

TOYOTA GAZOO RACING TAKES TEXAS PODIUM

Saturday 16 September 2017

TOYOTA GAZOO Racing finished on the podium in the 6 Hours of Circuit of the Americas after a race-long challenge for victory in the sixth round of the 2017 FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC).

The TS050 HYBRIDs recovered from a disappointing qualifying session to perform strongly, with the #8 of Sébastien Buemi, Stéphane Sarrazin and Kazuki Nakajima finishing third, 21.680secs behind the winning Porsche #2 after 1,058km of racing.

Mike Conway, Kamui Kobayashi and José María López in the #7 TS050 HYBRID played their part in an exciting race on their way to fourth place as the TOYOTAs finished in the same order as they started.

When the race began under the midday sun, both cars took the fight to Porsche and at the end of the first lap Sébastien passed the #2 for second, with Mike taking third a few moments later.

Due to air temperatures of 34°C, WEC regulations required the team to change drivers at each stint so Kazuki and José María took the wheel at the first pit stops when neither car changed tyres, unlike the Porsches.

Kazuki led the race from the #7 after one hour but José, using a different compound than the sister car and suffering higher degradation, slipped to fourth despite fighting wheel to wheel over two laps with the #1 Porsche.

At the next round of pit stops, when Stéphane and Kamui took over, new tyres of the same compound were fitted to both cars which handed the lead back to Porsche, courtesy of their shorter fuel-only pit stops. Kamui's impressive stint saw him pass Stéphane for third and eliminate the gap to Porsche #2.

On the three-hour mark, after another driver change and refuelling stop for both cars, a 10-minute safety car period for barrier repairs brought all four LMP1 cars together at the front, with Mike in second and Sébastien third.

When the race re-started the TS050 HYBRIDs, on used tyres, were under attack from the #2 Porsche on new rubber. Mike dropped to fourth while Sébastien temporarily defended his second place until the next pit stops when the #8 car slipped to third.

With two hours still to go the drivers kept the pressure on Porsche, despite the uncomfortable heat, but ultimately the leaders proved just out of reach with Kazuki and Kamui taking the chequered flag in third and fourth respectively.

Kamui brought the #7 car home 13.070secs behind the sister car, but was penalised a further 10 seconds for contact with the #24 LMP2 car late in the race.

Despite missing out on a third victory of the season, the team now prepares for its home race at Fuji Speedway on 13 October with renewed confidence.

Hisatake Murata, Team President: "The team worked very hard to recover from a disappointing qualifying and I am pleased that we could challenge Porsche and give the fans an exciting race. Everyone could see our fighting spirit today, so thank you to the team for their big effort; we had a good strategy, quick pit stops and tough racing from the drivers in the difficult, hot conditions. Congratulations to Porsche on their victory. Even though we are disappointed not to win, today's performance gives us a lot of

encouragement for our home race; we will go to Fuji Speedway aiming for the middle of the podium.”

TS050 HYBRID #7 (Mike Conway, Kamui Kobayashi, José María López)
Race: 4th, 192 laps, 6 pit stops. Grid: 4th. Fastest lap: 1min 47.391secs

Mike Conway (TS050 HYBRID #7): “After the first stint it was looking quite promising but the second stint on the tyres was difficult because there was less grip and we lost time. Also the safety car didn’t help us as it allowed the Porsche #2 to close the gap. So all in all it’s a bit disappointing even though we were much stronger today than we were in qualifying.”

Kamui Kobayashi (TS050 HYBRID #7): “We tried our best today and pushed really hard to take the fight to Porsche. It’s a pity not to score more points when we were relatively competitive but we were just not quite quick enough. It’s a good sign that we were stronger here than in Mexico and we expect to take another step in Fuji.”

José María López (TS050 HYBRID #7): “I have mixed feelings because I am happy that we put up a good fight and I enjoyed my battle with Porsche #1; we didn’t expect that. On the other side, fourth is not why we go racing; we are all here to win. But we should see the positive. We didn’t give up, we came back stronger after qualifying and I hope in the next race we can be even stronger.”

TS050 HYBRID #8 (Sébastien Buemi, Stéphane Sarrazin, Kazuki Nakajima)
Race: 3rd, 192 laps, 6 pit stops. Grid: 3rd. Fastest lap: 1min 47.556secs

Sébastien Buemi (TS050 HYBRID #8): “To be honest after qualifying I wasn’t expecting to be in a fight with Porsche because we seemed far away. On the old tyres in the middle of the race I had a really good stint. We had to be aggressive in traffic to stay in the fight and I pushed as hard as I could. In the end we were just missing a little bit of pace to beat them.”

Stéphane Sarrazin (TS050 HYBRID #8): “It’s nice to be on the podium again with TOYOTA. Sébastien and Kazuki, as well as the whole team, did a great job. I was disappointed after qualifying but we did a strong race and the battle was close. We need to improve the car to push really hard in Fuji where we are normally strong; we can do it.”

Kazuki Nakajima (TS050 HYBRID #8): “I enjoyed leading the race in my first stint; that was unexpected to be honest. Our pace was quite good and we managed to keep a gap. So it started very well, but we were just missing some speed towards the end. Third is the same result as we had in Mexico but it is actually a good step forward. We were in a fight; it should be better for Fuji and the rest of the season.”

6 Hours of COTA results:

1st	#2 Porsche (Bernhard/Bamber/Hartley)	192 laps
2nd	#1 Porsche (Jani/Lotterer/Tandy)	+0.276secs
3rd	#8 TOYOTA GAZOO Racing	+21.956secs
4th	#7 TOYOTA GAZOO Racing	+45.026secs
5th	#36 Alpine (Lapierre/Menezes/Negrão)	+15 laps
6th	#13 Rebellion (Beche/Heinemeier Hansson/Piquet)	+16 laps

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 19 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 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 13 pole positions and won 13 races, finishing on the podium a total of 36 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.

Media contact: Alastair Moffitt, Marketing & Communications Manager:
alastair.moffitt@toyota-motorsport.com