Aston Martin at the 'Ring 2010: New Rapide Second in Class

It wasn’t exactly a case of “take out the spare, tape up the lights and fit a fire extinguisher,” but a remarkably standard Aston Martin Rapide ran faultlessly at last weekend’s Nürburgring 24-hour race, finishing second in class and an impressive 34th overall.

At the road car’s press launch in Valencia earlier this year, company **Chief Executive Dr Ulrich Bez** surprised journalists by announcing that the famous day-long marathon at the Nürburgring would be the Rapide’s final ‘sign-off test’. Compared with much-modified machinery running in different classes (such as the **Works BMW M3 GT2** which won), the blue-painted four-door from **Gaydon** was only mildly changed for the track.

Running on slicks, with a degree of weight-saving and the fitment of full safety equipment, the 188mph **Rapide** racing car was powered by a standard (470bhp) V12, the drivers using the paddles on the production ‘Touchtronic 2’ six-speed transmission, rather than a pure racing 'box, to change gear.

The driving team of **Bez**, journalist **Matthew Marsh**, the company’s **Nürburgring Test Centre Director Wolfgang Schuhbauer** and engineering manager **Chris Porritt** improved on a 79th-place qualifying position to a fine 34th overall, second in class SP8.

An independently run (**Mathol Racing**) V8 Vantage won the SP10 GT4 class.

Cometh the hour, cometh the Cygnet

In unlikely circumstances, one of **Aston Martin’s** innovative city cars was pressed into service when the factory-entered **V12 Vantage** stopped out on the circuit, having led its class for more than half the race. The problem was driveshaft-related so, to get it back to the pits, a tow was required. The **Cygnet** was used by team members to pick a path through a packed paddock in order to correctly oversee the V12’s recovery.

Once restored to health, the green **V12 Vantage** lapped at near-qualifying speeds to finish 3rd in the SP8 class, 39th overall.

Speaking after an incident-packed race, the company’s **Head of Motorsport**, **David King**, said: “In the first

instance we’re obviously delighted that the **Rapide** has achieved 2nd in class and 34th overall – amongst such a hugely competitive field of specialist race cars, it really is a fantastic achievement and testament to our new four-door road car.

“We came here to prove the **Rapide** in this toughest of tests and it has passed with flying colours. Secondly, I speak for the whole Aston Martin team, when I extend congratulations to our customer teams who competed in the 24 Hours and notably for **Mathol Racing** winning the SP10 GT4 class.

“Finally, I must pay tribute to our own team who, under considerable pressure, showed calm and meticulous thinking to get the V12 Vantage back to the circuit and latterly our drivers, who pushed the car back up the order. The team have been nothing short of professional throughout and it has been a fantastic effort which I’m very proud to have been associated with.”

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