



## Le Mans Series teams test: Let the sun shine and the engines roar!

**Pescarolo Sport** and **Creation Autosportif**, two top teams in the 2006 Le Mans Endurance Series, completed long distance testing at the Paul Ricard circuit in Southern France on Sunday and Monday, both very satisfied with the performances of their cars and optimistic for the 2007 Le Mans Series which opens at the modern Istanbul track in Turkey on April 7-8-9. Nevertheless, the car that covered the greatest distance in the two days was the **RML MG Lola EX 264** which completed 455 laps.

No fewer than 32 cars took part in the two days of testing, evenly balanced in the Le Mans Prototype 1 and 2 divisions, and the GT divisions 1 and 2. Twenty-three different makes of car were represented and there were 21 nationalities of drivers, including former Formula One driver Alex Yoong from Malaysia, who drives with Jan Lammers in the Racing for Holland Dome, Alexey Vasiliev from Russia who has joined the Czech Convers Menx 550 team, and Japanese drivers Shinji Nakano and Haruki Kurosawa who will share the latest Courage LC70 Mugen with Swiss Alexander Frei.

Teams that had tested during the winter in freezing, or wet conditions welcomed the beautiful climate of the Paul Ricard test track near Toulon, warm and sunny on Sunday and Monday and with superb facilities. World Rally Champion Sebastien Loeb joined the Pescarolo Sport team on Monday, fresh from his victory in the Rally Catalunya, and contributed to the completion of 423 laps of the 6.035 kilometre track covered by Jean-Christophe Boullion, Emmanuel Collard, Erik Comas and Eric Helary. "We have had no significant problems at all" commented Pescarolo, satisfied that the off-season modifications have been effective. Loeb, who looks forward to racing at Le Mans for the second time with Pescarolo Sport, commented: "I was happy to have immediately a better feeling [to last year]. There were no spins, no flat spots, I was very comfortable in the car."

The **Creation CA06/H**, completely rebuilt in LMP1 'Hybrid' form during the winter, and switched from a Zytek V8 engine to a 5-litre Judd GV5 10-cylinder engine, set the fastest time in two days at 1m 44.240s, and drivers Nicolas Minassian and Jamie Campbell-Walter reveled in the extra power and torque of the larger engine, despite having to ballast the car to 925 kg. Beppe Gabbiani and Felipe Ortiz, who will drive for Creation Autosportif at the opening round in Istanbul next month, and in the full Le Mans Series, drove the car for the first time. "It needs very precise handling" remarked Gabbiani, while Ortiz proved the point with a lurid spin at the high-speed Signes curve and ruined a brand-new set of Michelin tyres!

The **Racing for Holland Dome-Mugen** was another car to complete a trouble-free long distance run in the hands of Jan Lammers and Alex Yoong, and the Dutch team will now send the car to Istanbul to compete in the opening round. The **Chamberlain Synergy Lola B06/10 AER** also completed a big distance in the hands of Bob Berridge, Peter Owen and Gareth Evans, and late in the Monday session Berridge promoted the car to the fourth fastest time overall at 1m 45.781s. "The car has completed the best part of 2,000 kilometres and we have not put a spanner on it" said Hugh Chamberlain. "You could not do any better with a brand-new car."

Two new **Courage LC70s** were given a thorough test at the Paul Ricard circuit with encouraging results. The **Courage Competition** entry is powered by a Mugen engine and races on Advan tyres, while the new **Swiss Spirit** team chose a Judd V10 engine and will race on Michelin tyres. "The car has great potential" said Jean-Marc Gounon of the Mugen powered car from Le Mans. "It has a lot of downforce and the engine is very good."

The **RML MG Lola EX 264** completed 455 laps (testing record!) in the hands of owner Mike Newton, Tommy Erdos and Jonny Kane. The Lola has switched to the AER 4-cylinder turbo engine for the 2006 season and this proved very satisfactory, completing 2,745 kilometres without difficulty. The fastest car in LMP2 was the **Chamberlain Synergy Lola B05/40** of Miguel Amaral, from Portugal, and Spaniards Angel Burgueno and Miguel Angel de Castro.

**Aston Martin** came out on top of the GT1 division as the Larbre Competition entry, a brand-new car driven by FIA GT Champion Gabriele Gardel with Pedro Lamy and Vincent Vosse, set the fastest time of 1m 52.293s. Second in class was the **Luc Alphand Adventures Corvette C5-R** of Jerome Policand, Luc Alphand, Anthony Beltoise and Patrice Goueslard and third, the **Team Oreca Saleen S7-R** in the hands of Stephane Ortelli, Soheil Ayari and Bruno Hernandez. The **Russian Age Racing** Aston Martin was fastest on the first day of testing, Spaniard Antonio Garcia setting competitive times on his first outing in the DBR9. "It is very different to what I have been driving," said Garcia, who will share his car with Scottish driver Nathan Kinch in Istanbul.

In GT2, the **Autorlando Porsche GT3 RSR** was fastest in the hands of Romain Dumas and Joel Camathias. The Porsche headed the Team Icer Brakes Ferrari 430 GT and the IMSA Performance Matmut Porsche GT3 RSR.

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## OFFICIAL TESTING - TOP TIMES

### "LM"P1

- 1, *Creation Autosportif* Creation CA06/H, Nicolas Minassian/Jamie Campbell-Walter/Beppe Gabbiani/Felipe Ortiz, 1' 44"240
- 2, *Pescarolo Sport* Pescarolo C60H Judd, J-C. Boullion/Emmanuel Collard/Erik Comas/Eric Helary/Sebastien Loeb, 1' 45"424
- 3, *Racing for Holland* Dome-Mugen, Jan Lammers/Alex Yoong, 1'45"594
- 4, *Chamberlain Synergy* Lola B06/10 AER V8, Bob Berridge/Gareth Evans/Peter Owen, 1'45"781
- 5, *Courage Competition* Courage LC70 Mugen, Shinji Nakano/Haruki Kurosawa/Alexander Frei/Jean-Marc Gounon, 1'46"060
- 6, *Swiss Spirit* Courage LC70 Judd, Harold Primat/Marcel Fassler, 1' 48"199

### "LM"P2

- 1, *Chamberlain Synergy* Lola B05/40 AER, Miguel Amaral/Angel Burgueno/Miguel Angel de Castro, 1' 47"139
- 2, *RML MG* Lola EX 264 AER, Mike Newton/Tommy Erdos/Jonny Kane, 1' 48"335
- 3, *Rollcentre Radical* SR9 Judd, Martin Short/Joao Barbosa/Rob Barff, 1' 49"341
- 4, *Paul Belmondo Racing* Courage C65 Ford, Claude-Yves Gosselin/Karim Ojjeh/Pierre Ragues, 1' 50"282

### "LM"GT1

- 1, *Larbre Competition* Aston Martin DBR9, Pedro Lamy/Gabriele Gardel/Vincent Vosse, 1' 52"293
- 2, *Luc Alphand Aventures* Corvette C5-R, Jerome Policand/Luc Alphand/Anthony Beltoise/Patrice Goueslard, 1' 53"769
- 3, *Team Oreca Saleen* S7R, Stephane Ortelli/Soheil Ayari/Bruno Hernandez, 1' 53"838
- 4, *PSI Experience* Corvette C6.R, Pertti Kuismanen/Jos Menten/Markus Palttala, 1'54"012

### "LM"GT2

- 1, *Autorlando Sport* Porsche GT3 RSR, Romain Dumas/Joel Camathias, 1' 58"668
- 2, *Team Icer Brakes* Ferrari 430 GT, Jesus Diez/Peter Sundberg/Domingo Romero, 2' 00"400
- 3, *IMSA Performance Matmut* Porsche GT3 RSR, Christophe Bouchut/Sebastien Dumez/Raymond Narac, 2' 00"726
- 4, *Team LNT Panoz Esperante*, Lawrence Tomlinson/Richard Dean/Luke Hines/Tom Kimber-Smith, 2' 03"093

Further results on the "Official Testings" of the website

[www.lemans-series.com](http://www.lemans-series.com)