



ASTON MARTIN RACING

ASTON MARTIN LOOKS FORWARD TO THE START OF THE 77TH LE MANS 24 HOURS

Le Mans, 9 June 2009. Aston Martin's preparations for the start of the 77th Le Mans 24 Hours, the manufacturer's first in the LMP1 category, are well underway after the three Gulf-liveried Aston Martin Racing cars passed through technical scrutineering this morning.

All the cars participating in the Le Mans 24 Hours are obliged to undergo scrutineering, which is designed to check that all entrants conform to the rules. Scrutineering also offers a great opportunity for fans to get close to the cars and drivers.

For Aston Martin, this year's Le Mans 24 Hours has a special significance as it marks the 50th anniversary of the company's last overall win at La Sarthe in 1959. Since then, Aston Martin Racing has claimed victory in the GT1 category at Le Mans for the last two years, but the challenge in 2009 will be bigger than ever.

With a new car and driver line-up, as well as some redoubtable diesel-powered rivals, the three factory Aston Martins – numbered 007, 008 and 009 – have a mountain to climb this weekend. Nonetheless, the team will be able to rely on the tried and trusted Aston Martin production-derived V12 engine that is at the heart of the new LMP1 challenger and took Aston Martin Racing to GT1 class victory at Le Mans in 2007 and 2008.

In front of an enthusiastic crowd of spectators at scrutineering, who turned out in force to see the 55 starters complete their technical checks in the Place des Jacobins, the nine Aston Martin Racing drivers talked about their prospects ahead of the epic race that will get underway at 3pm local time on Saturday 13 June.

007

Jan Charouz (CZ): "I'm really looking forward to starting the Le Mans 24 Hours in a factory car for the first time. So far our preparations have been fine, but Le Mans is the sort of race where you can never really predict what might happen – and that is what makes it so fascinating. At the moment I'm just feeling excited: I can't wait to get started!"

Tomas Enge (CZ): "It's going to be a tough race but I'm looking forward to qualifying as well because this is one area where I hope we might be able to make a difference. Last year Stefan managed to out-qualify one of the diesel cars and I hope we can do the same again. I had some experience of LMP1 in 2008 so I hope to put it to good use this year."

Stefan Mücke (D): "It's my third time at Le Mans and I'm very happy to be here. The diesel cars are still some way ahead so I think it will be tough to catch them, but I really hope we can be the fastest petrol-powered car. If we have a clean race, I think that this is perfectly possible. Our performances in the Le Mans Series so far, where we have been first and third, prove that we have a good car."

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Anthony Davidson (GB): "I'm delighted to be joining Aston Martin for the Le Mans 24 Hours. For any driver, it's a special event but I've got a lot to get used to as I've not driven here since 2003. On the plus side, I had a very good feeling with the car straight away and I've also got plenty of experience of working with Michelin from the past, which will be very useful over the coming weekend."

Darren Turner (GB): "This is going to be my seventh Le Mans, and it's a slightly different build-up to how it usually is for me, as it's my first time here in our LMP1 car. I think there's actually less pressure this year though: in GT1 we always came here needing to win whereas I think now everyone realises that we are the underdog to some extent."

Jos Verstappen (NL): "I'm very proud to be driving for Aston Martin and although I haven't had that much practice I'm not too worried as I know the circuit well from last year. The car seems to have a good level of straight line speed and it also feels very comfortable to drive. If we have solid reliability I think we can put ourselves in a strong position to do well."

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Stuart Hall (GB): "It was fantastic to see all the fans at scrutineering but obviously the real business starts tomorrow with practice. It looks like we are going to have some changeable weather but I think that could potentially help us by mixing things up a bit. It will be important for us to experience as wide a range of conditions as possible – because this is what Le Mans is like."

Peter Kox (NL): "Returning to Aston Martin feels a little bit like coming home for me, so I'm delighted to be back. I've probably done less than 50 kilometres in the car up to now so I'm

still trying to absorb as much information as I can, but at least after all these years at Le Mans I know my way around the circuit! It's not going to be easy but I'm sure it will be a lot of fun."

Harold Primat (CH): "Our rivals are very strong but I think we are all up for the challenge. We've tested the Le Mans aerodynamic configuration and had some good results, particularly in terms of straight-line speed, which is important at Le Mans with the Mulsanne straight. Tomorrow's practice session is going to be crucial in order to finalise our preparations before qualifying."

Aston Martin Racing Team Principal George Howard-Chappell commented: "The cancellation of the Le Mans test weekend this year was quite significant for us as we will only run here for the first time with our new car on Wednesday. It's likely that we could encounter wet conditions during practice, which will obviously affect our opportunities to find the correct dry set-up for the race. Of our three crews, 007 is the only line-up to have driven together before at Le Mans, so the practice sessions will be all about accumulating as much experience and information as possible."

The three Aston Martin LMP1 cars will take to the legendary 13.4-kilometre Le Mans track for the first time on Wednesday night, between 6pm and midnight, for practice before qualifying on Thursday.

In order to focus on the team's LMP1 programme this season in both the Le Mans Series and the Le Mans 24 Hours, Aston Martin Racing will not defend the GT1 category that it has won at Le Mans for the last two years running.

Instead, Aston Martin will be represented by customer team Jetalliance Racing from Austria, which will compete against the Corvette Racing factory team. Aston Martin will also be represented in the GT2 category, thanks to an entry for the Vantage GT2 of Drayson Racing, which is making its debut at Le Mans this year.

David Richards, Chairman of Aston Martin Racing, concluded: "We've had a lot of success and we've enjoyed ourselves tremendously competing in the GT1 class over the years, but the opportunity to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Aston Martin's Le Mans win by stepping up to the LMP1 category was too good to pass by."

