



Team RLR Leaves Spa Feeling Great

A fourth place class finish in LMP2 at Spa Francorchamps saw Team RLR's 2011 Le Mans Series campaign step up another gear and further underlined the British squad's potential.

The Lancashire-based outfit once again demonstrated its ability to get the most out of the MG Lola EX265 Judd and its three drivers, who drove a consistent, trouble-free race in Belgium to finish 14th overall from a stellar field of 53 starters that included the cream of the endurance racing world.

For the second race in a row the small but highly ambitious Team RLR raised the bar in its first full Le Mans Series season and collected its best ever result in the championship, finishing ahead of many more experienced rivals in the process.

With the event's practice sessions heavily disrupted by numerous crashes and resulting red flags, Team RLR went into qualifying with nowhere near as much running time as it wanted to fine tune the MG Lola to the demanding 7km circuit in the Ardennes. That, combined with the power and weight disadvantage currently placed on the car by the latest regulations, meant Team RLR's Rob Garofall could only put it 23rd on the grid and at the tail of the LMP2 class field.

However, the team always felt it would be able to use its race craft and well-drilled pit crew to make steady progress in the race, especially if any of its class rivals hit trouble on the unforgiving undulations of the legendary Spa circuit.

With a large and enthused crowd packing the vantage points around the breathtaking and sun-drenched track, Team RLR set about the task of making its way through the field. Rob Garofall took the wheel of the MG Lola EX265 Judd for the opening stint and steadily picked his way through the action-packed opening stages of the race, moving up to 19th overall before coming back into the box and handing over to team-mate Simon Phillips.

Phillips produced another tidy performance as he built up his pace around the demanding twists and turns that caught out many drivers with more Le Mans experience. While he saw a number of cars leave the track around him in spectacular fashion, Phillips' only real moment of concern was an engine temperature spike close to the end of his stint. However, that problem was solved in the pits after the crew cleaned out rubber debris built up in the radiator ducts as Barry Gates got into the car.

With other teams falling by the wayside due to a variety of dramas Gates pressed home the advantage borne out of Team RLR's meticulous preparation, with quick pit stops and the MG Lola ticking over sweetly he racked up impressively consistent times to move up to fourth in class and 16th overall before pacing the tail end of his time at the wheel in order to manage fuel levels.

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The chance to grab a shock podium spot looked like it may be on the cards for Team RLR as Rob Garofall closed out the final stages of the race in impeccable fashion. However, the race leaders had built up enough of a gap and ultimately had too much of a power advantage that he couldn't chase them down before the chequered flag came out.

However, another strong result has boosted Team RLR's efforts to compete with the established names in the series and given the squad reason to believe it can make further progress when the Le Mans Series moves to Italy for the next round at Imola in July.

Nick Reynolds, Team RLR team principal, said:

"I'm totally made up with this result, I couldn't have asked for more. We got the best result possible with the rules we are running to. Our pit stops were great, it's something we've put a lot of effort into getting right and each time the car came in the boys got it spot on. That really helps us over the course of a race, and with the drivers having such a clean run we had no issues at all. Every member of the team has worked their socks off and stepped up to the mark. Barry Gates' middle stint really made it for me though, that's two outstanding performances in a row from him. I think we've really shown what we can do against some very high quality opposition this weekend."

Barry Gates, Team RLR driver, said:

"I think we struggled a little bit earlier in the weekend with practiced being disrupted so much by other people's accidents. That meant we were on the back foot a little bit going into the race. Looking at the qualifying times it would have been easy to think we were in for an uncomfortable weekend. However the team has done a fantastic job as usual and really worked tirelessly together to turn it around. We worked through it, kept everything in one piece and got a result we very much deserved."

Rob Garofall, Team RLR driver, said:

"I think what we've achieved this weekend has been outstanding considering we came here at a disadvantage to the rest of the class. No-one's head went down even when it didn't look promising after qualifying and there was always a positive atmosphere within the team. We ran a completely clean race from start to finish, and with everyone putting in maximum effort the race came to us. The car was as good at the end as it was at the start, and we got everything out of it we possibly could. I'm very proud of everyone associated with team."

Simon Phillips, Team RLR driver, said:

"I'm very happy with that result. To get a fourth place like that even with the power and weight penalty we have is fantastic, and I'm sure we could achieve even more if we were on a level playing field. The driving was clean and the pit stops went like clockwork. All in all it was a great team effort and we couldn't have done any more with the restrictions currently placed upon us. "

ENDS

Notes for editors:

To find out more about Team RLR and its Le Mans Series campaign log on to: www.rlrmotorsport.com

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