

Sunday, 13 June
Le Mans 24 Hours – Race Report

OAK Racing complete Le Mans podium hat-trick

OAK Racing Team Mazda France continued their incredible run of form at the Le Mans 24 Hours in recent years with a third consecutive podium finish.

The #35 Pescarolo-Judd driven by Matthieu Lahaye, Guillaume Moreau and Jan Charouz produced a typically professional performance to run quickly and consistently throughout the twice-round-the-clock endurance race on their way to second position in LMP2 and seventh overall.



Meanwhile, the team's #24 entry of Jacques Nicolet, Richard Hein and Jean-Francois Yvon came home ninth overall and fourth in class, one place shy of their own podium finish from 2009.

Moreau was quickly into his stride after Saturday's 3pm start and had moved up to fourth by the end of his stint. There the car stayed as both Lahaye and Charouz completed stints of their own until passing Quifel ASM's Zytek in the darkness. And when the pre-race class favourite Highcroft HPD machine hit trouble, the crew were primed to pounce, taking a second position they would maintain to the flag.

While the #35 car enjoyed a relatively straight-forward race, the same couldn't be said of the #24. Running 7th just after midnight, Hein was squeezed by two faster LMP1 cars and forced into an accident with the stationary Matech Ford GT.

Both machines suffered significant damage with the Pescarolo losing much of its front left side. But just half-an-hour after limping back to the pits, the Monegasque returned to action, OAK Racing's mechanics having effected an incredible rebuild.

Throughout the night the car continued to run like clockwork, picking off those that fell by the wayside to seal fourth in class and an overall top ten finish.

Francois Sicard, Team Manager: "A third consecutive podium for the team is incredible, especially as it's so difficult to even finish at Le Mans. I'm also proud of the job done by the team and drivers because we got both entries inside the top ten overall. The car was very quick and reliable but we knew from the outset that it would be impossible to fight against the HPDs because of their straight-line speed, so we decided to focus on our own race. I asked the drivers to look after the car and thanks to the Pescarolo and Judd's reliability, combined with our Dunlop tyres' durability and consistency, we managed a great result.

"Now we'll look forward to the rest of the Le Mans Series where we've already scored two podiums, but I'm hopeful of taking the next step. I think our car will suit Portimao so let's wait and see. We've succeeded at Le Mans so I see no reason why we can't in Portugal or Hungary."

Matthieu Lahaye: "It's fantastic for the team which has scored podiums here every year since 2008. OAK Racing has become the team of choice for drivers wanting to finish on the Le Mans podium! We had no reliability issues with either car and both finished in the overall top ten. In the Le Mans Series one car is second and the other fourth in the championship which proves there's a great team effort and spirit. I'm delighted to have been a part of that since the beginning and hopefully it will continue."



Guillaume Moreau: "I rejoined OAK Racing this year and have completed two Le Mans Series races, scoring two podiums. Now, in my third, we finished on the Le Mans podium. We started the race with our confidence high whilst remaining cautious and realistic. Jan, who was quick and reliable, helped us put the HPDs under pressure. I'm delighted to finish second and sure it's a good sign for the rest of the season. The team were great, especially when Richard had his accident. They repaired the car so quickly, proving we are as competitive in the garage as on the track."

Jan Charouz: "I'm really happy to be back at Le Mans after focusing on single seaters this year. Luckily I haven't forgotten how to drive a prototype! I'm also pleased that after four years of trying I've finally finished on the podium. It was great to drive in LMP2 for OAK Racing. The team did a great job, the car was amazing and although we were losing out a bit on the straights, we gained more in the corners. Everyone was very professional and it was a pleasure to be a part of the team."

Jacques Nicolet: "As a driver I'm very happy with how the race went and had a great time. I completed a quadruple stint last night which was fantastic, as was the car. The accident revealed what a great bunch of mechanics we've got though. The crews from both cars got together to repair damage in 36 minutes which is similar to a manufacturer team. I'm also very proud as a team owner that with Francois Sicard we were able to put together an operation like this. To have two LMP2s in the top ten is an exceptional result. 2010 has been great so far and it's not finished yet. I'm thinking of Le Mans 2011 with even more enthusiasm now. I'm also proud that for the third year in a row an OAK Racing Pescarolo is on the podium."

Richard Hein: "It's fantastic for the kids in #35! They deserve it and I'm very proud of them. This proves that when you mix youth with experience it works well! It was going well until I ran out of luck at midnight when two Audis overtook me. There was a Ford GT stationary on the racing line with no lights on and no yellow flags out so the first I knew of it was when the cars in front darted left and right. It was a big impact – maybe 192km/h – but the team did a great job."

Jean-Francois Yvon: "I'm very happy for the team and it's a magnificent result to get two cars in the top nine overall. The car was exceptional but we had to work hard to maintain the level of performance. A big thanks to the entire team for preparing such a fantastic car. I hope they will have me back again next year as I think myself, Jacques and Richard form a fantastic partnership together."

LMP2 Results:

1. Strakka Racing HPD-HPD / Danny Watts/Johnny Kane/Nick Leventis / 367 laps
2. OAK Racing Pescarolo-Judd / Matthieu Lahaye/Guillaume Moreau/Jan Charouz / 361 laps
3. RML Lola-HPD / Tommy Erdos/Andy Wallace/Mike Newton / 358 laps
4. OAK Racing Pescarolo-Judd / Jacques Nicolet/Richard Hein/Jean-Francois Yvon / 341 laps
5. Team Bruichladdich Ginetta-Zytek / Karim Ojeh/Tim Greaves/Gary Chalandon / 341 laps
6. Team Race Performance Radical-Judd / Pierre Bruneau/ Marc Rostan/Ralph Meychtry / 321 laps
7. Quifel ASM Ginetta-Zytek / Miguel Amaral/Olivier Pla/Warren Hughes / 318 laps
8. WR Salini-Zytek / Philippe Salini/Stephane Salini/Tristan Gommendy / 308 laps
9. Highcroft Racing HPD-HPD / David Brabham/Marino Franchitti/Marco Werner / 296 laps
10. KSM Lola-Judd / Jean De Pourtales/Hideki Noda/Jonathan Kennard / 291 laps

ENDS

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