problem on his first lap. "I'm not exactly sure what it was," he reported. "I heard a strange noise from the car and I stopped in order not to risk further damage. It looks like we will have to start from the back of the grid now but this is a long six-hour endurance race, so where you start is not so important. If we all work together well, I'm sure we can overcome this setback."

According to Le Mans Series rules, the LMP1 qualifying session lasted just 15 minutes, putting the emphasis on slick teamwork and avoiding traffic or mistakes on the tricky seven-kilometre Spa circuit. Aston Martin Racing also faced some new and important rivals in the shape of the factory Peugeot team and the new

Oreca – which the Gulf-backed squad will compete against at the Le Mans 24 Hours next month.

Prior to the qualifying session Aston Martin Racing had just two free practice sessions to get acquainted with the circuit, held on Friday afternoon and Saturday morning. Nonetheless, the team is feeling upbeat prior to tomorrow's race, which is scheduled to start at 12:50 and cover 143 laps. As usual, there will be a 20-minute warm-up before the 1000-kilometre race in the morning, from 08:30 to 08:50. Spa – located in the heart of the Ardennes Mountains – is renowned for its unpredictability, with uncertain weather and several elevation changes making the task for Aston Martin Racing's six drivers all the more complex.

Team Principal George Howard-Chappell commented: "Darren did an absolutely great job in qualifying, especially considering that this was only his second-ever LMP1 qualifying session. It was a pity we encountered a problem with the 007 car, but until we have investigated further it's hard to comment on the cause. We start every race determined to do our best, but the gap to the two factory Peugeots in front of our 009 car is quite big and that does not bode well for Le Mans."

Aston Martin is also represented in the GT1 class for the first time at the Le Mans Series this year by the Jetalliance Team from Austria, consisting of Thomas Grüber (A), Alex Müller (GER) and Lukas Lichtner-Hoyer (A). Müller qualified their Aston Martin DBR9 first in class and 24th overall with an excellent time of 2m17.344s.

In GT2, Drayson Racing will once more field its Vantage crewed by Englishmen Jonny Cocker and Paul Drayson. Cocker qualified seventh in class and 38th overall with a time of 2m23.694s for tomorrow's race, which will be only the second Le Mans Series outing for the British squad.

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