



INFORMATIONS

DEPARTEMENT COMMUNICATION

PRESSE

24 HEURES DU MANS® 18-19 JUIN 2005

Test day: Sunday 5th June 2005

73rd race: 18th & 19th June 2005

ALL OUT FOR VICTORY...

The countdown to the 73rd Le Mans 24 Hours has begun. 2005 will see an all-out battle at every level: for outright victory and for success in each of the four categories.

Both the prototype and grand touring categories have one point in common, the high quality of the entry. This makes forecasting winners a risky business; an excellent sign because it promises a very open race with numerous teams in a variety of well-prepared cars fighting for victory.

Among the prototypes the three Audis must start favourite. Two are entered by Champion Racing from America and the third by Hugues de Chaunac's Oreca outfit. Their strong point is their bulletproof reliability but this year they have to cope with regulations that restrict them in terms of performance and aerodynamics. The aim of the legislators is to encourage the new generation prototypes represented by Courage, Pescarolo and the latest Mugen-engined Dome. The results of the recent Spa 1000 Kms race prove that the rule makers have chosen the right path, as the Pescarolo was as quick in practice and in the first part of the race as the Audi. While on the subject of Courage it is great to see him back in LMP 1 while in LMP 2 his cars have met with enormous success as there are no fewer than seven down to race in the Sarthe. Two have been entered by Paul Belmondo Racing with backing from two legendary Le Mans names, Ford (thanks to Ford France) and Gulf. No round-up of this category would be complete without mentioning Vanina Ickx, Jackie's daughter, who came third overall at Spa in the Dallara-Judd entered by the British team Rollcentre Racing which is also bringing a Nissan-powered version to Le Mans. A foretaste of things to come...

In the Grand Touring category the big news is the official return of Aston Martin to Le Mans, a marvellous challenge in itself. The DBR9s will be up against tough opposition in the form of the two new Corvette C6-Rs, the Ferrari F550 Maranellos and the 575 GTC. This three-handed combat can be summed up as follows: in 2004 the Corvettes revenged themselves on the Prodrive Ferrari Maranellos victorious in 2003. In the meantime the British team had devoted itself to the design and development of the Aston Martins and at Sebring in March they beat the Corvettes. The Ferraris, though, are still redoubtable rivals as proved by their first place in LM GT1 in the Spa 1000 Kms thanks to the BMS Scuderia Italia squad, the 2004 FIA-GT Championship winners. In addition, the opening round of the 2005 season at Monza was won... by the Larbre Competition F550 Maranello also entered for Le Mans. A mouth-watering battle in perspective! In LM GT2 there is also an increasingly varied field including Porsche, Panoz, Ferrari, TVR and Spyker, yet another indication that the 2005 Le Mans field is made up of teams that are all out for victory.

LATEST NEWS...

- **Honorary starter** - Dr. Martin Winterkorn, the Chairman of the Audi AG Board will be the honorary starter: he will lower the French flag to unleash the field in the 73rd Le Mans 24 Hours.
- **Week 23** - Apart from the time devoted to the installation of the different structures and getting the various circuits ready, the week between the Test Day and start of the 24-Hour week will provide the teams with opportunities to test on the Bugatti circuit. Manufacturers too will be able to use it to introduce potential clients and enthusiasts to their products. These sessions are open to the public: entrance costs 3 euros (free for ACO members and 24-Hour ticket holders).
- **Saturday 11th June 2005** at 18h00 (50 years day for day after the 11th June 1955 catastrophe) the ACO is organising a small ceremony to unveil a commemorative plaque on the pits straight. Pierre Levegh's accident in his Mercedes-Benz caused the death of 79 spectators and injured many more. This memorial underlines the ACO's desire to make sure its circuit remains one of the safest in the world, and to emphasize safety as one of the primordial elements of motorcar development.
- The ACO has decided to hire a **TGV** so that certain spectators from the Parisian region do not have to leave the circuit at around 20h00. The train will depart at 23h59 and a shuttle service will bring people from the circuit to the Le Mans station from 23h00 onwards. Thus, they can attend the build-up and then see the thrilling battle during the opening hours of the race and enjoy the special ambience as night falls. After a problem-free trip to the station they can relax and 56 minutes later they will arrive at Paris-Montparnasse.
The SSP ACO is looking after this service; it is not available from the SNCF. Ticket prices: 65 euros in second class and 89 euros in first.

For further information, download the order form from: www.lemans.org

(All schedules and prices in appendix)

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25/05/05