



ASTON MARTIN RACING

BEHIND THE WHEEL WITH...JAN CHAROUZ (CZ)

Gaydon, 6 May, 2009. "Everyone says that Spa is one of the all-time classic driver's circuits and I certainly agree: either here or Brno back home in the Czech Republic is my favourite track of all. There are many reasons why people love Spa, but mostly it's about the variety. Spa covers a very large area so there are some big elevation changes, some really flat-out parts and some more technical sections as well. There can even be completely different weather conditions on one part of the circuit compared to the other, so there's plenty to grab your attention as you're driving!

I've raced at Spa five times before, in machinery ranging from various single-seaters all the way to the Charouz Racing System LMP1 car last year. The start-finish line was moved when they rebuilt the pit complex a few years ago, so now the first corner is the La Source hairpin: it's heavy braking and down to first gear in our Aston Martin for this one. Then we accelerate hard through what was the old start-finish straight and up to Eau Rouge: one of the most famous corners in the history of motorsport. It's hard to put into words the experience: let's just say that you need to be brave and it sorts the men from the boys. You take this corner almost flat – at around 260kph – and then it's into Raidillon. This corner basically flows on from Eau Rouge and it's important to get good drive out of it as then you are immediately onto the longest straight of the circuit. Coming out of Raidillon there is plenty of run-off but you need a tight line to get the best momentum onto the straight.

At the end of the straight you are then braking hard – somewhere between the 100 metre and the 80 metre mark – for Les Combes. This corner is normally a good opportunity to overtake: you can line up someone along the straight and then hopefully outbrake them into the right-hander. This is immediately followed by a left-hander that is actually quite slow before you keep accelerating through Malmedy, which is nearly flat.

We now come to one of the most complex parts of the circuit. The downhill approach to Rivage is bumpy and the corner itself is off-camber, which makes it easy to outbrake yourself or suffer big understeer. Once you are out of Rivage there is a fast left-hander where you just touch the brakes for confidence as you head towards Pouhon. This too is a quick and difficult corner: there are actually two apexes, which you take in fifth, changing up to sixth gear as you go downhill towards Fagnes.

Fagnes is not a particularly difficult corner but there is some heavy braking beforehand, as you take it in second gear. Stavelot is trickier as it essentially consists of two quite long right-handers. The first one is straightforward enough but during the second one you have to change up a gear in the middle and this can cause some understeer if you are not careful. Hard on the power now and straight through Blanchimont, which is flat if you are feeling brave. I would say we are hitting about 300kph at this point in the Aston Martin. The circuit then goes uphill, which makes the braking quite tricky for the Bus Stop chicane. Because it's quite a steep climb you can normally brake a bit later than you think but the difficulty is obviously finding the right point. I normally look for a mark on the tarmac or something like that as a reference.

The Bus Stop chicane is slow but quite open with good visibility, so you can choose your line precisely to power onto the start-finish straight, which slopes downhill. Again because of the gradient you have the opposite problem to the Bus Stop: you sometimes have to brake earlier than you think, otherwise you can run wide – which is never the perfect way to start a lap!

Last year, the Peugeots set pole position and fastest race lap in Spa. Their times were very quick, but this year we definitely hope to be competitive with them. When you have the right feeling with the car at Spa, it's really one of the best experiences in the world.”

-ends-

For further information please contact:

Sarah Durose	+44 (0) 7801 265 126
Motorsport Communications Manager	e-mail: sdurose@astonmartin.com
Website:	www.astonmartinracing.com