

**PROVISIONAL LE MANS POLE FOR TOYOTA GAZOO RACING**

Wednesday 14 June 2017

World Championship leaders TOYOTA GAZOO Racing hold provisional pole position after the first qualifying session for the Le Mans 24 Hours, the third round of the 2017 FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC).

Having won the opening two WEC races of the season, TOYOTA is aiming to win Le Mans for the first time, having made its debut in 1985, and the TS050 HYBRID cars made a strong start to the event.

Kamui Kobayashi set the provisional pole position time in the #7 TS050 HYBRID he shares with Mike Conway and Stéphane Sarrazin with a lap of 3min 18.793secs, which is already 0.940secs faster than last year's pole position time.

The #8 car of drivers' World Championship leaders Sébastien Buemi, Anthony Davidson and Kazuki Nakajima was second fastest, with 2014 pole position winner Kazuki having set the best time.

The #9 of Nicolas Lapierre, Yuji Kunimoto and José María López took provisional fourth position. Nicolas set the best time for that car while rookies Yuji and José María, in their first night session at Le Mans, built on impressive test performances earlier this month.

Grid positions for Le Mans are decided by the fastest single lap from any of the three two-hour qualifying sessions. Therefore, the starting grid will be confirmed at midnight on Thursday, when the chequered flag flies at the end of final qualifying.

Ahead of a 24-hour race, one-lap performance was not the main priority, with most of Wednesday's track time dedicated to optimising the TS050 HYBRIDs for race conditions at the Circuit de la Sarthe, which is part public roads, part permanent circuit.

That began with four hours of practice in the afternoon. Significant work was already carried out during the official test day on 4 June, so practice allowed further optimisation of aerodynamic and mechanical set-ups in hot, sunny conditions.

First qualifying took place after sunset but temperatures were still 27°C at the start. The session was delayed by 20 minutes to allow barrier repairs following an accident in a support race practice, meaning it ran for only one hour 40 minutes.

As well as the primary target of improving the car balance and evaluating tyre performance in evolving track conditions, all nine drivers are required by race regulations to complete a minimum of five laps at night and this was achieved.

The team will continue to focus mainly on race pace during Thursday's two 120-minute qualifying sessions, which take place at 18.00 and 22.00 respectively, whilst nevertheless aiming to secure TOYOTA's third Le Mans pole position.

**TS050 HYBRID #7** (Mike Conway, Kamui Kobayashi, Stéphane Sarrazin)

Free practice 1: 2nd (3min 20.966secs), 51 laps

Qualifying 1: 1st (3min 18.793secs), 26 laps

**Mike Conway (TS050 HYBRID #7):** "That was a great lap by Kamui, especially considering it wasn't a full-blown qualifying attack. It has been a good job from the whole crew to get the car in such good shape, because we have been steadily

improving. We are focusing on the race so we just have to keep working away and prepare the best we can. I feel pretty prepared already after a good first day."

**Kamui Kobayashi (TS050 HYBRID #7):** "Even though my lap was fastest, I had traffic so that was a bit frustrating. But it's good to be on provisional pole. In the afternoon I got more confident with the car and we made progress. It is a 24-hour race so qualifying isn't the priority; let's see how we can improve the car for long runs because we need to be prepared for a long race."

**Stéphane Sarrazin (TS050 HYBRID #7):** "It was a very good first day on our car. We focused mostly on preparing for the race because that is the most important thing. Kamui did a very good lap time which shows we have a nice basis. We can still improve the balance to be stronger for the race but we've made a strong start so I'm happy with our work so far."

**TS050 HYBRID #8** (Sébastien Buemi, Anthony Davidson, Kazuki Nakajima)  
Free practice 1: 4th (3min 21.775secs), 50 laps  
Qualifying 1: 2nd (3min 19.431secs), 26 laps

**Sébastien Buemi (TS050 HYBRID #8):** "I didn't do a lot of laps in qualifying so there's not a lot to say. It's encouraging to see two TOYOTAs on the provisional front row but it's only first qualifying. We are focusing more on preparing for the race; qualifying is just part of that process."

**Anthony Davidson (TS050 HYBRID #8):** "It's been a surprising day really because the track conditions were nothing like they were at the test. We were very comfortable with the car in the test but initially the balance wasn't there today. We had to work to rectify it and we have done a pretty good job. There is still one more day to prepare so we'll be working hard."

**Kazuki Nakajima (TS050 HYBRID #8):** "The track conditions were pretty bad so that made it harder. Later in qualifying the conditions got back to where they were for the test and we were quite happy with the car at night. We learned a lot about tyres and set-up in these conditions, so it was a productive day but we need to keep pushing."

**TS050 HYBRID #9** (Nicolas Lapierre, Yuji Kunimoto, José María López)  
Free practice 1: 5th (3min 21.975secs), 54 laps  
Qualifying 1: 4th (3min 19.958secs), 27 laps

**Nicolas Lapierre (TS050 HYBRID #9):** "It was a bit frustrating for me due to a lot of traffic on my qualifying laps but the car was pretty good so I am happy about that. Tomorrow the track will probably be faster anyway. It was particularly positive that my two team-mates did a great job, also at night, and the car seems competitive. So overall I am pretty happy."

**Yuji Kunimoto (TS050 HYBRID #9):** "I drove a night session here at Le Mans for the first time and I enjoyed it a lot. Of course, it is more challenging than a day session and I had to adjust to the traffic, especially in the high-speed corners. I have learned a lot and I am pleased with how it is going."

**José María López (TS050 HYBRID #9):** "It was very special to do my first qualifying here at Le Mans. I really enjoyed the night driving and I am learning every time I jump into the car. I am building up my pace step by step and I am very happy with my progress. This is only the start; it's a 24-hour race and Thursday is another day. We will be ready to fight."

**Free Practice results:**

1st	#1 Porsche (Jani/Lotterer/Tandy)	3min 20.362secs	50 laps
<b>2nd</b>	<b>#7 TOYOTA GAZOO Racing</b>	<b>+0.604secs</b>	<b>51 laps</b>
3rd	#2 Porsche (Bernhard/Bamber/Hartley)	+1.325secs	56 laps
<b>4th</b>	<b>#8 TOYOTA GAZOO Racing</b>	<b>+1.413secs</b>	<b>50 laps</b>
<b>5th</b>	<b>#9 TOYOTA GAZOO Racing</b>	<b>+1.613secs</b>	<b>54 laps</b>
6th	#4 Bykolles (Webb/Kraihamer/Bonanomi)	+7.466secs	24 laps

**First Qualifying results:**

<b>1st</b>	<b>#7 TOYOTA GAZOO Racing</b>	<b>3min 18.793secs</b>	<b>26 laps</b>
<b>2nd</b>	<b>#8 TOYOTA GAZOO Racing</b>	<b>+0.638secs</b>	<b>26 laps</b>
<b>3rd</b>	<b>#2 Porsche (Bernhard/Bamber/Hartley)</b>	<b>+0.917secs</b>	<b>21 laps</b>
4th	#9 TOYOTA GAZOO Racing	+1.165secs	27 laps
5th	#1 Porsche (Jani/Lotterer/Tandy)	+2.372secs	21 laps
6th	#4 Bykolles (Webb/Kraihamer/Bonanomi)	+10.094secs	21 laps

A Meet the Team media session with drivers and management will be held in the team's catering area in the paddock on Thursday 15 June at 16.15. A pre-race press conference will take place on Friday 16 June at 13.00 at the TOYOTA hospitality suite in the Parc du Raccordement. All accredited media are invited.

A German translation of this press release is available on [www.RacingByTMG.com](http://www.RacingByTMG.com). High-resolution copyright-free photos are available for editorial use at [www.toyota-motorsport-photos.com](http://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 13 races, finishing on the podium a total of 34 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.

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