



TOYOTA HYBRID

Wednesday 13 June 2018
Toyota Motor Corporation
GAZOO Racing Company

TOYOTA GAZOO RACING TAKES PROVISIONAL LE MANS POLE

TOYOTA GAZOO Racing began its Le Mans 24 Hours challenge in positive fashion by taking provisional pole position in the first qualifying session for the second round of the 2018-19 FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC).

World Championship leaders Sébastien Buemi, Kazuki Nakajima and Fernando Alonso, who won the opening WEC race of the season from pole position in the #8 TS050 HYBRID, hold top spot going into Thursday's final qualifying sessions thanks to a 3min 17.270secs lap from Kazuki.

Kamui Kobayashi, who last year set the fastest-ever Le Mans lap to take pole position, was just 0.107secs behind in the #7 TS050 HYBRID he shares with Mike Conway and José María López to make it a provisional all-TOYOTA front row.

The grid for the 86th Le Mans 24 Hours is decided by the best single lap from three two-hour qualifying sessions, split over Wednesday and Thursday. TOYOTA is seeking its fourth Le Mans pole position as it aims for the perfect basis from which to fight for a first win at La Sarthe at its 20th attempt, following five runners-up finishes since 1985.

Wednesday's action began with a four-hour practice session and TOYOTA GAZOO Racing used the time effectively to optimise mechanical, aerodynamic and hybrid electric set-ups, setting a combined total of 109 laps, more than any other cars in the field.

Although the #8 TS050 HYBRID set the fastest lap in the official test day on Sunday 3 June, the team nevertheless worked tirelessly in the following days to optimise all areas of the car for the challenge ahead and these changes were evaluated.

Additional work was also carried out to analyse the various compounds of Michelin tyre, comparing both outright speed and durability ahead of the weekend's race, during which all LMP1 cars are limited to 12 sets of dry tyres, plus four spares.

First qualifying took place after sunset for the TS050 HYBRID's first night running at La Sarthe since the 2017 race. As well as the targets of setting competitive lap times and further enhancing set-ups, the session

gave all six drivers the chance to complete the mandatory minimum number of laps in order to race.

Both TS050 HYBRIDs set out on qualifying runs at the beginning of the session when traffic was lightest and ended up completing a single flying lap each when an incident soon after caused a slow zone, preventing any immediate improvement.

Mike Conway (TS050 HYBRID #7): “It went pretty well. We got through quite a big programme and we have been just trying to find a good balance; it’s been a positive start. Tonight we focused on the tyres and making the right choice. Our car already feels good but will try to extract a bit more performance and make it better for tomorrow and the race.”

Kamui Kobayashi (TS050 HYBRID #7): “I think it went pretty well for us today. My lap wasn’t bad but as usual the traffic is quite difficult. The most important thing was to do a lot of laps and work through our programme for set-up and tyre work. I think we made a strong start but there is more to do so we will look at all the data and try to improve the car for the race.”

José María López (TS050 HYBRID #7): “Everything went smoothly and both cars did a very good qualifying, so I’m very happy for the team. We were getting a good feeling with the car and everything looks okay, although traffic as always is very hard. I’m very happy with the day. Of course it’s only the beginning and the most important thing is the chequered flag on Sunday at 3pm.”

Sébastien Buemi (TS050 HYBRID #8): “It was a very good day for the team. In the end the objective was to be one-two tonight and we achieved that, plus we put quite a lot more laps in the bag. I am happy with what we have done; the car in free practice wasn’t great but it is quite a lot better now. It is the start of a very long journey so let’s not get too excited.”

Kazuki Nakajima (TS050 HYBRID #8): “It was a normal session for us. It is good to be on provisional pole but it is only first qualifying so let’s see what happens for the rest of the week. It was difficult to put everything together on my lap because the traffic was difficult. I put in a decent lap time so it was a positive start to qualifying but we need to work more on the race set-up and preparation as it is a very long race.”

Fernando Alonso (TS050 HYBRID #8): “It was a good day for us and we learned a lot in free practice with the set-up. In qualifying it was more about getting used to the conditions at night. It went well for me and it was important to get some laps in the dark; I’m looking forward to more tomorrow as I am still finding some references and braking points. This race is so long and difficult so anything can happen but we are as prepared as we can be and we have done a good job up to now.”

Free practice results:

1st	#7 TOYOTA GAZOO Racing	3min 18.718secs	54 laps
2nd	#8 TOYOTA GAZOO Racing	+0.557secs	55 laps
3rd	#3 Rebellion (Beche/Laurent/Menezes)	+0.708secs	39 laps
4th	#10 Dragonspeed (Hedman/Hanley/Fittipaldi)	+1.604secs	44 laps
5th	#11 SMP (Petrov/Aleshin/Button)	+2.586secs	47 laps
6th	#1 Rebellion (Jani/Lotterer/Senna)	+2.831secs	46 laps

Qualifying 1 results:

1st	#8 TOYOTA GAZOO Racing	3min 17.270secs	31 laps
2nd	#7 TOYOTA GAZOO Racing	+0.107secs	33 laps
3rd	#17 SMP (Sarrazin/Orudhzev/Isaakyan)	+2.213secs	24 laps
4th	#1 Rebellion (Jani/Lotterer/Senna)	+2.392secs	26 laps
5th	#3 Rebellion (Beche/Laurent/Menezes)	+2.675secs	27 laps
6th	#10 Dragonspeed (Hedman/Hanley/Fittipaldi)	+3.840secs	13 laps

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