



## LE MANS 24 HOURS

Qualifying practice

Thursday June 11, 2009



### PEUGEOT AND SARRAZIN CLAIM A THIRD CONSECUTIVE POLE-POSITION AT LE MANS

This evening's thrilling qualifying session saw Team Peugeot Total's Stéphane Sarrazin put the N°8 Peugeot 908 HDi FAP (Sarrazin/Montagny/Bourdais) at the sharp end of the grid for the Le Mans 24 Hours for the third year in a row. Saturday's race will in fact start with four Peugeot's sitting on the top five places, with the Pescarolo-run N°17 car joining the three factory machines at the top of tonight's order.

For the first time in the history of the Le Mans 24 Hours, in its modern-day format at least, teams benefited from just one qualifying session this year in their respective bids to claim first place on Saturday afternoon's grid. But while nobody would shun the honour of starting from pole position, the combined effects of the cancellation of the traditional preliminary test day and the wet conditions which marked the majority of Wednesday evening's free practice meant that teams still had a certain amount of work to get through in dry conditions before being able to think in terms of topping tonight's timesheets.

The principal mission facing the crews of the three Team Peugeot Total Peugeot 908 HDi FAPs during this evening's four-hour run was to gather key information about the different compounds of slicks they have available for this weekend's race, and also to put the finishing touches to the set-ups of their respective machines.

*"Given the all the work we still had to get through this evening, it was only after 11.30pm that I gave Stéphane the green light to go for a time. I told him he had three laps to try, and he took five, but I have no intention of holding that against him!"* said Peugeot Sport Director Olivier Quesnel after the session. *"It's obviously nice to see four Peugeot 908 HDi FAPs in the top-five places tonight, but we mustn't forget that this was just qualifying. The only thing that counts for me is Sunday afternoon's result. Even so, I would like to say a big bravo to Stéphane and to all the drivers, as well as to everyone in the team."*

Franck Montagny surprised observers just a quarter of an hour into the session by putting the N°8 Peugeot at the top of the provisional order with an early benchmark lap of 3m 25.608s. However, it was only once all the team's crucial groundwork had been completed that the times truly began to tumble in the final half hour before the chequered flag came out on the stroke of midnight.





**Stéphane Sarrazin** kicked off the frantic dying stages by closing to within 78/1000ths of the then best time at 23:30, but his first two flying laps were thwarted by traffic through the final sector. Following a quick pit-stop for freshly-heated rubber, the Frenchman then went out for one last attempt which bagged a 3m 22.888s to earn him a place at the front of the grid... with just 11 minutes remaining: *"It's a great result for all the team, but Franck, Sébastien and I worked first and foremost on the race set-up this evening. It was only when we were fully satisfied on that front that we tried for a time at the end,"* observed **Sarrazin**. *"Our objective now is to get away to a good start on Saturday afternoon and put in a good race."*



The crew of the N°8 car was joined on tonight's podium by the N°7 sister car of Klien/Lamy/Minassian. *"Stéphane and I were on completely different strategies at the end,"* related **Nicolas Minassian**. *"The N°7 and N°9 Peugeots were in race trim and our focus was on preparing for the race. I've think we've found a good balance. Our Michelin tyres are nice and consistent, too, and we were able to post some very encouraging times with the race set-up."*

The top six cars this evening were covered by less than three seconds round the 13.629km circuit, which suggests that spectators can look forward to an exciting show when the great race itself kicks off at 3pm on Saturday afternoon.

**Qualifying – final positions:**

- 1, Bourdais/Montagny/**Sarrazin** (Peugeot N°8), 3'22"888
- 2, Capello/Kristensen/McNish (Audi N°1), 3'23"650
- 3, Klien/Lamy/**Minassian** (Peugeot N°7), 3'24"860
- 4, Boullion/Pagenaud/Tréluyer (Peugeot N°17), 3'25"062
- 5, Brabham/**Gené**/Wurz (Peugeot n°9), 3'25"252
- Etc.

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