

# STRAKKA RACING

## Strakka Out but not Down

There was an upbeat and positive mood in the Strakka Racing garage after the end of the Nürburgring 1000 Kilometres, even after the team's Ginetta-Zytek had come to a spectacular and untimely end following four and a half hours of very competitive running.

Qualifying fourth had placed first-stint driver Danny Watts in the perfect position to pace his first hour, watching and waiting, but never out of touch with the battle for the lead. After two hours he was still there, one of only four cars still on the lead lap. The former British Formula Renault champion and Great Britain A1GP racer then handed over to Nick Leventis for the middle portion of the race.

On his first visit to the Nürburgring, Nick was swiftly into his stride and lapping at a very competitive race pace, holding his own amid far more experienced professional LMP1 drivers. Throughout a solid double-stint he maintained his position, and shortly after the start of the fourth hour Nick handed the car back from fifth overall. Danny responded by promptly setting a new fastest lap for the car of 1:44.272 that included an outright quickest third sector. It would miss being the fastest lap of the race by a fraction over one-tenth of a second.



Danny Watts then began a demonstration drive that rapidly ate into the gap between fifth place and fourth; closing at between four and six seconds with each lap. Then, thirty-five minutes into that impressive stint, he came up to pass one of the slower GT2 cars. Evidently the other driver hadn't seen the fast-approaching prototype and started to "close the door" as the pair descended on the Ford Kurve. Fighting to avoid contact, Danny clipped the edge of the track, and the Ginetta-Zytek was instantly tipped into an uncontrollable slide that only ended when the car hit the barrier, spinning back across the track and hammering into the Armco on the other side. It was a heavy impact, and it was immediately obvious that the team's race was over.

"Of course it's enormously disappointing," said Piers Phillips, Team Manager, "but we must take the positives from the weekend. The car was fast and reliable, and

Danny's pace was phenomenal, but what really impressed me was Nick. His race pace was exemplary – I couldn't have asked for anything more. Once he'd settled down, his lap times just got steadily quicker, until he was consistently setting times that was just two or three seconds off those of the leading cars. For a young driver who's never been here before, that was highly commendable."

For his own part, Nick was keen to emphasise that Danny had been the innocent victim of circumstances. "Danny did a great job all weekend," he stressed. "He helped to put together a car that was a dream to drive, and he was consistently one of the quickest out there. Danny's an incredible driver. He knows exactly what he's doing and his performance today simply demonstrates what a talented racing driver he is."

This had been Strakka's fourth prototype race in the Le Mans Series. "It's still only our first year in LMP1," explains Nick. "We're at the beginning of what will be a lengthy programme for Strakka Racing in sportscars, and we're delighted to be at the stage where we can already be in contention for a podium. Fourth was within our grasp, and thanks to Danny, third had become a possibility. All credit to the guys in the garage, they did a tremendous job in preparing the car. The sad thing is, without the results on paper, we can't reward them with the credit they deserve."

The next and final round is at Silverstone in three weeks' time. "There's still one more race to go, and it's at our home circuit," added Nick. "It's the track I know better than any other, and we'll give it everything we've got."



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For details relating directly to this release, please contact [James Turner](#), Commercial Director at Strakka Racing.

