



GOLD *Access*

13h - 15h

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Sunday 18 June 2006

13H - 15H



24 HEURES DU MANS®
17-18 JUIN 2006

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





dimanche 18 juin 2006 - 13h07

> RETIREMENTS AFTER 20 HOURS OF RACING



Official Retirements at 13:05 after 20 hours and five minutes of racing:

- No.69 BMS Scuderia Italia Aston Martin DBR9 - accident;
- No.37 Paul Belmondo Racing Courage Ford - accident caused by a tyre blow-out;
- No.77 Multimatic Panoz Esperante - electrical problems;
- No.85 Spyker Squadron B.V. C8 - engine failure caused by oil leak;
- No.13 Courage Competition Mugen - broken gearbox;
- No.61 Russian Age Racing Ferrari 550 Maranello - engine

- failure caused by loss of coolant;
- No.98 Noel Del Bello Porsche 911 GT3 RSR - accident at Mulsanne corner;
- No.35 G-Force Racing Courage Judd - gearbox failure;
- No.5 Swiss Spirit Courage Judd - gearbox failure;
- No.90 White Lightning Racing Porsche 911 GT3 RSR - accident;
- No.91 T2M Motorsport Porsche 911 GT3 RS - stopped on circuit ran out of petrol;
- No.36 Paul Belmondo Racing Courage Ford - engine failure;
- No.14 Racing For Holland Dome Judd - accident;
- No.86 Spyker Squadron B.V. C8 engine - engine failure caused by a dropped valve;
- No.12 Courage Competition Mugen - engine failure;
- No.67 Convers Menx Team Ferrari 550 Maranello - accident;
- No.6 Lister Storm Racing - accident;
- No.39 Chamberlain-Synergy Lola AER - transmission failure;
- No.50 Larbre Competition Team Ferrari 550 Maranello - clutch failure;
- No.30 Welter Gerard WR Peugeot - caught fire;
- No.76 IMSA Performance Matmut Porsche 911 GT3 RSR - engine failure.

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dimanche 18 juin 2006 - 13h10

> 11AM - 1PM: MORE OF THE SAME, GREAT RACING

There are four hours left in this race, and one might reasonably claim the home stretch is in sight. So far, it is gloriously sunny and very hot in Le Mans, and the rumour of coming rain remains unfulfilled. Those fans who departed for the night streamed back into the grandstands and have also been enjoying the wide array of other entertainments offered at this track. For car enthusiasts, Le Mans is unlike any other modern race since the campgrounds and parking areas are tantamount to a Concours d'Elegance, or perhaps a museum of performance automobiles.



People-spotting is also rewarding at the world's premier endurance race. Two-time Formula 1 Driver's World Champion Emerson Fittipaldi has been making his first visit to Le Mans, supporting his nephew Christian competing here this weekend

While the running order at the top of each class has remained fairly static the excitement is unabated, mostly due to fantastic displays of racing. Just prior to 13:00 Erik Comas, in the No.16 Pescarolo Judd, and Tom Kristensen in the No.7 Audi Sport Team Joest R10, had a furious battle as Kristensen repeatedly set up to pass and was baulked. The two duelled for about half a lap before

the Audi was able to power past. It is a testament to the drivers and their cars that after almost twenty hours of racing they can still maintain this level of speed and competition. If there was a problem, it related only to the fact that Comas was, in fact, sixteen laps behind Kristensen at the time.

At the front, the No.8 Audi R10 retained control of the race, still lapping consistently under 3:50, often in the high 3:30s. Four and a half laps behind, the No.17 Pescarolo Judd continued to shadow the Biela/Pirro/Werner Audi, ready to take the lead should the R10 suffer a failure. Thirteen laps further back, the No.7 Audi R10 is keeping pace in terms of lap times, its track position reflecting the numerous difficulties the car has experienced. The latest came during the 20th hour when it inexplicably pitted for a new nose. Tom Kristensen commented earlier in the day that the car has been very fast and handles well, but "you cannot win Le Mans if you park the car for the night."

In LM P2, the No.25 RML Lola AER continued to lead the class despite a couple of lengthy pit stops, including one reportedly needed to eliminate a misfire resulting from earlier stop. Thirty laps behind the race leader, the No.25 car was nonetheless shown on the timing board in a comfortable ninth place overall, fourteen laps ahead of the No.27 Miracle Motorsports Courage AER, itself two laps up on the No.24 Binnie Motorsports Lola Zytek running third in the class.

In GT1, the battle between the No.009 Aston Martin Racing DBR9, in the hands of Pedro Lamy for most of this stint, and the No.64 Corvette Racing C6.R continued at the same intensity. Matching lap times as these teams have for almost the entire race, this may go down as one of the most competitive class competitions in Le Mans history. It is certainly amongst the hardest fought. Only four laps behind the Corvette the second factory Aston could be in with a chance of victory should anything befall the leaders. The No.007 DBR9 is, in fact, often lapping faster than the two cars it is trying to chase down.

In GT2, this stint was marked by the heart-broken announcement from the No.76 IMSA Performance Matmut Porsche 911 GT3 RSR team that the car had retired with engine failure. The team had worked valiantly to stay in the race, but it was not to be.

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> CORVETTE IN TROUBLE AND SEBAH AUTOMOTIVE PORSCHE STRANDED...



Just after 12:00 the No.89 Sebah Automotive Porsche 911 GT3 RSR stopped on the start-finish straight; when it couldn't get going again, eight marshals had to push it all the way to the pit lane exit. They parked the car up only yards from the pit exit but the team were not permitted to get to the car to help.

The No.83 Seikel Motorsport Porsche 911 GT3 RSR spent a long time in the pits while the team sorted out a problem with the gearbox; but such was the size of their lead of the GT2 category that

they maintained a lead of over six laps.

At 13:15 after 20hrs 15 minutes, the No.9 Creation Autosportif Judd officially retired with engine problems. It had run impressively during the early part of the race and was close to the pace of the Audis and Pescarolos; later in the race it was dogged by a series of problems.

At 13:20 the No.63 Corvette Racing C6.R made an unscheduled pit-stop and was pushed back into its garage smelling very badly. The team explained that the smell was burning gear oil; they had already topped up the differential when they saw a temperature spike, then the pressure suddenly dropped. That tipped them off that they had a leak, so next they had to figure out what was leaking. They diagnosed a problem in the gearbox, and removed the rear transaxle to effect repairs.

The No.33 Intersport Racing Lola AER went into the garage, only to emerge a few moments later with its exhaust wired back on. The team hope it will hold together to the finish.

dimanche 18 juin 2006 - 14h34

> ASTON MARTIN LOSES LM GT1 LEAD TO CORVETTE.....



The No.22 Rollcentre Racing Radical Judd has been battling all sorts of problems during the race; it was forced back into the garage again because the gearbox had stopped working properly and put itself into a safe 'get you home' mode. Then the radio went wrong, followed by the car not starting. Everything pointed toward a battery problem so the team set to work on the electrics.

At 14:00 several teams began to have 'wet' tyres ready in the pit garages. This tied in with the weather forecast that suggested it might rain later in the afternoon; at the time, there were some clouds building up.

At 14:05 Stephane Ortelli brought GT1 class leader, the No.009 Aston Martin Racing DBR9, into the pits for an unscheduled stop and it went straight into the garage. Within a couple of minutes the No.64 Corvette C6.R had moved into the class lead. The Aston Martin had a clutch problem and the team set to the task of replacing it.

The No.24 Binnie Motorsports Lola Zytek, driven by Yojiro Terada, spun on the exit of the Dunlop chicane and came to rest under the Dunlop Bridge, putting gravel all over the circuit in the process. The engine refused to restart and the car was hauled to safety but Terada managed to get the car going again.

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> 1PM TO 3PM: THE END IS IN SIGHT

With only two hours to go, most of the teams are doing the only thing they can – ‘hurry up and wait’. This is the time when the drivers become truly paranoid, imagining every noise, every unexpected bump is presaging imminent equipment failure. The bad news for some is that such things really are harbingers of doom.



In a heartbreaking development for the works Aston Martin team, the No.009 Aston Martin DBR9 was forced into the pits to have the clutch replaced. It came down pit lane at 14:03, and emerged from the garage just over 50 minutes later

That handed the lead of the GT1 class to the No.64 Corvette C6.R, which had been within a lap of the No.009 Aston Martin for hour after hour; the Aston had led the class almost continuously for over twelve hours, but the clutch problem looks set to have dropped the car off the GT1 podium.

Moving up to second in class was the sister No.007 Aston Martin; since it is some five laps back from the leading Corvette, it will take problems for the Corvette to give them any chance of the class win. Third in class was the No.72 Luc Alphand Corvette C5-R, a further three laps back.

There was no change at the front, with all three cars seeming to have settled for finishing in their current positions. The No.8 Audi Sport Team Joest R10 continues to hold a four-lap lead over the No.17 Pescarolo Judd, which in turn is nine laps clear of the sister No.7 Audi; all three cars are now pacing themselves to the finish, generally running about 10s a lap slower than the fastest they have managed.

It is a similar story in GT2, where the No.83 Seikel Porsche 911 GT3 RSR continues to lap with remarkably consistency, six laps ahead of the No.81 Team LNT Panoz Esperante; the third-placed car, the No.87 Scuderia Ecosse Ferrari F430 GT, is another ten laps back, about ten minutes ahead of the car in fourth; there is little incentive for any of the teams to raise their pace, as the gaps are now too great to be bridged.

The only minor drama came in LM P2 when the third placed car, the No.24 Binnie Motorsport Lola Zytek, spun coming out of the Dunlop chicane, spraying gravel across the circuit and stopping sideways to the track under the Dunlop Bridge. The driver, Yojiro Terada, couldn't get the car restarted, so the marshals hauled it to safety, where Terada was able to get the car started and continue.

The No.25 RML Lola AER continues to lead the class in tenth overall, with a huge fifteen-lap lead over the No.27 Miracle Courage AER, which was a couple of laps ahead of the No.24 car; as with the other classes, it seems the teams may simply be pacing themselves to the finish.

The pit lane is becoming an increasingly forlorn place, with many of the garage doors down and the pit wall stands dismantled. There may be other retirements before the race finishes; the No.53 JLOC Isao Noritake Lamborghini Murcielago came to a halt on the approach to the Porsche curves, and their race may be run.

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