



Le Mans 24 Hours ... Six Weeks to go

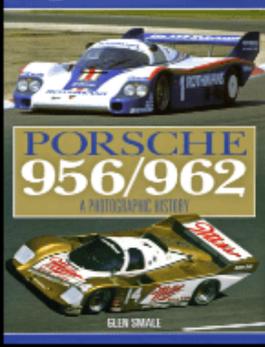
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In the pits ahead of the 2011 Le Mans is the winning No.2 Audi R18 driven by Marcel Fässler, André Lotterer and Benoît Tréluyer. (© VMP/GHS)

This weekend's 6-Hours of Spa is a daunting race in itself, but many teams see this race as a warm-up for the Le Mans 24-Hours on 16/17 June, just six weeks away. Audi will line-up at Spa with the first race win of the year under their belt in the revamped WEC series having raced their 2011 R18 at Sebring, but this weekend's race in Belgium will see the Ingolstadt team rolling out two of their new 2012 R18 TDI Ultra cars as well as a pair of R18 e-tron quattros ([see our 8 Weeks blog](#)). This race will be as much a warm-up for the spectators as it will for the teams as the 2nd round of the WEC is also the first of the season in Europe.



Foreword by Norbert Singer

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Head of Audi Motorsport, Dr. Wolfgang Ullrich, said, “Like last year, Spa will be a dress rehearsal for us for the Le Mans 24 Hours. We’d been planning to compete there with exactly the same teams as at Le Mans, in other words with all four vehicles and the squads assigned to them.” Unfortunately though, these plans will be slightly upset with Mike Rockenfeller driving in the DTM race at the Lausitzring and with Timo Bernhard not yet fully fit after his accident at Sebring, and so Marc Gené will be behind the wheel of the No.3 R18 Ultra with Romain Dumas and Loïc Duval in order to get used to the vehicle in case Audi need him at Le Mans.





Dr. Wolfgang Ullrich, Head of Audi Motorsport, in discussion at the 2010 Silverstone 1000km. (© VMP/GHS)

Since its inception in 1923, the 24 Hours of Le Mans has served as a test bed for new technologies - front, mid or rear engines, petrol or diesel, turbocharged or atmospheric - but the latest area of development today is seen in the emergence of kinetic energy recovery systems (KERS). The development of hybrid powertrains is seen this year in high profile teams such as Toyota and Audi, but even here their application is different in each case.



Audi R18 e-tron quattro and Toyota TS030 Hybrids during a photo session at Spa 03/05/12. (© FIA/WEC)

To be considered as a hybrid, an LM P1 must be able to move the entire length of the pit lane at 60 km/h using only its KERS. When the car is running on the circuit, the amount of energy delivered between two braking zones should not be greater than 500 kilojoules (approximately 100 horsepower for 6 seconds). While this technology has already been used



in Formula 1 racing for some years, it is yet to gain full acceptance within the sport but its benefits may well be more apparent in endurance racing than in short sprint races. Whatever the resultant performance advantage may be at Le Mans, you can be certain that the other conventional LM P1 teams such as the Honda, Judd and Toyota powered cars will be waiting to pounce should the leaders run into trouble.

LM P1 Technical regulations: Minimum weight 900kg

Engine	Atmospheric	Turbo
Petrol	3400cc max.	2000cc max.
Diesel	—	3700cc max.
Fuel capacity	Normal	Hybrid
Petrol	75 litres	73 litres
Diesel	65 litres	63 litres

LM P1 Entrants

No	Team	Race Car
1	Audi Sport Team Joest	Audi R18 e-tron quattro Hybrid
2	Audi Sport Team Joest	Audi R18 e-tron quattro Hybrid
3	Audi Sport Team Joest	Audi R18 Ultra
4	Audi Sport Team Joest	Audi R18 Ultra



7	Toyota Racing	Toyota TS030 Hybrid
8	Toyota Racing	Toyota TS030 Hybrid
12	Rebellion Racing	Lola B12/60 Coupe Toyota
13	Rebellion Racing	Lola B12/60 Coupe Toyota
15	Oak Racing	Oak Pescarolo Judd
16	Pescarolo Team	Pescarolo 03 Judd
17	Pescarolo Team	Dome Judd
21	Strakka Racing	HPD ARX 03a Honda
22	JRM	HPD ARX 03a Honda



Toyota TS030 Hybrid during tests at Paul Ricard in April 2012. (© Toyota Motorsport)

The word from Toyota is that they have completed the construction of the team's second TS030 tub following the testing accident at Paul Ricard on 4 April. Toyota will return to the track today (4 May) for a functionality test of its TS030 HYBRID at the Magny-Cours circuit in France. A total of seven test days were cancelled in April as a result of the accident, leaving the team no opportunity to validate the aerodynamic and hybrid system specifications intended for its first race. This incident forced the team to withdraw from the Spa 6-Hour race this weekend making the Le Mans Test Day on 3 June all the more important for the car's debut at the Le Mans 24-Hours on 16/17 June.



Much more than just a tweaked supercharged Continental GT, a Bentley Supersports pulls into the pits at Montebancho Circuit near Huelva in Southern Spain during the car's launch there in September 2009. (© VMP/GHS)

The future ... well we have the possibility of not one but two names 'returning' to Le Mans in the foreseeable future. One name, Porsche, has not been absent from the 24-Hour race since the marque's first appearance there back in 1951, but its return to this great race with a works team in 2014 is about as tantalizing a proposition as you are likely to get. The other name is that of Bentley who of course won there in 2003, but details are sketchy at this stage as to whether the company will make its return to Le Mans in the near future or if it will test the water in GT3 first. Back in September 2009 when this writer attended the launch of the Continental GT Supersports in Spain, I quizzed the Bentley engineer to see if they had plans for developing the car for racing and of course the answer was a 'no', but then you would expect that wouldn't you. What is exciting though is that it was apparent even back then that the Continental GT would make an awesome addition to any race car grid, and if the whispers are to be believed, it's the Continental GT that could form the basis of such a GT racer. Exciting times indeed!



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