



GOLD *Access*

17h - 19h

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Samedi 16th june 2006

17H - 19H



24 HEURES DU MANS®
17-18 JUIN 2006

Partenaires "Privilège" des **24 HEURES DU MANS** 2006





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samedi 17 juin 2006 - 17h21

> FRANTIC FIRST TWENTY MINUTES ENDS WITH SAFETY CAR ON TRACK



The 74th running of the 24 Hours of Le Mans started at precisely 17:00 hrs. The Football World Cup has caused the start to be put back one hour. The fifty teams can look forward to around 370 laps and over 5,000 km of racing. The weather forecast is good but there could a chance of rain and thunderstorms later on Sunday afternoon. The ambient temperature is 27° C; it is also very humid. The drivers now have to use either 'cool suits' or air conditioning. The cars set out on an installation lap and then returned to their pits to top up with fuel before the start.

As the flag dropped the No.35 G-Force Racing Courage Judd, driven by Ed Morris, pitted straightaway with gear selection problems. It was stuck in 4th gear. At the end of the first lap No.91 T2M Motorsport Porsche 911 GT3 RS also came into the pits with a problem with its front left tyre.

The No.20 Bruneau Pierre Pilbeam Judd pitted because he thought he had a 'drive through' penalty for a jumped start. He didn't: it was a problem with team communications.

The No.7 Audi Sport Team Joest R10 driven by Alan McNish put in a 3:33.933 lap; this is already quicker than last year's fastest.

At 17:16 No.69 BMS Scuderia Italia Aston Martin DBR9 crashed heavily on the exit of the Porsche curves. The Aston Martin, with Fabio Babini driving, slammed into the wall on the right-hand side before bouncing across the track into the opposite wall, one wheel completely torn off. Babini was quickly out of the car, apparently unhurt. The incident brought out the safety car for the first time in 2006.

samedi 17 juin 2006 - 17h41

> PIT LANE DRAMA UNDER SAFETY CAR



Following the earlier accident involving the No.69 BMS Scuderia Italia Aston Martin DBR9, the safety car spent two laps at the head of the field; the period saw many cars head for the pits, and drama struck at the head of the GT1 class.

There were all sorts of drama in the pits while the safety car was out. The No.6 Lister Storm Racing car was in its garage to have a transmission bearing changed. The No.9 Creation Autosportif Judd, which was being driven by Jamie Campbell-Walter, was also wheeled into its garage with a rear brake problem. Campbell-Walter went off briefly when the caliper seized so he brought the car in. The team set about changing both rear callipers and bled the brakes.

The No.007 Aston Martin Racing DBR9 car made what appeared to be a routine stop when the safety car appeared, but after it had returned to the track a fluid leak of some kind was obvious in the pits; it returned on the next lap with the leak significantly worse and went straight into the garage as the crew set about rectifying the problem.

The No.35 G-Force Racing Courage Judd had further troubles and also pitted, it appeared to be suffering from serious gear selection problems caused by an electronics problems.

It seems the crash which triggered the safety car period was caused by oil on the track. The safety car pulled in after two laps and racing got under way again.

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samedi 17 juin 2006 - 18h30

> THE ACTION GOES ON WITH SPINS AND PUNCTURES



At 5:43pm the No.14 Racing For Holland Dome Judd, driven by Jan Lammers, was given a stop-go penalty for crossing the white line on the pit-lane exit; before it made its enforced stop, the car had been running as high as third, but dropped down to fifth.

No.9 Creation Autosportif Judd went back out it seems the brake problems may not have been completely rectified. At 5:51, No.20 Bru-neau Pierre Pilbeam Judd made it back to the pits after a spin at the

Playstation Chicane.

At 5:51pm the two Audi Sport Team Joest R10 cars made routine pit stops, the No.7 car with McNish at the wheel coming in fractionally ahead of Frank Biela in the sister No.8 car; the two had spent several laps squabbling over the race lead. Both went out again but Biela dropped a few seconds, which was enough to allow the No.16 Pescarolo Judd to get up to second.

Gary Pratt of GM told us "We are fighting very hard to stay in front. This is more like an ALMS sprint race, rather than an endurance race!"

At 5:58pm, No.69 BMS Scuderia Italia Aston Martin DBR9 was officially retired. Christian Pescatori said: "It is very disappointed, but we'll be coming back next year," said Christian Pescatori, one of the car's three drivers.

Ten minutes later Johnny O'Connell, driving the No.63 Corvette Racing C6.R, spun at the entry to the Porsche curves; after he got the car pointing the right way he went straight to the pits. "I hit some debris on the track, then went into a slow, lazy spin, and ended up hitting the barriers with the left side of the car. The rear wing has been changed, as well as the rear left wheel arch, and the brakes on the front left," he said.

The No.50 Larbre Competition Team Ferrari 550 Maranello driven by Gabriel Gardell slowed out on the track with a rear left puncture at Terte Rouge. It was a very long way back to the pits; on the way back the flailing tyre did quite a lot of damage, and when he made it back to the pits the crew set to repairing the car.

samedi 17 juin 2006 - 18h55

> FRUSTRATION FOR YOUNG ED MORRIS



Ed Morris, in the No.35 G-Force Courage Judd, has been having a frustrating race so far. He has been in and out of the pits five times. Initially the team thought the problem lay with the gear shift electronics, but then realised that the engine was cutting out at 9,000 rpm; annoyingly, it was perfectly alright at low revs. Having already changed the ECU, the team were forced to consider replacing the entire wiring loom.

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samedi 17 juin 2006 - 19h04

> 5PM TO 7PM: FRANTIC ACTION IN THE FIRST TWO HOURS



When the French flag was waved by Jean-Martin Folz, President of PSA Peugeot-Citroen, on the stroke of 5pm, the action got under way in the 24 Hours of Le Mans; and, less than four minutes later, history was made when a lap was led by a diesel-powered car for the first time ever. Allan McNish, in the No.7 Audi Sport Team Joest R10, had the honour of leading that first lap.

After that, the incidents came fast and furious. The two Audis set a furious pace at the head of the field, McNish pursued by Frank Biela in the sister No.8 Audi; they quickly pulled out a lead over their pursuers, who were led by the No.16 and No.17 Pescarolo Judd cars.

It was all for nothing; on lap 5 the No.69 BMS Scuderia Italia Aston Martin DBR9 slammed into the wall on one side of the Porsche curves, bouncing across the track with one wheel completely torn off to slide to a halt against the opposite wall. The driver, Fabio Babini, was unhurt, but the car was terminally damaged, becoming the race's first retirement.

The safety car came out while the debris was cleared up, but this caused more problems. Many cars headed for the pits, including the top four in GT1; the two works Corvette C6.R cars, the No.64 and 63 cars, made it out ahead of the two works Aston Martin DBR9 cars, with the No.009 getting out before the sister No.007 car. But after Darren Turner went back out in the No.007 car, it was obvious that the car had been losing fluid while stationary; he came back in on the next lap with the leak having worsened and the team wheeled it into the garage.

They quickly diagnosed a broken oil line, together with a damaged undertray; according to team boss Dave Richards, Turner had done the damage on the curbs in the pit-lane entry. Six laps were lost while the damage was repaired.

The drama in GT1 continued when Johnny O'Connell, in the No.63 Corvette C6.R, hit debris and went into a slow spin in the Porsche curves; he brushed the barrier and came to rest facing the wrong way. After spinning it around and getting back to the pits the crew set about replacing the damaged parts, dropping two laps in the process.

After two hours of the race the two Audis were circulating at the head of the field with a handy lead, the No.7 car some 30s ahead of the No.8 Audi; the superior fuel consumption of the diesel-powered Audi enabling them to run longer between stops than their pursuers. They were led by the two Pescarolo Judd entries, the No.16 car just a handful of seconds ahead of the sister No.17 entry.

An equally fierce battle for LMP2 raged, the top three running on the fringes of the top ten. The No.39 Chamberlain-Synergy Lola AER car held the advantage for much of the time, just over a minute ahead of the No.22 Rollcentre Radical Judd car; the No.25 RML Lola AER held third, only seconds from the back of the Rollcentre car.

The problems which hit the works teams allowed others to get into the top three in GT1, although the No.64 Corvette C6.R ended the period leading the class, less than 10s clear of the No.009 Aston Martin DBR9; third was held by the No.72 Luc Alphand Corvette C5-R three minutes further back.

In a remarkable performance the No.76 IMSA Performance Matmut Porsche 911 GT3 RSR had made it into the class lead – remarkable because the car had started at the back of the grid. The car was being hotly pursued by the No.87 Scuderia Ecosse Ferrari F430 GT, less than 10s back; the No.90 White Lightning Porsche was in third, a minute further back.

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