

SPA SPEED BUT NO POLE FOR TOYOTA GAZOO RACING

Friday 5 May 2017

TOYOTA GAZOO Racing set the fastest lap but missed out on pole position during an incident-packed qualifying for the 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps, the second round of the 2017 FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC).

A red flag, traffic and other dramas entertained the fans during the 25-minute session, in which Stéphane Sarrazin recorded the quickest time. However, with the starting grid determined by the average of two drivers' best laps, the #9 TS050 HYBRID crew of Stéphane, Nicolas Lapierre and Yuji Kunimoto will start third.

In the #7 TS050 HYBRID, Mike Conway and Kamui Kobayashi earned another front-row start and they will line up in second, alongside the pole position-winning Porsche #1. World Championship leaders Sébastien Buemi, Anthony Davidson and Kazuki Nakajima, in the #8 TS050 HYBRID, start from fourth after a qualifying session which saw the first two rows of the grid separated by less than a second.

The drama started almost immediately when all cars, including Mike, Kazuki and Stéphane, were forced to abort their first flying laps due to a red flag, caused by an accident for an LMP2 car. When the action resumed, Stéphane delivered a very quick lap to take provisional pole position.

After the driver changes, Kamui showed potential to put the #7 car into top spot but, with only a few metres to go on his first flying lap, the #4 ByKolles spun directly ahead. Kamui reacted well to avoid an impact but his lap time was ruined and, with used tyres, he was not able to take pole position with his next lap.

Nicolas took the wheel of the #9 targeting pole, but a track limits violation and time lost in traffic meant he earned third place at the chequered flag. Sébastien finished the session for the #8, and the Silverstone race winners complete an all-TOYOTA second row in fourth.

Despite a disappointing result today, TOYOTA GAZOO Racing is optimistic all three cars can compete for victory in Saturday's race on a track where the team has finished on the podium twice before in WEC.

TS050 HYBRID #7 (Mike Conway, Kamui Kobayashi)

Free practice 3: 2nd (1min 55.238secs). 27 laps

Qualifying: 2nd (1min 54.693secs average)

Mike Conway (TS050 HYBRID #7): "It's good to start from the front row again. I was generally happy with my lap but at the end a Porsche went off and I lost a little time. We definitely had a shot at the pole but Kamui had traffic on all of his laps. I think we have a good race car and we can expect another close battle with Porsche."

Kamui Kobayashi (TS050 HYBRID #7): "My first flying lap was good enough to get pole position I think because it was similar to Mike's lap. But someone spun right in front of me. It's a pity but starting second is okay and the car felt pretty strong. We didn't get the luck today but the target is still to win the race tomorrow."

TS050 HYBRID #8 (Sébastien Buemi, Anthony Davidson, Kazuki Nakajima)

Free practice 3: 1st (1min 55.233secs). 27 laps

Qualifying: 4th (1min 54.907secs average)

Sébastien Buemi (TS050 HYBRID #8): "I did what I could but to be honest we cannot be satisfied with our qualifying. The car felt okay but I'm not happy with the lap times so we will try to improve for the race. I am happy for car #9 to set the fastest lap, they have done a great job this week and Stéphane's lap was brilliant."

Kazuki Nakajima (TS050 HYBRID #8): "It was a difficult qualifying for our car. We just didn't quite have the speed so it wasn't what we hoped for. We need to see what we can do for the race. Starting from fourth we still have plenty of chance for the race if we can find some improvements."

TS050 HYBRID #9 (Stéphane Sarrazin, Yuji Kunimoto, Nicolas Lapierre)
Free practice 3: 3rd (1min 55.448secs). 28 laps
Qualifying: 3rd (1min 54.701secs average)

Stéphane Sarrazin (TS050 HYBRID #9): "We had an amazing car today, it was really flying and I am sure we will have a good car also for the race. I haven't done a qualifying session since last year so I put myself under a bit of pressure. I did my maximum and it was a quick lap; I really enjoyed it."

Nicolas Lapierre (TS050 HYBRID #9): "It was a messy qualifying for me which is a pity because Stéphane did a fantastic lap. We had a good strategy at the beginning but I had some traffic and it wasn't a great qualifying. In the end we are third which is not bad and we learned a bit for the race, so we are looking forward to that now."

Free practice 3 results:

1st	#8 TOYOTA GAZOO Racing	1min 55.233secs	27 laps
2nd	#7 TOYOTA GAZOO Racing	+0.005secs	27 laps
3rd	#9 TOYOTA GAZOO Racing	+0.215secs	28 laps
4th	#1 Porsche (Jani/Lotterer/Tandy)	+1.171secs	24 laps
5th	#2 Porsche (Bernhard/Bamber/Hartley)	+2.863secs	24 laps
6th	#26 G-Drive (Rusinov/Thiriet/Lynn)	+6.475secs	25 laps

Qualifying results:

1st	#1 Porsche (Jani/Lotterer/Tandy)	1min 54.097secs
2nd	#7 TOYOTA GAZOO Racing	+0.596secs
3rd	#9 TOYOTA GAZOO Racing	+0.604secs
4th	#8 TOYOTA GAZOO Racing	+0.810secs
5th	#2 Porsche (Bernhard/Bamber/Hartley)	+1.343secs
6th	#26 G-Drive (Rusinov/Thiriet/Lynn)	+7.161secs

A German translation of this press release is available on www.RacingByTMG.com. High-resolution copyright-free photos are available for editorial use at www.toyota-motorsport-photos.com.

About TOYOTA GAZOO Racing in the World Endurance Championship:

TOYOTA first competed in the World Endurance Championship (WEC) in 1983, marking the start of a long period of participation in endurance racing. Since 1985, TOYOTA cars have raced in 18 Le Mans 24 Hours races, achieving a best result of second place on five occasions. TOYOTA entered the revived WEC in 2012, combining the expertise from TOYOTA Higashi-Fuji Technical Centre, where the hybrid powertrain is developed, with TOYOTA Motorsport GmbH's support and facilities for chassis development. The multi-national team is based in Cologne, Germany and includes engineers from TOYOTA's motorsport and hybrid department, who deliver technology and know-how back into road car development. Since 2012, TOYOTA has earned 11 pole positions and won 12 races, finishing on the podium a total of 32 times. In 2014, the team won the drivers' and manufacturers' World

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RAISING THE EXCITEMENT TOYOTA HYBRID

Championships with the TS040 HYBRID while a year later TOYOTA celebrated 30 years since its first Le Mans entry. TOYOTA Motorsport GmbH combines its role in the WEC project with its other activities, such as the supply of a World Rally Championship engine for TOYOTA's return to the category in 2017, as well as its engineering services business and customer motorsport activities.

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