

PODIUM START FOR TOYOTA GAZOO RACING

Sunday 17 April 2016

TOYOTA GAZOO Racing started the 2016 FIA World Endurance Championship with an encouraging podium finish in the 6 Hours of Silverstone after an eventful race.

Stéphane Sarrazin, Mike Conway and Kamui Kobayashi crossed the line in third to extend TOYOTA's run of podiums at Silverstone which stretches back to its first WEC season in 2012.

However, that became second place when the winning #7 Audi was excluded due to a technical infringement. That decision gave victory to the #2 Porsche.

Mike's third podium in WEC meant he earned the Richard Lloyd Trophy, presented to the highest placed member of the British Racing Drivers' Club in the 6 Hours of Silverstone.

Kamui marked his LMP1 debut, and his first race at the wheel of a TOYOTA since the 2009 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, with a strong performance on his way to the podium.

The #5 of Anthony Davidson, Sébastien Buemi and Kazuki Nakajima had also been on course for a strong result until a puncture severely damaged the rear of the car. It finished 16th.

On a sunny day, in contrast to yesterday's snow, the TS050 HYBRID made a solid race debut, illustrating its potential by setting a fastest lap just 0.354secs behind the overall quickest.

More is required from the car in future races as the team continuously improves its understanding of the settings necessary to get maximum performance out of the new, efficient 2.4litre turbocharged engine and 8MJ hybrid system.

In the early part of the race, the two TS050 HYBRIDS ran close together after starting fifth and sixth as Sébastien in the #5 found his way past Mike in the other car, while incidents for the #1 Porsche and #8 Audi elevated the TOYOTAs into third and fourth.

At half distance, the #5 was third but encountered trouble of its own with a right rear puncture. Unluckily, the puncture occurred just after pit entry, meaning Kazuki completed a full 5.901km lap at slow speed whilst the damaged tyre ripped off significant amounts of rear bodywork.

Intense work from the mechanics got the car back on track after 41 minutes of repairs, with Sébastien resuming in 29th, 24 laps behind.

The #5 crew fought hard to regain ground in the search for World Championship points, while the sister car showed promising speed and matched the leaders' lap times in the closing stints.

The #6 car took the chequered flag in front of 52,000 fans (weekend total). By virtue of being the only LMP1-Hybrid manufacturer to get both cars to the chequered flag, TOYOTA leads the World Championship after the first of nine rounds.

TOYOTA GAZOO Racing is in action again next month at the 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps in Belgium on 7 May, a race which takes place just 120km away from the team's home base in Cologne, Germany.

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Toshio Sato, Team President: "This has been an exciting and eventful first race of the season. We take encouragement from this result, especially after our difficulties in qualifying. To achieve a two-car finish with a completely new car is a good achievement. We are not at the level we want yet, but we have made a big improvement compared to last year. It was great to see the #6 car setting very competitive lap times later in the race; this shows we have good potential in the TS050 HYBRID. We will continue to push hard to improve for the next race."

TS050 HYBRID #5 (Anthony Davidson, Sébastien Buemi, Kazuki Nakajima)
Race: 16th, 170 laps, 7 pit stops. Grid: 6th. Fastest lap: 1min 41.076secs

Anthony Davidson: "It was nice to see the other car score a podium and I am really happy for the guys in the team. It justifies all of the hard work over the winter. On our car we could say it could have been us if it was not for the puncture but at the end of the day we were not fast enough to win. There is a lot more work to be done and hopefully we will be even better in the next race."

Sébastien Buemi: "First of all congratulations to car #6. They had a strong race and it's a very good reward for the team. It is a bit unfortunate what happened to our car as we lost all chance of finishing on the podium due to the puncture. We will try to learn as much as we can from this weekend. Clearly we need to work hard to catch the other guys but compared to last year we have moved forward and we will continue to push."

Kazuki Nakajima: "It was a difficult race for our car. We had reasonable pace. It's a pity about the puncture; I guess I had a contact with the GT car but it's difficult to say. Everything went wrong at that moment. Many thanks to the mechanics who managed to fix the car and allow us to score some points which could be important for the championship. We showed we have made a step forward so as a team it was a pretty strong start. Let's see how much we can improve for Spa."

TS050 HYBRID #6 (Stéphane Sarrazin, Mike Conway, Kamui Kobayashi)
Race: 2nd, 193 laps, 7 pit stops. Grid: 5th. Fastest lap: 1min 40.657secs

Stéphane Sarrazin: "It is not a win but it is a good podium for the team. The TS050 is a really nice car and there is big potential in it. We still need to improve many areas in terms of how we use it but we are already closer than last year. We have to push and give our maximum every day in every area. The team is very motivated and we are fighting hard to be back at the front."

Mike Conway: "It is great to get a podium and a cool way to start the year. It was not an easy race and our podium place was hard fought. Our speed generally on one lap was quite strong but we still need to work on the pace over a whole stint to get closer to the others. We know the areas to focus on. We scored solid points for the World Championship; all in all a pretty good way to finish the weekend."

Kamui Kobayashi: "This was a positive start, especially for me as it was my first race in LMP1. For the team it is the improvement we needed compared to last year and we have still a lot more potential. We need to continually improve how we are using the car to get more out of it so we can fight more closely with the others. I am really excited to see what we can do with this car."

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



RAISING THE EXCITEMENT
TOYOTA HYBRID

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 17 Le Mans 24 Hours races, achieving a best result of second place on four occasions (1992, 1994, 1999 and 2013). 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 nine pole positions and won 10 races, finishing on the podium a total of 25 times. In 2014, the team won the drivers' and manufacturers' World 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. www.toyota-motorsport.com / www.facebook.com/toyotamotorsport / @Toyota_Hybrid

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