

CLASSIC DRIVER

Aston Martin Racing at Le Mans 2010: Not This Time



For a brief period on Sunday morning, it looked as if a shock result might, just possibly, be on the cards. The diesel Peugeots were failing fast, Audi's metronomic three-car attack was experiencing minor problems, and the two Gulf Blue Lola-Aston Martins were still howling round the track.

Sadly, for the 1000s of supporters eager to see at least a podium finish for **Aston Martin Racing**, in the final hour the 009 car of **Juan Barazi (DK)**, **Sam Hancock (GB)** and **Darren Turner (GB)** stopped near **Arnage** when in fourth place, smoke seen drifting from the back of it.

Such were the twists and turns of the 2010 race that a third place - or even higher - for 009 had been quite conceivable, with 007 just a few laps behind. As it was, 007, crewed by **Adrian Fernandez (MEX)**, **Stefan Mücke (D)** and **Harold Primat (CH)** eventually finished in sixth place overall, missing out on the unofficial 'best petrol-engined car' award by four laps.

To be honest, it had looked tough right from qualifying as the seemingly 'money-no-object', factory **Peugeot** and **Audi**, diesel-powered teams blocked out the first seven places on the grid. The two **Gulf Lola-Astons** were split by the tiniest of margins, while the black and white, French **Signature Plus** car, #008, was a couple of positions back, in 11th place. The latter was driven by **Franck Mailleux (F)**, **Pierres Ragues (F)** and **Vanina Ickx (B)**.



Yes, THAT **Ickx** – she is the multiple-Le Mans-winner **Jacky Ickx**'s daughter.

Come race day, and for the early stages, all three cars held their grid positions. The rule changes which allowed petrol cars a fuel capacity advantage didn't really do enough to equalise performance, so it was a case of just making the best of the situation and hoping for dramas to befall others ahead.

At half-distance, the three **Aston Martin** prototypes were running in 7th, 8th and 10th places. Things proceeded in the same manner until early Sunday morning when, at 08:00, **Harold Primat** experienced transmission trouble in 007 while in a useful fifth place. The hour's delay for repairs in the pits put the car out of contention – cruelly so, as later events were to prove.



The **Signature Plus** 008 car retired at 10:00 after a heavy accident on its 'out' lap with **Vanina Ickx** at the wheel, luckily with no injuries to the driver.

So it was down to the 009 car to take the fight to **Audi** and **Peugeot**, with a now healthy 007 howling round to make up lost time. As we have seen, a result for 009 wasn't to be and 007 finished in sixth place, 32 laps behind the winning **Audi**.

Speaking after the race, **David Richards, Chairman of Aston Martin** said: "All in all this weekend was a success; we set out to prove that we were the fastest petrol entry here and whilst the result wasn't quite what we were looking for, we certainly proved the performance of the **Aston Martins**.



"We received such an extraordinary amount of enthusiasm and support from customers and fans alike. The team performed to their usual immaculate standards and I am especially pleased with our Official Partner **Team Young Driver AMR** who secured a podium. We hope and look forward to the opportunity to challenge for an outright victory in the future."

Team Young Driver supplied the sole **Aston** entry in **LM GT1**, veteran AMR drivers **Tomas Enge (CZ)** and **Peter Kox (NL)** joined by **Christopher Nygaard (DK)**. Having qualified on pole in **LM GT1**, the white/red DBR9 eventually finished 22nd overall, third in class with driveshaft problems holding the clearly fast car back.



In **LM GT2**, the yellow and black, Dunlop-sponsored **Aston Martin V8 Vantage GT2** of **Rob Bell (GB)**, **Tim Sugden (GB)** and **Bryce Miller (USA)** qualified 13th in class but was eliminated in an accident at 21:00 on Saturday evening.

You can read our full report on the 2010 Le Mans 24 Hours [HERE](#).

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