



LE MANS SERIES: 1,000KM DE SPA RACE (May 10, 2008)

MINASSIAN/GENE/VILLENEUVE TAKE THE SPOILS AT SPA WITH THE PEUGEOT 908 HDi FAP

Just like the first two rounds of the 2008 Le Mans Series, the 1,000km de Spa-Francorchamps turned out to be yet another fiercely-disputed, drama-filled race. The result saw Team Peugeot Total claim its third success from three starts without suffering the slightest technical problem. Nicolas Minassian, Marc Gené and Jacques Villeneuve shared the winning N°7 Peugeot 908 HDi FAP, but the team's other car crashed out shortly after the two-hour mark.

The Belgian Ardennes were bathed in glorious summer sunshine throughout the weekend and an impressive crowd of 35,000 spectators turned out to watch the 42 starters begin the race behind the Safety Car following an off by a competitor during the formation lap. When the cars were finally unleashed, Pedro Lamy got away cleanly with the N°8 908 HDi FAP N°8 and soon started to pull clear of his chasers, putting five seconds between his Peugeot and the Audi R10 of McNish who was coming under pressure from Nicolas Minassian in the other 908 HDi FAP. The scrap between the two began in earnest on Lap 21 and ended in a virile clash on Lap 35 during which neither driver was prepared to give way and both were forced to take to the grass through Combes. The last word went to Nicolas Minassian, however, which left the two Peugeots lapping in first and second places for the rest of their double-stint. The first driver changes on Lap 44 saw Villeneuve take over from Minassian, but the N°8 car dropped 35 seconds in the pits when the engine was accidentally switched off with Wurz on board. The Austrian re-joined in third place behind Capello's Audi and began to push hard to make up the gap which was closed on Lap 56. As Wurz came up to pass a Spyker, however, the two cars touched and the Austrian crashed hard in a tyre wall, taking with him the hapless Capello who was able to re-join, albeit with a damaged car. *"It all happened so quickly,"* explained **Alexander Wurz**. *"I was pulling back in front of the Spyker when the rear right of my car hit it, and that sent me into a spin. I couldn't avoid hitting the Audi and I would like apologise for that, just as I would like to say sorry to everyone at Peugeot whose excellent work had given us a fantastic car."*

Jacques Villeneuve handed over to Marc Gené who went on to post the fastest race lap before the Spaniard handed back over to Nicolas Minassian, as the three drivers took turns to head the field without suffering the slightest technical or strategic problem.

In the Drivers' standings, Minassian/Gené now top the standings, equal with Rockenfeller/Prémat, while Peugeot has lost its advantage in the Manufacturers' table to Audi by two points.

Jacques VILLENEUVE: "I thoroughly enjoyed the race. We had a good fight and the three of us did a good job together. The weekend was excellent preparation for the Le Mans 24 Hours and it was also very nice to win a race again. My last victory dated back to the 1997 Luxemburg Grand Prix!"

Nicolas MINASSIAN: "I suffered quite badly with oversteer during my first stint but everything returned to normal once new tyres were fitted and I had a great scrap with McNish. I left my braking as late as possible, and he braked even later, and we both end up crossing the grass. It was close, but perfectly fair and square! I spent the rest of the race enjoying the afternoon with my two teammates."



INFO PRESSE 908 HDi FAP



Marc GENE: "Nico' did most of the work. It's a good result in championship terms and I'm delighted that the team brought in Jacques for this race to help us prepare for Le Mans."

Michel BARGE: "Peugeot has kept up its unbeaten run in the Le Mans Series and we were also pleased that we chose to use Spa to prepare for Le Mans by entering three-drivers for both cars. That doesn't necessarily mean we are perfectly ready for Le Mans; we still have a great deal of work to do, especially following the accident of the N°8 car. Unfortunately, that's racing. Mixing cars of differing performance levels is one of the draws of this discipline, but it's also its biggest difficulty."

Bruno FAMIN: "We didn't have any technical problems whatsoever. The engine cut on the N°8 car following an erroneous manoeuvre during the driver change. The N°8 car's crash has obviously made life more complicated for us, but it isn't the first challenge we have had to rise to!"

THE RACE

Time	Lap	Car	Incidents
12:53	1	7 and 8	Race start behind the Safety Car after the N°46 car went off during the formation lap.
12:57	2	7 and 8	Re-start: the N°8 908 leads ahead of the N°1 Audi and the N°7 908.
13:02	3	7	Battle between McNish and Minassian: Minassian makes a mistake at La Source and loses six seconds.
13:38	21	7 and 8	Fuel and tyres.
14:02	32	7	Minassian attempts to pass McNish round the outside through Combes. The two cars go off into the grass. Minassian moves into second place.
14:27	44	7 and 8	Fuel and tyres. Driver changes: Wurz takes over N°8 and Villeneuve takes over N°7. The N°8 car loses 35s after the engine is switched off, leaving the N°7 car in the lead.
14:34	46	7 and 8	Safety Car.
14:47	51	7 and 8	Re-start.
14:58	56	8	Wurz crashes heavily following a tangle through Fagnes. Safety Car.
15:01	58	7	Fuel.
15:17	63	7	Re-start.
15:37	72	7	Safety Car.
15:43	75	7	Fuel. Driver change (Gené).
15:50	77	7	Re-start.
15:54	79	7	Gené posts the fastest race lap (1m 59.883s).
16:33	98	7	Fuel and tyres.
17:22	121	7	Fuel and tyres. Driver change (Minassian).
17:55	136	7	Safety Car.
18:03	139	7	Re-start. Minassian leads by 13s ahead of Prémat (N°2).
18:12	143	7	Victory for the N°7 Peugeot 908 (Minassian/Gené/Villeneuve).



1,000km de Spa – final positions:

1, Minassian/Gené/Villeneuve	Peugeot 908 HDi FAP (143 laps in 5h 17m 48.566s)
2, Rockenfeller/Prémat	Audi R10 (+30.387s)
3, Panis/Lapierre	Courage Oreca (+3 laps)
4, Capello/McNish	Audi R10 (+4 laps)
5, Collard/Boullion	Pescarolo (+4 laps)

Fastest race lap: Marc Gené (Peugeot 908 HDi FAP), 1m 59.883s (average: 210.295kph)

Manufacturers' Championship:

1, Audi	37 points
2, Peugeot	35 points
3, Pescarolo	21 points

Drivers' Championship:

1, Minassian/Gené	24 points
Rockenfeller/Prémat	24 points
3, Primat/Tinseau	12 points
McNish/Capello	12 points
5, Sarrazin/Lamy	11 points

NEXT EVENTS:

Le Mans 24 Hours

Test day: June 1, 2008

Race: June 14-15, 2008

Le Mans Series

Nürburgring: August 16-17, 2008

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