

CLASSIC DRIVER

Aston Martin to Race Gulf-liveried Prototype at 2009 Le Mans



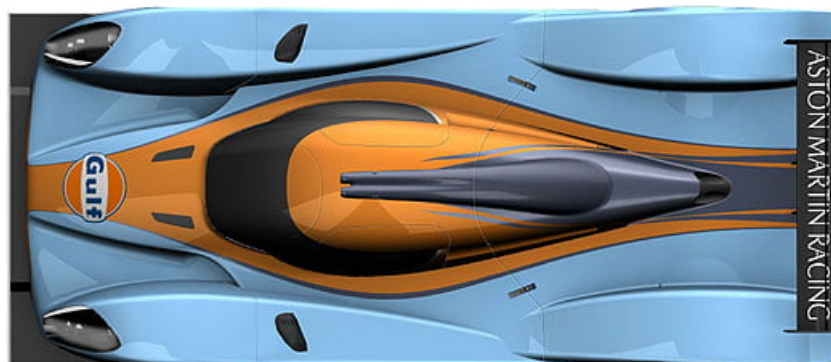
Running two works LMP1 cars, the iconic British manufacturer will attempt to repeat its last win at the famous 24-hour race, 50 years ago this June.

The Gulf-liveried cars are based on the V12 Aston Martin-powered **Charouz Racing System Lola** chassis that proved stunningly quick on its debut at the famous French event in 2008. For 2009, the car has been extensively revised and re-engineered by **Aston Martin Racing** and **Prodrive**, with bodywork influenced by Aston's designer, **Marek Reichmann**.

Dr Ulrich Bez, Aston Martin Chief Executive Officer, commented: "Racing has been, and still is, at the heart of Aston Martin. Our cars today are subtle, elegant and handcrafted but they still have the genes for competition... We will put all our heart and skill behind this project to demonstrate the essence of Aston Martin: Power Beauty and Soul."

After years of trying, the then-Feltham-based, David Brown-owned company finally won Le Mans in 1959 with a 3.0-litre **DBR1** driven by **Roy Salvadori** and **Carroll Shelby**. It returned to modern racing in 2005 with its production-based **DBR9** and has won the GT1 class at Le Mans for the past two years. It will not enter works DBR9s in 2009, but will assist independent teams in GT1.

Aston Martin Racing partner, **Drayson Racing**, has also expressed a desire to compete at Le Mans with the new **Vantage GT2**, powered by bio-ethanol fuel.



The biggest issue Aston Martin Racing has to face will be - despite rule changes for 2009 - the better fuel efficiency of the diesel **Audis** and **Peugeots**. In previous years, this has meant that not only do the big-budget manufacturer teams have awesome overall speed, they can also go for at least one lap longer than a petrol-powered car on one tank.

Over 24 hours this has proved decisive. Since 2006, **Audi R10 TDIs** have proved unbeatable at La Sarthe, with only Peugeot (diesel) offering any real opposition.

In addition to the Le Mans 24-hour race, the team will also compete throughout the year in the **Le Mans Series** (LMS), which opens with the **1000km de Catalunya** on the 5th of April. Drivers named so far are: **Jan Charouz** (CZ), **Tomas Enge** (CZ), **Stefan Mücke** (DE), all of whom raced the **Charouz** car last year, and **Darren Turner** (GB) and **Harold Primat** (CH). One more driver will be named before the season starts.

Once more, **Gulf Oil** and **Hackett** - the quintessentially British gentleman's outfitters - will be key sponsors of the team, in addition to trade suppliers **Lola**, **Michelin**, **Koni** and **BBS**.



Aston Martin Chairman, David Richards, said: "2009 is a hugely significant year for Aston Martin at Le Mans and the challenge of reclaiming victory in this famous race for Aston Martin and Great Britain was simply too great to ignore.

"However, we do not underestimate the task. While we have won the GT1 class for the last two years, competing against the proven speed and endurance of the diesel-powered cars with all their years of winning the prototype class will be a massive undertaking. Nonetheless, I see this as a great opportunity to showcase the ingenuity of British engineering talent."

The 2009 Le Mans 24 Hours will be run on the 13th - 14th June.

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Photo: Aston Martin Racing

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