



# RAISING THE EXCITEMENT TOYOTA HYBRID

## BELGIUM BECKONS FOR TOYOTA GAZOO RACING

Monday 1 May 2017

TOYOTA GAZOO Racing will race with three TS050 HYBRID cars for the first time when the 2017 FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC) heads to Belgium for the 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps this weekend.

Having won the first race of the year, at Silverstone last month, TOYOTA GAZOO Racing is ready for one of its three home WEC events; the Spa circuit is located just 120km from the team's headquarters in Cologne, Germany.

Spa also represents the final competitive action before the highlight of the WEC season; the Le Mans 24 Hours on 17-18 June. With that in mind, the team will utilise both of its permitted 2017 aerodynamic configurations.

The #7 crew of Mike Conway, Kamui Kobayashi and José María López will use the high-downforce TS050 HYBRID with which they earned pole position at Silverstone. Their race ended when José María crashed in damp conditions. After a period of rest, he is expected to confirm his race fitness in Thursday's practice sessions.

Silverstone race winners and World Championship leaders Sébastien Buemi, Anthony Davidson and Kazuki Nakajima, in the #8 TS050 HYBRID, will also drive the high-downforce car, which concedes top speed in favour of more grip around corners.

To enhance its preparations for Le Mans, the #9 TS050 HYBRID will use a low-downforce configuration which is optimised for the long straights which characterise the Circuit de la Sarthe. At the wheel, Stéphane Sarrazin joins WEC debutant Yuji Kunimoto and the returning Nicolas Lapierre.

Opened in 1922, Spa is the oldest circuit on the WEC calendar and holds some positive memories for TOYOTA GAZOO Racing. Anthony, Sébastien and Nicolas won the race together in 2014 while both TS050 HYBRIDS had the opportunity to win last year before suffering engine issues.

This year's targets are to again fight for victory whilst accelerating Le Mans preparations by optimising the low-downforce car in race trim and adjusting to the additional demands of competing with three cars.

The team will be supported by a large number of employees from its Cologne headquarters, with staff members and their families invited to visit Spa to watch Saturday's race.

**Toshio Sato, Team President:** "We made a strong start to the season and we hope to continue this at Spa. The competition against Porsche is intense and we are looking forward to another close fight. Our high-downforce TS050 HYBRID performed very well at Silverstone, but Spa is a different circuit so we have been working hard to get ready. This year we have three cars for the first time, which gives us a chance to try out our low-downforce car in race conditions. We have tested it extensively over the winter, so this weekend we are taking another step in our Le Mans preparations."

**Mike Conway (TS050 HYBRID #7):** "Spa is one of my favourite circuits so I'm really looking forward to this. The track itself is just really cool, with elevation changes, fast flowing corners and a huge variety of corners types. It is really challenging but I like it a lot. I hope that the package we've used at Silverstone will have a similar pace at Spa. There are definitely still things to improve but we are confident. I think it will be a close race again with Porsche, so we will stay focused."

**Kamui Kobayashi (TS050 HYBRID #7):** "I'm excited to race in Spa. We showed good speed at Silverstone so we can go to the second race of the season with a very positive mentality. We are motivated and want to show our best there to win the race. That would give us as well good motivation for Le Mans. I'm particularly looking forward to the atmosphere in Spa because there are many enthusiastic fans and also the employees from TMG in Cologne will be there to support us."

**José María López (TS050 HYBRID #7):** "It's fantastic to be racing an LMP1 car at Spa. I haven't raced there for a few years, since my GP2 days so I am very much looking forward to it. This weekend is an opportunity to again fight for victory, and also for me to get more laps. It was a disappointing end to our race at Silverstone but I learned a lot and gained important experience. I know I have the speed and I am learning fast about other aspects of endurance racing, like traffic management."

**Sébastien Buemi (TS050 HYBRID #8):** "Obviously we had a great start to the season so we go into Spa with a lot of hope. It's going to be a very exciting and interesting weekend for us because it will be the first time that we will have three cars. I want to get as many points as possible and of course we need to learn as much as we can for Le Mans, as Spa is the last race before the big one. We will do our best and try to replicate our good result from Silverstone."

**Anthony Davidson (TS050 HYBRID #8):** "I am looking forward to racing again in Spa because it's one of my favourite circuits. It's always a pleasure to drive an LMP1 car around such a great track. After the victory in Silverstone, I hope we can fight for a win again but we are expecting even tougher competition from Porsche. Weather can be a factor at Spa; we have had nice weather in the race recently but you never know. Our car is generally very good in the wet so we are ready for anything."

**Kazuki Nakajima (TS050 HYBRID #8):** "It's difficult to predict what is going to happen in Spa because of the different aerodynamic packages. But we had a good start of the season and we want to continue that. The Spa track is really special, especially Eau Rouge; the g-forces there are like nowhere else. It's a very challenging circuit with a lot of high-speed corners so I'm really looking forward to go there; our car will be amazing to drive on this track."

**Stéphane Sarrazin (TS050 HYBRID #9):** "I'm really looking forward to racing the TS050 HYBRID again, especially after seeing the performance at Silverstone. It was great to watch and I hope the car is strong also in low-downforce spec. As always, I hope to get a good result but the most important thing for our car this weekend is to prepare ourselves properly for Le Mans. We need to get a lot of data about the low-downforce car and fine-tune the teamwork in our first race together."

**Yuji Kunimoto (TS050 HYBRID #9):** "This will be my first race in WEC and my first time to race at Spa so it's very exciting for me. I've heard so much about Spa from the other drivers and of course I know it from video games and TV; I can't wait to experience it with the TS050 HYBRID. I am pleased to have experienced drivers like Stéphane and Nicolas as team-mates in car #9 because I am sure they will have a lot of helpful advice. I can't wait to get started."

**Nicolas Lapierre (TS050 HYBRID #9):** "Spa is a fantastic circuit and a good one for me. Anthony, Sébastien and I won the race in 2014 and last year I won the LMP2 class there so I have some nice memories. I am excited to drive the TS050 HYBRID for the first time at a race event and Spa is the perfect place. I am also looking forward to my first race with Stéphane and Yuji. We already have a good relationship so I know we will work well together to get a positive result for the team."



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**TOYOTA HYBRID**

**TOYOTA GAZOO Racing in 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps:**

**2013** #7: Qualifying 4th; Race DNF. #8: Qualifying 5th; Race 4th.

**2014** #7: Qualifying 4th; Race 3rd. #8: Qualifying 2nd; Race 1st.

**2015** #1: Qualifying 6th; Race 8th. #2: Qualifying 7th; Race 5th.

**2016** #5: Qualifying 5th; Race 26th. #6: Qualifying 3rd; Race DNF.

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**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 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.

**Media contact:** Alastair Moffitt, Marketing & Communications Manager:  
[alastair.moffitt@toyota-motorsport.com](mailto:alastair.moffitt@toyota-motorsport.com)

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SUMITOMO METAL

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**ETICS**

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