

# STRAKKA RACING



## Strakka Dominant at Ricard



The Strakka Racing trio of Jonny Kane, Nick Leventis and Danny Watts scored an emphatic win in the opening round of the 2010 Le Mans Series, taking the team's Honda Performance Development (HPD) ARX-01c from pole to chequered flag victory in the inaugural Paul Ricard 8 Hours.

It was a dominant performance that clinched all the accolades. "To turn up for Round 1, our first race in LMP2 after the move from LMP1, and secure pole, fastest lap, a race win, the championship lead - and the Michelin Green X Challenge - is simply beyond all our expectations," said a delighted Danny Watts. "It's absolutely brilliant!"

From the pole position secured by Danny Watts on Saturday, Jonny Kane made a fantastic start to the race, stamping his authority on the class within the first lap and then extending a lead that grew steadily with every tour of the 5.8 kilometre circuit. By the end of the first hour Jonny had risen to fifth overall, relishing a tremendous duel with Nigel Mansell in the Beechdean Mansell LMP1 along the way. The Ulsterman eventually won that private battle and handed over to Danny Watts with a commanding class lead.

"The potential was always there for double points in this race, because of the extra distance," said Kane. "That made it vital that we finished strongly. Under other circumstances I might have been more assertive at the start, through the traffic, but I couldn't risk any mistakes."

Half an hour into Danny's first stint, and with a lead of around 40 seconds, the #42 Strakka HPD was back for unscheduled repairs. One of the so-called "legality panels" that visually obscure the tyres at the rear of the car had been dislodged, and regulations dictate that these must be intact. Replacing the part took only seven minutes, but that was enough to drop the car from a comfortable lead to eighth in class.

The enforced pitstop also changed the team's strategy, and Nick Leventis took over driving duties. He began an impressive recovery, regaining lost ground lap-by-lap and repeatedly setting fastest laps for the class until he'd moved through to fifth in LMP2 and time to hand back to Danny Watts. Grasping the nettle with both hands, Watts set a series of new fastest laps, picking off rivals in quick succession, until he swept through into the lead with

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just over an hour of the race remaining. It was a commanding run, but not until he'd stretched that advantage to more than 40 seconds did he relax, ease back, and conserve fuel to the flag.

"We decided to put Nick in early," explained Piers Phillips, Team Manager at Strakka. "He thrived, and we were so impressed by the way he rose to the challenge. Nick not only kept on getting quicker and quicker, but he also displayed great maturity, dealing with heavy traffic and showing all the competition exactly what they were up against. Nick's efforts gave us the platform upon which Danny could push for the win, and without his rapid set of laps and the expertise of the HPD engineers, who devised the strategy, we would never have been close enough to make up the deficit."

"I would also like to offer my appreciation for the boys on the floor," added Piers. "They deserve a distinct mention for their efforts and professionalism. Strakka gave every impression of being a full-on works team this weekend, and everyone in the squad should feel proud of their achievements."

Nick Leventis echoed the key role played by the personnel. "For me, it's the guys in the team, HPD, Michelin and Wirth Research who've all worked so hard for the last six months who deserve the credit. This is their reward. Driving the car is the easy part, compared to the eighteen-hour days they've put into the preparation for this weekend. Today's win is a demonstration of the soul and determination of this young team, and our commitment to sportscar racing. There's a great wealth of experience and high aspirations for the future within Strakka, and we're all determined to make this a success."

The team celebrated on Sunday evening, but their focus will swiftly return to the championship, and also that all-important race in June. "We mustn't get carried away," admitted Danny Watts. "This is only Round 1, and there's Spa, the Le Mans 24 Hours, and the rest of the season still to go." Round 2 of the Le Mans Series, the 1000 Kilometres of Spa, takes place on May 9th.

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#### Further information:



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For details relating directly to this release, please contact Piers Phillips, Team Manager - [email](#).

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