



GOLD *Access*

21h - 23h

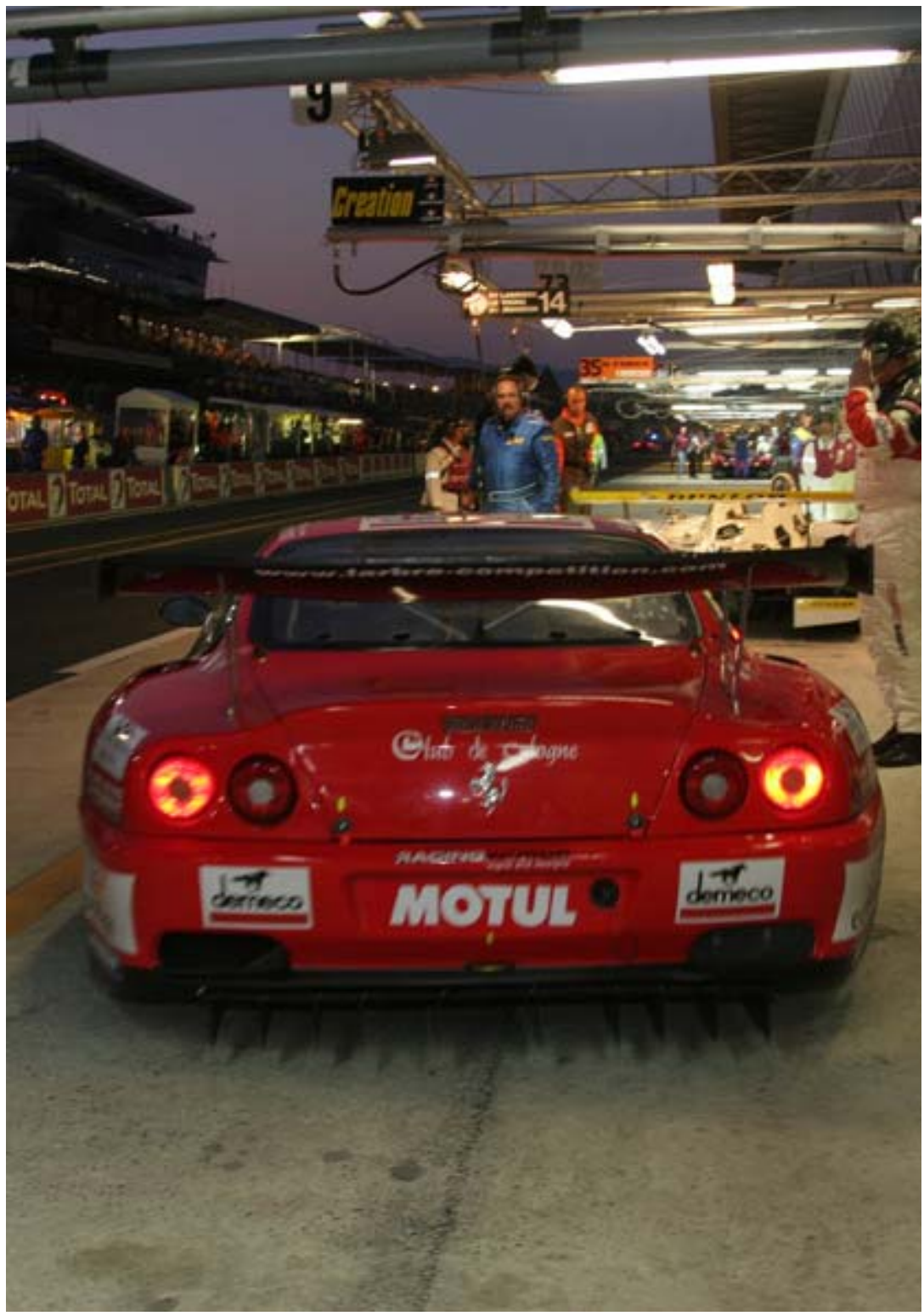
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Saturday 16 June 2006

21H - 23H

24 HEURES DU MANS®

17-18 JUIN 2006



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





samedi 17 juin 2006 - 21h25

> ASSORTED QUOTES; TECHNICAL PROBLEMS FOR NO.12 COURAGE



Eric Hélyary, one of the drivers of the No.17 Pescarolo Sport Judd, told us: "We are rather surprised by the pace of the Audi cars. Looks like they didn't show us all they had during practice! I have doubts about their reliability. We will keep on doing a quiet race, with our own rhythm We are very confident about where we will finish tomorrow."

The No.12 Courage Competition Mugen was spotted slowing down and then it went into the gravel trap at Indianapolis. It subsequently escaped from the trap but was limping

slowly back to the pits.

Darren Turner, driver of the No.007 Aston Martin DBR9, explained the earlier problems for the car. "I'd been having radio problems, and unfortunately I only heard the instruction to come into the pits after I'd passed the pitlane entrance", he said. "I then had to cross the kerbs to get into the pitlane, and that damaged the sump. It's very frustrating, but it's still early in the race and anything can happen."

Pedro Lamy talked to us about his stint in the No.009 Aston Martin Racing DBR9 "It is going fine. The only issues I have had involved traffic, which was really bad for some reason. But the car is performing well and the tyres were fine when I double-stinted them."

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samedi 17 juin 2006 - 21h47

> 7PM-9PM: LE MANS IS UNPREDICTABLE

Spectacular racing, spectacular mishaps



Hours three and four of the 24 Heures du Mans were action-packed, a testament to the marvelous surprises that await acolytes of sports car racing. At 19:00 local time, the Audi Sport Team Joest R10s, No. 7 and No. 8 were comfortably leading the race, a lap ahead of the No.16 and 17 Pescarolo Sport Judd duo, and at the front the race was proceeding pretty much as expected.

By 21:00 the No.8 Audi, with Emanuele Pirro at the wheel, remained in the lead, almost a full lap ahead of the second place No.16 Pescarolo Judd of Erik Comas and the No.17 Pescarolo of Sebastien Loeb. Tom Kristensen was putting in some very fast laps in the No.7 Audi, but by then was down in twelfth place, seven laps behind the leader, having hit problems.

Difficulties befell the No.7 Audi twice during the third and fourth hours. A brief off-track excursion around 19:15 happened as the car cut a corner and lost some time; no explanation for this momentary aberration has been forthcoming.

Shortly before 20:30 the No.37 Belmondo Racing Courage Ford suffered a catastrophic tire failure near Indianapolis corner, tearing the entire rear bodywork and wing from the car and pitching it across the track into the armco on driver's left, removing the front bodywork. The car came to a halt and its driver, Yann Clairay, got out unaided, as the marshals extinguished a small blaze on the grass behind it.

The No.7 Audi R10, which had been immediately behind the No.37 Courage at the time, dived into the pit lane at the next opportunity. It was wheeled into the garage, jacked up, and did not return to the race for over twenty minutes. Danish television reported the car had a smashed windscreen, and also required new fuel injectors, a new engine ECU, and a new fuel filter. Driver Dindo Capello had earlier been heard saying the engine of the No.7 was not running cleanly.

Elsewhere on track, action abounded. The No.007 Aston Martin missed Mulsanne corner entirely, and made an intentional 'bootlegger turn' on the runoff road to rejoin the track. The No. 13 Courage Competition Mugen, in the hands of former Formula 1 driver Shinji Nakano stopped on the grass near Mulsanne Corner and was quickly removed to safety by the marshals. The No.61 Russian Age Ferrari 550 Maranello suffered a second tire failure just after starting a lap, and limped around almost the entire circuit to its pit, rejoining the race after losing a number of laps. The No.63 Corvette Racing C6.R of Max Papis suffered an unexplained problem with its rear bodywork, which was temporarily fixed in the pits.

It seemed as if there was a major occurrence on track every few laps, while at the same time the competition itself was highly entertaining. This is often the way at Le Mans, as the sun begins to set. The Circuit de la Sarthe provides plenty of surprises, and confounds prognosticators.

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samedi 17 juin 2006 - 21h54

> THE SUN SETS AND THE LIGHTS COME ON

As the evening progresses the headlights of the cars begin to shine through the gathering gloom.



Just before 21:30 the No.13 Courage Competition Mugen became the second official retirement with a broken gearbox.

No.12 Courage Competition Mugen, which had been going slowly and visiting the gravel traps from time to time, returned to the pits, where the team changed the left side steering arm and also removed a lot of gravel.

A problem came up for the No.76 IMSA Performance Porsche; it stopped out on the circuit for a while, but eventually made it back to the pits,

where the team diagnosed an electrical fault.

During what appeared to be a routine pit-stop for the No.7 Audi Sport Team Joest R10, the pit crew quickly removed the engine cover and the team appeared to make some minor adjustments to the right bank of cylinders; this happened on the pit apron, and the car was quickly back out on track.

With the sun having set, temperatures are falling, which helps the engines produce more power; it is possible that some drivers take the opportunity to put in some quick times.

samedi 17 juin 2006 - 22h35

> DARKNESS DESCENDS AND ANOTHER CAR IS FORCED TO ABANDON



The No.19 Chamberlain-Synergy Lola AER pitted and looked set for a fairly lengthy pit stop as a result of trouble with the turbo pressure. The turbo and wastegate were changed and an oil leak on the left side of the engine needed to be investigated as well.

At 9:57pm there was much back-slapping and delight all around after Ron Fellows came in to the pits, having done a double stint in the No.63 Corvette Racing C6.R. Setting some great lap times, over the double stint Fellows was hauling in the No.66 Acemco Saleen, which was fifth

in GT1.

GM Road Racing Group Manager Steve Wesoloski told us: "That's the Ron Fellows we all know and love; he was the fastest GT1 car out there on his second stint. He was absolutely perfect, doing exactly what we needed to do, making up four seconds a lap. In the two stints, he picked up almost a minute on the Saleen."

Sadly the No.77 Multimatic Panoz Esperante, which had hoped to challenge the Porsches in LM GT2, was forced to abandon with terminal electrical problems. This brought the tally of retirements to four: the No.37 Paul Belmondo Racing Courage Ford (accident), the No.13 Courage Competition Mugen (gearbox) and the No.69 BMS Scuderia Italia Aston Martin DBR9 (accident).

It was interesting to note that the two works Aston Martin cars have been double-stinting their tyres, whereas the Corvettes have not. This should have given the Aston Martins an advantage, so the Corvette Racing team are surprised - and pleased - that they are still in control of the class.

At 22:28, after almost five and a half hours of racing, the No.16 Pescarolo Sport Judd slowed on the Mulsanne straight as a result of what looked like the engine cutting out intermittently. Nicolas Minassian managed to get the car back to the pits where it went straight into the garage.

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samedi 17 juin 2006 - 23h00

> NO.16 PESCAROLO SPORT JUDD LOSING TIME IN THE PITS....



There was a lot of work going on in the Pescarolo pits. Following the earlier problem which hit Nicolas Minassian, the No.16 Pescarolo Judd was in its garage with the engine cover off and several engineers working on it. It returned to the race after losing about 17 minutes - but not for long. Minassian was in again at the end of the very next lap, and again into the garage. Another five minutes were lost, putting the car down to ninth overall.

The No.9 Creation Autosportif Judd picked up a puncture at the Mulsanne corner, and was forced to make a very slow trip back to the pits; the pay-off was that the car didn't suffer any significant bodywork damage.

The No.22 Rollcentre Racing Radical Judd, which had been leading LMP2, came into the pits and was pushed straight into the garage for work on the front of the car.

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