



ASTON MARTIN RACING

ASTON MARTIN VICTORIOUS ON LE MANS SERIES DEBUT

Barcelona, 5 April, 2009. Aston Martin Racing has won the Catalunya 1000 kilometres, on the team's Le Mans Series debut with its new LMP1 challenger. The 007 car, driven by Jan Charouz (CZ), Tomas Enge (CZ) and Stefan Mücke (DE) finished first after a flawless debut run. Car 009, crewed by Harold Primat (CH), Miguel Ramos (PT) and Darren Turner (GB), ran in the top three until the final 40 minutes of the race, when a spin put the crew out of contention.

An elated David Richards, Chairman of Aston Martin, said: "This momentous victory is a fantastic reward for the many weeks and months of hard work put in by every member of the team. Endurance racing is above all a team sport, and I think that we have proved this once again today."

Despite a limited pre-season testing programme, neither the 007 nor the 009 car experienced any mechanical problems during the course of the six-hour race, with just six scheduled pit stops for fuel and tyres on the winning Aston Martin. The car also set the fastest race lap of 1m34.089s.

Starting from third on the grid the 007 car showed both speed and reliability throughout the race, which came to a dramatic climax just over half an hour from the finish. Having hounded the leader until the closing stages, the 007 Aston Martin with Mücke at the wheel benefited from a safety car period to close right up to the leader. With a masterful move around the outside, Mücke was able to take advantage of traffic to claim the lead for Aston Martin Racing. He once again demonstrated his impressive speed to pull away in front and claim an emotional victory by just 14.8 seconds.

In the highly-competitive GT2 class, there was further encouragement for Aston Martin with the Drayson Racing Vantage GT2 of Englishmen Paul Drayson and Jonny Cocker taking a strong eighth place in class on their first ever European outing.

Driver quotes

007

Jan Charouz (CZ): “It’s been a really impressive debut, and I’ve had a very good feeling with the car throughout the weekend. I’d like to thank everybody for doing a fantastic job: I think this sets us up really well for a successful continuation to the season. I had no problems at all during my stints, and most importantly we have learnt a lot for the future.”

Tomas Enge (CZ): “This is the perfect way for us to start our season, and the car has been very good from the beginning. The only problem I’ve experienced is a lack of rear-end grip sometimes, which is what caused my spin. But luckily no harm was done and we did not lose much time. During my stint I tried to keep up with the leading Pescarolo but it was very tricky. In the end though it was a great result for everyone.”

Stefan Mücke (D): “I’m absolutely delighted with this result, but it was a very close call at the finish. It was so tight at the end that I really did not know which way everything would go. Eventually we were able to take advantage of the safety car to close up, and then we found a gap in the traffic to pass the leader. He went to the inside, we went to the outside and thankfully it worked. Once we were through, I think we proved that we had the pace to win.”

009

Harold Primat (CH): “It was a tough first stint for me, as my drinks bottle did not work so I got very hot. Physically it was difficult but I’m pleased with the job that we did and the result goes to show that all our hard work has paid off. I’m delighted for the team, the only problem we had with the car was driver comfort: we need to work on our seating position.”

Miguel Ramos (PT): “I obviously have mixed emotions: I’m very disappointed and sorry for what happened when I was in the car, but I am delighted for the team. I was following behind an LMP2 car during my final stint, when I spun. I tried to control the spin in order not to hit the barrier, but once the car was stopped I could not get it going again.”

Darren Turner (GB): “My first stint was quite tricky, as it was by far and away the longest time I had spent in the car in one go. Before today, the longest time I had been in the car was probably around 20 minutes; after the start of the race it was nearly an hour and a half. We didn’t change tyres during that time, so our Michelins were definitely having to work hard and did a good job. There was less traffic during our second stint and we were able to hold position without problems. ”

THE STORY OF ASTON MARTIN'S FIRST LE MANS SERIES WIN

Despite very little track time prior to the start of the season, Aston Martin Racing was able to overcome serious opposition to record the company's first ever overall win in the LMP1 category.

During Saturday's qualifying session, German driver Stefan Mücke overcame a minor gearbox problem and some traffic to end up third on the grid in 007. Britain's Darren Turner did an excellent job in his very first LMP1 qualifying to place 009 second on the grid.

The same two drivers were chosen to start the race on Sunday. The opening round of the Le Mans Series got underway at 11:30, with a scheduled race distance of 1000 kilometres or 215 laps. By the end of the opening lap, Mücke was in the lead with Turner third, ensuring that the Aston Martin LMP1 car led its very first lap of competition.

Mücke handed over to Jan Charouz after his opening stint, who held second place, while Turner stayed in 009. After nearly an hour and a half, Turner swapped places with Harold Primat, with the Swiss driver keeping 009 well and truly in the hunt for a podium place.

Tomas Enge took the 007 car over from his team mate and compatriot Charouz just after 13:00, and immediately set about hunting down the lead car, reducing the gap to less than a second on the 100th lap of the race. The Czech driver was part of a thrilling three-way battle for the lead, but he was not quite able to make his move after losing grip at the end of a long stint.

Primat did an excellent job in 009 and handed over to Miguel Ramos just after 1pm. The Portuguese driver had no problems during his first stint and maintained fourth until Turner was back in the car just after the halfway point of the race. Shortly afterwards Enge lost a handful of seconds with a spin that luckily had no lasting consequences, meaning that 007 and 009 maintained their second and third places respectively.

During his final stint, Stefan Mücke continued to chase down the leader, catching him lap after lap, but then the race was interrupted by a safety car period caused by a spin for Miguel Ramos in the 009 Aston Martin, 15 minutes into his final stint and less than an hour from the finish. The car was running in third place when Ramos spun, but the Portuguese driver was not able to restart it. This meant that the safety car came out while 009 was recovered, allowing the 007 car driven by Stefan Mücke to close right up to the leader.

Once the safety car came back in, Mücke was able to make use of the traffic to pass the leader with a brilliant move around the outside on lap 193, with just 20 minutes to go. The 007 car was already fuelled to the finish, and once in front Mücke was able to pull away to seal an emotional victory on Aston Martin Racing's Le Mans Series debut.

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