



The Le Mans Series heads to Hungary for the very first time so the 1,000Km of Hungaroring is a leap in the dark for most of teams and drivers. Team ORECA Matmut took their first victory with the Peugeot 908 HDi FAP one month ago in Portugal and expects to clinch another one in the heat of the night at Budapest.

The Hungaroring lies just east of Budapest and the Castle District of Buda has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The layout has not been too much modified over the years and the latest changes see the longest lap in the circuit's history with a total distance of 4.384 km.

With its slow corners and its narrow straights, many say its characteristics more closely resemble a street circuit than a purpose-built track. However, its beautiful setting in a natural amphitheatre makes it an excellent venue for spectators. They should enjoy a race that Team ORECA Matmut ex-Formula One driver Olivier Panis predicts tough.

A LAP OF THE HUNGARORING WITH OLIVIER PANIS – TEAM ORECA MATMUT

“The circuit is twisty with many slow corners and understeering is an issue. The track is often dirty as there are not many races scheduled, but Formula One cars raced here a few weeks ago, and it should help. The track picks up quite a lot of grip as more rubber goes down. You can easily overtake in the first hairpin, after that... it's very hard to do so; this is why it is very important to have good qualifying.

“You break hard for Turn One, which is a quite tight right-hand hairpin taken in first or second gear in a prototype. This is the best opportunity to pass either entering or exiting the corner. On the power as you exit, you go slightly downhill and the short straight leads to Turn Two, a long second or third gear left hander that is very difficult. It is off-camber and tricky so you have to be careful not to lock a wheel or you can lose a lot of time. Turn Three is a flat-out right-hand kink that leads to Turn Four, which is a very fast third or fourth gear left-hander. You dab the brakes as you enter the corner, which is bumpy and makes it difficult to keep the car in line. You must hug the bend to carry speed through the exit.

“You then climb uphill on the approach to very slow Turn Five. You can brake late and maybe hit the kerbs, but you want to ensure you have a good line as you need to carry speed all the way to the chicane. You must find the good compromise. Then you come to Turns Six and Seven, a chicane, and a short straight follows before Turns Eight and Nine. This is the other fast part of the track. You can carry an enormous amount of speed through, but they are quite slippery corners. We will have a hard time to work our way through traffic as it is almost impossible to pass here. You can make or lost tenths of a second.

“You are now in Turn Ten, a flat-out left-hand kink, before you come to Turn 11, which is a very fast right-hander. You then go down a hill and brake for a 90-degree right-hander. The grip is good so you can brake late even if you want to make sure you don't go wide. This is a conventional corner. The long penultimate left-hander is tricky. You want to keep to the left to carry speed through here, because if you don't, you drive on the dirty line. The long last corner is about the same. It's very bumpy and slippery on the entry and it makes the corner tricky, but you need to carry as much speed as you can for the start-finish line.”

A NIGHT SHOW

For the second time in a row, the race is scheduled late in the afternoon and the competitors will cross the finish line in the dark. The chase for titles will be up throughout all classes and some contenders would like to clinch the title as soon as Sunday night. The race looks promising.

FOLLOW THE RACE

The 1,000Km of Hungaroring will start at 4:00 pm on Sunday, August 22.

Please visit our website at www.lemans-series.com for live-timing.

