

# CLASSIC DRIVER

## Reigning in Spain: Dream Debut Win for Aston Martin at Catalunya



**Aston Martin Racing won the opening 1000km round of this year's Le Mans Series with its new LMP1 car.**

The light blue and orange, Gulf-sponsored machines ran very well in practice (second and third on the grid) with '007', driven by **Jan Charouz** (CZ), **Tomas Enge** (CZ) and **Stefan Mücke** (DE), victorious after 209 laps of the **Catalunya** circuit.

The cars had been tested only briefly pre-season, and are developments of the production-based Aston Martin V12-powered prototype that ran so well in the **2008 Le Mans 24 Hours**. The **Le Mans Series** comprises five, 1000km endurance races at European circuits: **Catalunya, Spa-Francorchamps, Algarve, Nürburgring, Silverstone**.

**Aston Martin Racing** is one of 52 entrants in the series and competes in the top, 'LMP1' category. The marque is also represented in 'LM GT2' by **Drayson Racing** and its **Aston Martin Vantage GT2**. In LMP1, the British company's chief rivals are the ex-works **Audi R10 TDIs** of **Kolles Racing** and two **Pescarolo-Judds**.



That said, in Spain, another British team was making a stunning debut and that was Silverstone-based **Strakka Racing**. **Danny Watts** put the team's **Ginetta-Zytek GZ09S** on pole and the car (co-driven by **Peter Hardman** and **Nick Leventis**), eventually finished fifth, having experienced bad luck during the safety car and yellow flag periods.

Back to **Aston Martin** and it was a very strong showing with both cars consistently on the pace and 007 - driven at the time by **Stefan Mücke** - was able to pass the then-leading **Pescarolo-Judd** just a few laps before the end of the race. It had been at the top of the leader-board for over 60 laps and the final margin of victory was just 14.8 seconds.



**Aston Martin Racing** car number 009, driven by **Harold Primat** (CH), **Miguel Ramos** (PT) and **Darren Turner** (GB), was another top-three contender but dropped out after a spin 40 minutes before the end of the 1000km race.

Afterwards, a highly pleased **David Richards, Chairman of Aston Martin**, said: "This momentous victory is a fantastic reward for the many weeks and months of hard work put in by every member of the team. Endurance racing is above all a team sport, and I think that we have proved this once again today."



**Stefan Mücke**, who crossed the finishing line first, commented, "I'm absolutely delighted with this result, but it was a very close call at the finish. It was so tight at the end that I really did not know which way everything would go. Eventually we were able to take advantage of the safety car to close up, and then we found a gap in the traffic to pass the leader. He went to the inside, we went to the outside and thankfully it worked. Once we were through, I think we proved that we had the pace to win."

The next **Le Mans Series** round will be in Belgium, at **Spa-Francorchamps** on May 8-10. **Aston Martin Racing** will enter two Gulf-sponsored LMP1 prototypes in the **Le Mans 24 Hours** on June 13-14.

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*Photos - Aston Martin Racing + DPPI + Marcus Potts / CMC*

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