

## Communiqué n° 14

19/06/2005 16h20

14h – 16h

- At the hour, Boullion in the No. 16 Pescarolo Judd was still running 4 seconds a lap faster than Kristensen in the leading No. 3 Champion Audi. In GT1, when Sarrazin handed over to Turner the gap was 2 minutes, 3 seconds between their No. 59 Aston Martin and the leading No. 64 Corvette C6-R. Both duels were still undecided.
- Tomas Erdos in the No. 25 RML Lola MG suffered a major mishap in the Ford chicane, barely missing the tire wall. His rear wheel was badly damaged but regardless, he managed to limp into the pit entry.
- Leader Kristensen brought the No. 3 Champion Audi into the pits for fluids, water for him, fuel for the car, then was out again quickly, Boullion's No. 16 Pescarolo was getting ever closer.
- A punctured left rear tyre on the No. 61 Cirtek Ferrari 550 Maranello of Bouchet sent him into the pits.
- No. 4 Audi Playstation Team Oreca Audi driver Gounon handed over the car to Montagne, saying, "We have everything to lose, nothing to win."
- Frank Biela took over the third place No. 2 Champion Audi from McNish at 14:18, added fuel and tires.
- Hignett's No. 9 Team Jota-Zytek Engineering Zytek suffered an off at Indianapolis, ploughing through the gravel to thump the tire wall. He had to be towed out.
- After his earlier off at Indianapolis, Hignett in the No. 9 Zytec waited impatiently for assistance getting out of the gravel. At last, help arrived and he was finally able to get back on track, spraying gravel everywhere as he got under way again.
- In a rather astounding development, what appeared to be a routine pit stop for the No. 16 Pescarolo wound up with the car being rolled into the garage. However, its substantial lead over the No. 2 Audi kept it from losing the number 2 position. A driver (Comas) and tire change and it was out on the track again.
- A rash of stops found all of the LMP2s plus the No. 59 Aston Martin in the pits at the same time. Then, big trouble on the track for Aston. The No. 58 Aston slowed to a crawl, apparently out of fuel, as teammate No. 59 was rolled into the garage for a radiator problem. Unable to limp all the way to the pits, the No. 58 Aston stopped on the track at the Porsche curves, ultimately to be pushed to the side of the track. Aston's misfortune left first and second place in GT1 to the intrepid Corvettes, No. 64 ahead of No. 63.

- Twenty minutes before the hour, Comas in the No. 16 Pescarolo Judd slowed, turning laps well below the blistering pace seen from him most of the day.
- David Brabham said the No. 59 Aston Martin DBR9 was disabled by a water leak, and thye crew were fitting a new radiator. But didn't know what was wrong with the other Aston, still out on the course. A sign in the pitlane had been shown to the No. 58, "Enge, Box, Box." Should he have come in earlier?
- The No. 18 Rollcentre Dallara Judd was wheeled into the garage. Oil had been spraying from the rear end of the car, the same problem as yesterday. As Barbosa brought it into the pit lane, it dropped oil which ignited. Despite this, they were making a gallant effort to get the car out to make it to the finish. Finally, Martin Short brought the car back onto the track at 14:56.
- The No. 3 Champion Audi entered the pits at 14:56. It got fuel, a lot of it, but no tyres. Kristensen does about 1 hours and five to 10 minutes between fuel stops ... his timing couldn't be better. With just an hour left, record win number seven looked more and more likely.
- LMP1  
No. 3 Champion Audi, Kristensen  
No. 16 Pescarolo Judd, Comas  
No. 2 Champion Audi, Biela
- LMP2  
No. 37 Belmondo Courage Ford, Belmondo  
No. 25 RML Lola MG, Erdos  
No. 36 Belmondo Courage Ford, Sharpe
- GT1  
No. 64 Corvette C6-R, Magnussen  
No. 63 Corvette C6-R, O'Connell  
No. 59 Aston Martin DBR9, Turner
- GT2  
No. 71 Alex Job Porsche 911 GT3 RSR, Lieb  
No. 90 White Lightning Racing Porsche 911 GT3 RSR, Bergmeister  
No. 80 Flying Lizard Porsche 911 GT3 RSR, Pechnik
- Radiator problems that plagued the second-place No. 16 Pescarolo took at least some of the heat off of six-time Le Mans champion Tom Kristensen, who stayed in the cockpit of the No. 3 Champion Audi R8 on the last pitstop. Appropriately, his team decided to grant the popular Dane the honor of being the man to take the checkered flag for a record seventh individual win, his record sixth in a row, and the first Le Mans 24 win for Champion Racing.
- Twenty-one of the 49 starters had retired by the top of the last hour, many due to problems related to the blistering heat of the day.
- The LMP2 third-place No. 36 Belmondo Courage struggled to keep rolling on the track, desperate to be classified as a finishing team and attain the podium

position.

- Meanwhile, its sister car, the class-leading No. 37, pulled off the track short of the pit entrance, badly beaten and hard pressed to run. It ostensibly was waiting for the close of the race to make a last lap effort to cross the finish line. Team owner Paul Belmondo bided his time in the already-hot cockpit of the Gulf-sponsored car.
- This gave the No. 25 RML Lola MG an excellent chance to make the best of a very trying day. Once the Lola MG passed the Belmondo Courage, it would move into the lead in the LMP2 class. RML team owner Ray Mallock expressed his relief. "It's been a tough one - but they generally are."
- The powerful No. 59 Aston remained in the pits following the radiator problems that sidelined the extremely popular British programme's chances of a class victory. Word was that the Aston would pull out of the pits toward the end of the race to salute the team's loyal fans.
- The No. 2 Champion Audi made its final pit stop, three-time Le Mans winner Frank Biela handling driving chores.
- With the end almost in sight, the pressure finally appeared to be off at the front of the race. Having been chased right up to the closing hours, Tom Kristensen was able to take things relatively easy in the No. 3 Champion Audi, with the comfort zone of a two-lap advantage over Erik Comas in the No. 16 Pescarolo Judd. Comas spent the final hour running ten seconds or more off the car's earlier pace, probably to avoid overheating the engine.
- Frank Biela continued what was almost a 'stealth' run in the No. 2 Champion Audi, third overall and seven laps off the lead; even the car's final pit-stop was almost ignored by the scores of pit-lane photographers and reporters.
- Similarly, LM GT1 seemed to have been settled by the late problems that struck the Aston Martin squad. The No. 64 Corvette C6.R continued its relentless, almost trouble-free run to the flag ahead of the sister No. 63 Corvette, a brilliant Le Mans debut for the new C6.R. With the retirements and other problems hitting various LMP1 runners, the No.64 car had made it up to fifth overall, although over 20 laps down on the leading Audi.
- Thomas Erdos led the LMP2 class in the No. 25 RML Lola MG; given all the problems that have hit cars in this category, it was almost surprising that nothing major happened for over half an hour. Erdos enjoyed a five-lap lead over Adam James Sharpe in the No. 36 Belmondo Courage Ford.
- The only class left unresolved with 20 minutes remaining was the LM GT2 category. As they had for several hours, the No. 71 Alex Job Porsche 911 GT3 RSR and No. 90 White Lightning Racing Porsche 911 GT3 RSR were separated by only a lap. As the race wound down, Marc Lieb was driving the Alex Job entry, matching the lap times of White Lightning driver Timo Bernhard almost to the tenth of a second.

- After all the incidents, accidents and general mayhem that had gone before, the final twenty minutes of the 24 Hours of Le Mans came as almost an anticlimax. With most of the podium positions in the different classes already decided, the cars could afford to cruise to the finish.
- Right on 15:40 hrs Tom Kristensen brought the No. 3 Champion Audi down pit-lane for the car's final stop. When he took the flag he had been in the car for three and a half hours in blistering heat; but all that faded into insignificance in comparison with the magnitude of his achievement. This was Kristensen's sixth win in succession and seventh overall – a new record. One almost felt sorry for his team mates JJ Lehto and Marco Werner, largely overlooked as the media concentrated on their big story.
- Second place went to the No. 16 Pescarolo Judd, with Erik Comas doing the final stint. The car had the speed to beat the Audi, but not the all-important reliability; it spent fourteen minutes longer in the pits than the Audi, and the drivers finally had to back off to minimise engine cooling issues. Third went to the sister car to the winner, the No. 2 Champion Audi, with Frank Biela celebrating another great performance at Le Mans by driving to the finish.
- LMP2 proved to be the most incident-hit category, with the lead changing countless times. Thomas Erdos managed to have a trouble-free final stint to claim a well-deserved win in the No. 25 RML Lola MG, a comfortable four laps clear of Adam James Sharpe in the No. 36 Belmondo Courage Ford, in turn, Sharpe was five laps ahead of the sister No. 37 Belmondo Courage Ford.
- Once the Aston Martin DBR9 cars hit serious problems, there was no doubt about the LM GT1 one-two; Corvette, and Corvette. Jan Magnussen brought the No. 64 C6-R home to claim the victory, two laps ahead of the sister No. 63 car, with Johnny O'Connell at the wheel; they crossed the line in a formation finish. Stephane Sarrazin brought the No. 59 Aston Martin DBR9 home in third to claim a consolation podium place.
- Only the LM GT2 fight went down to the wire, with gentleman-race Leo Hindery being given the honour of bringing home the No. 71 Alex Job Porsche 911 GT3 RSR just a lap ahead of Timo Bernhard in the No. 90 White Lightning Racing Porsche 911 GT3 RSR; third, eight laps further down, was the No. 80 Flying Lizard Porsche 911 GT3 RSR, with Lonnie Pechnik at the wheel.
- Remarkably, the cars crossed the line in an almost perfect formation; the top four LMP1 cars following each other past the chequered flag which signalled the end of their endurance test, the 73<sup>rd</sup> running of the Le Mans 24 Hours.

