

OAK Racing Team Mazda France targeting podium hat-trick at Le Mans

OAK Racing Team Mazda France head into next weekend's Le Mans 24 Hours targeting a third successive LMP2 podium finish at the world's most famous motor race, but also hoping for an improvement on the fine third places achieved in 2008 and 2009.

The French squad, which will field the only pair of Pescarolo-Judd prototypes on the grid in the twice-around-the-clock endurance event at La Sarthe, has enjoyed a strong start to the 2010 season and currently lies second in the Le Mans Series standings after podium finishes in both the Paul Ricard 8 Hours and Spa 1000km races.

Both events proved to be useful preparation for Le Mans, while two days of testing at Magny-Cours recently has also boosted confidence ahead of an event in which reliability is critical, as both cars ran trouble-free.



Once again in 2010, OAK Racing has two complimentary driver line-ups for the squad's fourth appearance at Le Mans since Jacques Nicolet took over ownership of the team in 2007.

In car #24, Jacques Nicolet is joined by Richard Hein and Jean-Francois Yvon, reuniting the line-up which finished third in the LMP2 class last year. Car #35 brings together three young racers with a strong background in single-seaters; Matthieu Lahaye, Guillaume Moreau, and Renault F1 reserve driver and reigning Le Mans Series champion, Jan Charouz.

Race week begins on Sunday with the traditional scrutineering in Jacobin's Square. The whole team will be present, except Charouz who is in Brno in the Czech Republic for the World Series by Renault where he will get the chance to demonstrate the Renault F1 car as well as race in the two Formula Renault 3.5 series events, in front of his home crowd.

François Sicard, Team Manager: "Before now our team has been going through a learning process, but this year we are approaching things differently. We have achieved some very good results. We now have the experience and technical package to have big ambitions for the race. Even though we're not the favourites, we have the means to fight and we will keep the pressure on our rivals until the very end! We are feeling positive and have made sure that everything is in place to do well. Le Mans is a



complex and unique race and while the preparation of the drivers and cars plays an important role, the input of the team is absolutely crucial. Expertise, team spirit and experience in each area of the event are essential and we are counting on that to make a real difference."

Jacques Nicolet: "I'm happy to be reunited with my team-mates again. The Magny-Cours test allowed us to find our reference points again without any technical problems. I don't think the three of us have ever been better prepared. This is my fourth appearance at Le Mans, I feel ready both physically and mentally and, despite my excitement to get out on the circuit again, I arrive at La Sarthe feeling calm and confident."

Richard Hein: "This is my third appearance at Le Mans and third season in the Le Mans Series, so I should be used to it by now, but the mystique of Le Mans is still alive and well for me! I'm able to manage negative pressure, but positive pressure is more difficult. My bag has been packed for a long time and I cannot wait to experience this magnificent sporting and human adventure again. This event is one of the most important of my year."

Jean-François Yvon: "It was great to meet up with the team again at Magny-Cours. I was a bit nervous before the first session, thinking about driving for the first time in a car that is quite different from last year, but I felt that I settled down very quickly. I am very happy to be part of this event for the 11th time and with the same team as last year, with the same drivers and in the same positive atmosphere."

Matthieu Lahaye: "In 2008 for my Le Mans debut, I was desperate to get there to see what it was all about. This year I can't wait for Saturday 12 June at 3pm for the race to start. The team has matured a lot, everybody is well prepared. We hold all the cards and we have the means to fight! I'm sure our rivals will be showing their strength in qualifying and at the beginning of the race, but we must remain calm and concentrate on our own race."

Guillaume Moreau: "I am very enthusiastic about our chances, although I am always cautious as it is such a difficult race with a lot of potential pit falls. I'm approaching the race as if it was my first Le Mans, even though I'm arriving with more confidence than I had in 2009 where I was confirmed at the team just a few days before the race. This season we have had good results in the Le Mans Series, where we are second, just one point behind the leaders and that definitely means something!"

Jan Charouz: "I had a chance to learn about the car and the team at the Magny-Cours test and everything was perfect. The atmosphere is friendly, yet professional, and the car is fast with excellent traction. The chassis is really good, one of the best ones I have driven, and it only took me a few laps to be up there in terms of performance. I was really surprised by how well everything went and it has given me a lot of confidence for Le Mans."

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Le Mans 24 Hours 2010 Schedule:

Sunday / Monday, 6/7 June

Scrutineering

Wednesday, 9 June

1600 – 2000: Free Practice

2200 – 2400: Qualifying

Thursday, 10 June

1900 – 2100: Qualifying

2200 – 2400: Qualifying

Friday, 11 June

1800 – 1900: Drivers parade, Le Mans city centre

Saturday, 12 June

0900 – 0945: Warm-up

1500: Start, 78th Le Mans 24 Hours

Sunday, 13 June

1500: Finish, 78th Le Mans 24 Hours

P R E S S R E L E A S E

