

Audi made a stunning debut with its R18 TDIs. The Ingolstadt firm's three cars set the three quickest times in qualifying for the Spa-Francorchamps 1000 kms. Strakka Racing, AF Corse, IMSA Performance Matmut and Neil Garner Motorsport bagged pole in the other categories.

Since the start of the Spa-Francorchamps 1000 kms, the teams have all been faced with interruptions of the practice sessions. In qualifying for the prototypes, the no. 15 OAK Racing Pescarolo had a heavy shunt with Matthieu Lahaye at the wheel. The red flag came out and the session was stopped with 6 minutes to go the end. The driver is conscious and has been taken to hospital for more in-depth examinations that look positive, but the weekend is over for the team in no. 15.

Audi scores a hat trick

The battle for pole on the Ardennes circuit raged between André Lotterer in the no. 2 R18 and Timo Bernhard in no. 1. Finally, the latter bagged pole with a time of 2m 01.512s before the session was interrupted. "I'm delighted for the whole Audi team, which has done a huge amount of work to put us where we are," said the German. "We knew we were quick but we had to find the pace in qualifying. My second attempt was the right one, I had a clear lap. It's a big satisfaction to set the R18's first pole!"

ORECA took fourth place behind the Audis in 2m 05.482s and its 908 HDI FAP was the highest-placed of the Peugeots. The leading works car was no.7 driven by Marc Gené in thirteenth spot as the 908s were obliged to lift off following the red flag. "It's a huge handicap," grimaced Bruno Famin, the technical director. "But it doesn't change our programme and our strategy very much. We'll do our own race."

Strakka Racing back in front

Mathias Beche in the TDS Racing Oreca 03-Nissan was the quickest for a long time until Danny Watts snatched pole in the Strakka Racing HPD ARX-01d with a time of 2m 10.016s. "I was a bit lucky to be able to put in a clean lap despite the traffic. Tomorrow, we'll have to watch out. A lot can happen. We'll have to deal with traffic."

Ferrari triple in LM GTE Pro

Ferrari continued to dominate in LM GTE Pro. Giancarlo Fisichella in the no. 51 AF Corse Ferrari F458 Italia fought hard for pole until he was pipped by Jaime Melo in the no. 71 AF Corse Ferrari F458, very much at home on the Belgian circuit. "It's all down to team work. We share all the information," said the Brazilian. "Our car could be even better and we could be quicker in the corners."

Nicolas Armindo doubles up

Nicolas Armindo who set pole in LM GTE Am at Le Castellet doubled up at Spa. The Frenchman put his no. 76 IMSA Performance Matmut Porsche 997 GT3 RSR on pole, and was in the same time bracket as the Pros. He got round in 2m 23.007s to bag pole early on. "I was driving without looking at the performance of the others, but it's a great satisfaction to top the time sheets. We were able to take the fight to some of the Pros! In the event, we'll have to keep out of the way of the prototypes and drive our own race. Being quick over a lap isn't important. Above all, we have to finish."

FLM: Neil Garner Motorsport bags pole

Nicolas Marroc (Hope Racing) held pole for a long time in Formula Le Mans with a time of 2m 14.431s. Phil Keen (Neil Garner Motorsport) got close with a lap in 2m 14.752s and then pipped the Hope Racing driver with a time of 2m 13.592s before the red flag was hung out. The Genoa Racing FLM 09, no. 93, went off in the same spot as the no. 15 OAK Racing entry and was towed back to its pit undamaged!

Find the full results on www.lemans-series.com. Rendezvous for the race tomorrow at 14h05.