



## LE MANS 24 HOURS

Free practice

Wednesday June 10, 2009



### A FRUITFUL SESSION FOR PEUGEOT IN THE WET

Although much of this evening's free practice took place in heavy rain, Team Peugeot Total profited from the six-hour session to get in some valuable running time and set-up work. The crews of the three Peugeot 908 HDi FAPs reported good progress ahead of tomorrow evening's qualifying session and in readiness for the weekend's race which is due to start at 3pm on Saturday afternoon.

Following the cancellation this year of the preliminary test day, which traditionally gives competitors a chance to work on the set-up of their cars round the full 13.629km circuit a fortnight before the race itself, the organisers decided that this evening's six-hour practice session would have no incidence on grid positions for Saturday's start. The teams were consequently free to organise their programmes as a function of their specific requirements, without having to worry about the shoot-out for pole-position.

As it turned out, though, and apart from the first 90 minutes, the session was marked by heavy, persistent rain, which prompted the majority of the teams to revise their plans. *"The conditions weren't really what we wanted, but six hours of track time with three cars enabled us to learn quite a lot in the end,"* commented Peugeot Sport's **Technical Director Bruno Famin** after the session. *"It was difficult to stick to the original programme. We had intended to run the different Michelin tyres we have here with a view to collecting data for our race strategy. That wasn't possible given the weather, but we did get in some excellent work with our wets and intermediate tyres in wet and drying conditions, so that was very useful."*

The complex conditions produced a few harmless spins, and the best-placed Peugeot 908 HDi FAP when the session ended at the stroke of midnight was the N°9 car (Gené/Wurz/Brabham) which claimed the third fastest lap (3m 31.102s) in the hands of **Alexander Wurz**. *"I was first out in the car when the track was almost entirely dry, although there were still quite a few damp patches,"* reported the Austrian driver. *"I started on wets but we soon switched to slicks, and I profited from a reasonably clear lap to post our best time of the evening. I was able to try a couple of set-up options but it started to drizzle, so I came in early to give Marc and David a chance to drive the car."*





The N°9 car was later forced to spend a long period in its pits for a clutch change following an over-enthusiastic getaway by Brabham at the beginning of his first run as darkness began to fall over Le Mans.

Team Peugeot Total's all-French driver line-up in the N°8 908 HDi FAP (Sarrazin/Montagny/Bourdais) completed this evening's test in fifth place, with Sébastien Bourdais putting in a stunning series of quick laps when the rain was at its heaviest. *"It's been an interesting evening's work,"* said his team-mate **Stéphane Sarrazin**. *"We managed to try practically all the Michelin tyres we have here for this weekend's race, and we got through some valuable set-up work, too. We tried to make the most of the six hours, and our only problem was when the windscreen wiper failed when the rain was still falling quite heavily."*

The third factory Peugeot (N°7) shared by Lamy/Klien/Minassian rounded off the provisional top-ten at the end of the session. *"We profited from the evening to work on the set-up in the wet and in changing conditions,"* related **Nicolas Minassian**. *"We could well get the same sort of weather during the race, so it was important to see how the car ran in these conditions. The 2009 regulations mean that we are running less downforce compared with last year, but the team has worked well and the car is nicely balanced. Hopefully, we will get a chance to work on a set-up for the dry tomorrow night."*

Thursday evening's qualifying session will revert to Le Mans' traditional four-hour format, with the first two-hour half-session scheduled to kick off at 7pm, and action resuming at 10pm before the chequered flag brings the action to a halt at midnight.

**RESULTS :**

1. Audi 1, 3.30.708
2. Audi2, 3.30.762
3. PEUGEOT 9 (A. Wurz), 3.31.102
4. PEUGEOT/PESCAROLO, 3.33.028
5. PEUGEOT 8 (F. Montagny), 3.33.426
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10. PEUGEOT 7 (P. Lamy), 3.37.980, etc.

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