



Toyota geared to win the WEC 6 Hours of Spa

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Toyota is geared to win the WEC 6 Hours of Spa at the second round of the FIA/WEC series which takes place tomorrow, Saturday 6 May 2017, at arguably the best circuit of the whole series, Spa-Francorchamps. The circuit is not in Spa itself, but lies in the vicinity of Francorchamps and borders on the city of Malmedy.



Sebastien Buemi after Qualifying today: "I did what I could but to be honest we cannot be satisfied with our qualifying. The car felt okay but I'm not happy with the lap times so we will try to improve for the race. I am happy for car #9 to set the fastest lap, they have done a great job this week and Stéphane's lap was brilliant."

Toyota will be racing there this weekend with a three-car contingent for the first time. The #7 car is driven by Mike Conway and Kamui Kobayashi, as their team mate Jose Maria Lopez has been ruled out of action by the doctors following his Silverstone crash. The #8 car is driven by Sebastien Buemi, Anthony Davidson and Kazuki Nakajima. The new #9 car, will be piloted by Stephane Sarrazin, Yuji Kunimoto and Nicolas Lapierre.



Nicolas Lapierre after the Qualifying today: "It was a messy qualifying for me which is a pity because Stéphane did a fantastic



lap. We had a good strategy at the beginning but I had some traffic and it wasn't a great qualifying. In the end we are third which is not bad and we learned a bit for the race, so we are looking forward to that now."

All of the Toyota drivers are veterans of the brand and of the Spa circuit, with the exception of Yuji Kinomoto, who will be experiencing the circuit for the first time. Looking at the Free Practice times, the Toyotas have consistently headed the time sheets although the Porsches are not far off the pace. On Thursday alone, the three Toyotas completed 178 laps, a total of 1246km.



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#7, Toyota Gazoo Racing Toyota TS050 Hybrid, driven by, Mike Conway, Kamui Kobayashi, FIA WEC 6hrs of Spa 2017, 04/05/2017,



Of the three Toyotas, two will be running a high downforce aero package (#7 and #8), while the #9 car will run a low downforce aero package. That will account for the fact that the #9 car is slightly slower than its two siblings. Watching the cars from the trackside while photographing the cars during the three Free Practice sessions, all three cars have looked and sounded strong.



© Virtual Motorpix/JM
#8, Anthony Davidson, Kazuki Nakajima, Sebastien Buemi, Toyota Gazoo Racing Toyota TS050 Hybrid, driven by, FIA WEC 6hrs of Spa 2017, 04/05/2017,

During the LMP1 Qualifying session, a potentially catastrophic situation was avoided when the ByKolles car spun as it turned onto the start/finish straight at the entrance to the pits. The #7 Toyota following closely behind the ByKolles had to do some very sudden and abrupt braking to avoid the pirouetting ByKolles, but in the end, no damage was done to either car.



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#9, Toyota Gazoo Racing Toyota TS050 Hybrid, driven by, Stephane Sarrazin, Yuji Kunimoto, Nicolas Lapierre, FIA WEC 6hrs of Spa 2017, 05/05/2017,

Against all expectations, it was the #1 Porsche driven by ex-Audi driver, Andre Lotterer, who claimed pole in the face of what was almost a foregone conclusion of a Toyota grid lock-out. Although Stéphane Sarrazin set the fastest lap, Toyota missed out on pole position because the qualifying time is the average of the two best laps of the two qualifying drivers. Thanks to an early red flag incident and the ByKolles incident, and being conscious of saving rubber, further attempts of setting better times were thwarted.



Andre Lotterer after Qualifying today: "Neel did an amazing lap, for me it was smooth, conservative, I didn't realise there was so much grip. It's cool that my fastest lap was quicker than my best lap in F1 here! I didn't think we'd beat the Toyotas as they've looked strong all week. The first job is done, the next step is to win the race tomorrow."

You can be sure that Toyota have their eyes firmly set on the WEC title, and there is that little matter of capturing the Le Mans crown after last year's dramatic finish. Toyota already have the first race of the 2017 season to their name, and they would dearly love to add a second, so the little hiccup (to them) of not capturing pole position at Spa, will not put them off their stride. Porsche may have captured pole by 0.6 of a second, but Toyota have secured second, third and fourth places and the three cars are only separated by two-tenths of a second each.



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#1, Porsche Team, Porsche 919 Hybrid, driven by, Neel Jani, Andre Lotterer, Nick Tandy, FIA WEC 6hrs of Spa 2017, 05/05/2017,

Saturday's race is forecast to be run largely in the dry, with the exception of a shower around the halfway point. It should be a great race!

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