



Team RLR focussed on final flourish at Estoril

Team RLR will look to sign off its first full season in the Le Mans Series by claiming a podium finish in the final round at the Six Hours of Estoril this weekend (September 23-25).

The British LMP2 squad has already notched up three top-five class finishes in 2011, but wants to deliver on the potential it has shown by taking home silverware from the championship finale.

The MG Motor UK backed outfit will take heart from its heroic performance in the previous round at Silverstone, when it battled back from multiple engine failures and starting from the pit lane to finish fifth in class and 14th overall from 48 starters.

The outstanding recovery drive underlined the squad's belief that it can be a podium contender given a trouble free race, and both drivers and management are now determined to deliver a top three finish at the famous Estoril circuit just over 30km to the east of Portugal's capital Lisbon.

Team RLR tested on the 4.18km track early in 2011, but torrential downpours that left rivers of standing water on the asphalt restricted running and frustrated the team's efforts to dial in the MG Lola EX265.

However, with warm, dry weather forecast for the upcoming race weekend Team RLR expects both the conditions and the technical nature of Estoril's 13 turns will suit the car down to the ground.

While not in contention for the LMP2 title, the destination of which will be decided at Estoril, a podium finish for Team RLR could still land the Bolton-based squad third place in the overall LMP2 standings should other results go its way.

With the tried and tested driver combination of Warren Hughes, Barry Gates and Rob Garofall working well together the team will hope the unheard-of engine troubles it experienced at Silverstone are a thing of the past and the performance of the Dunlop shod MG Lola EX265 can be maximised throughout the three practice sessions ahead of qualifying and the six hour race itself.

The Team RLR management believe a strong result in the final event would be a major boost in securing additional sponsors and strengthening the squad's bid to challenge for both Le Mans Series and 24 Hours of Le Mans honours in 2012.

Nick Reynolds, Team RLR team principal, said:

"What we achieved at Silverstone was pretty special given the circumstances, but ultimately we didn't get the chance to show our true potential. I hope we can now go on and do that at Estoril. We can still potentially finish third in the championship so we're not going there to make up the numbers, we want to grab every point we can. We are still at a slight disadvantage in terms of power due to the regulations, but around Estoril I don't think it will hurt us as much so we should be able to go really well there. Everyone in the team will be working flat out again to achieve the kind of result we think we deserve."

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Warren Hughes, Team RLR driver, said:

“It was really good to get a finish in the last race at Silverstone even after all the engine difficulties, as not only is it what the team deserved but from my point of view it was great to get more familiar with the car and the rest of the guys. Looking forward to Estoril I see no reason to think a podium is out of the question. It’s a downforce circuit so the car should be a bit more suited to the track, and I really enjoy driving there so I’m looking forward to the challenge. If we can have a trouble free run it would be nice, and I really think we can finish the season on a high if that’s the case.”

Barry Gates, Team RLR driver, said:

“With the short turnaround between the last event and this one I think we’ll all be going to Estoril feeling race ready and looking forward to it. At Silverstone we had a frustrating weekend although we went well in the race, and we feel that with a clean run we should be on the pace and be competitive at Estoril. I was there earlier in the season when we tested, although I’ve still to drive it in the dry. We carry more downforce than most cars in the LMP2 class but that should suit us better at Estoril as it’s quite technical, and that will also suit our drivers too. The team has made a lot of progress this year and we’ve had some near misses this year in terms of the results we are aiming for, so we now want to go out on a high note. We feel we’re due a decent result now and if things go our way we can finish third in the championship, which is not bad at all after a steep learning curve in our first season.”

Rob Garofall, Team RLR driver, said:

“The last event was a tough one and the final hour or so was probably as difficult as anything I’ve experienced in a race, I was physically and mentally drained by pushing so hard. However, I’m over that now and raring to go to Estoril. It’s a circuit where I’ve had some success before in other championships so I know it pretty well and really enjoy racing there. It should suit the MG Lola a little more too as it requires a higher level of downforce than some of the other circuits we’ve raced at this season. If you look at where we finished at Silverstone even after all the problems we had you can see the potential, and I think we really should be in a position for a shot at the podium. That would be a job well done and a great way to finish the season.”

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