



## Mechanical woes for Minassian at Spa

Nicolas Minassian and Jamie Campbell-Walter fought broken alternators, flat batteries, rain, fog and driveshaft failure today at Spa Francorchamps retiring with only 45 minutes of the six hour race left to go.

With both British F3 races cancelled due to visibility issues on the circuit, conditions were far from ideal and as the LMES season-opener got underway it was not possible to see from one marshall post to the next.

But as the green flag flew pole-sitter Emmanuel Collard lead the way into Eau Rouge followed by Minassian, a nice clean start this year for the Frenchman. On cold Michelin intermediate tyres the DBA settled into fourth place patiently awaiting an opportunity to regain third from Jan Magnussen in the Lister Racing entry, he did not have to wait long and as the lap times tumbled the chase for second was on.

With half an hour gone traffic began to come into play and although the times were see-sawing as a result, the gap between Minassian and Stephane Ortelli in second position gradually began to close as the Creation Autosportif driver put in lap times that bettered those of the leaders.

Unfortunately a loss of voltage in the battery meant a lengthy first pitstop on lap 24 and dropped the DBA to eighth position and 1.47m off the lead, but a series of exceptionally quick laps on a drying track saw Minassian pull himself back into fourth by lap 28.

A collision between #68 JMB Racing, the LMP1 of Team Jota and the ensuing heavy accident for Tomas Enge in the # 67 Ferrari 550 brought out the safety car after an hour and ten minutes of running, allowing the marshalls to clear the track and closing up the cars.

Minassian chose to pit under the safety car and the continuing alternator problem meant the team took the decision to change it along with the battery, a case of damage limitation for the British team, a five minute pitstop dropped the #7 back to 13th position and two laps off the lead car of Pescarolo Sport.

Due to extensive barrier damage and descending fog the safety car stayed out until lap 40 when racing once more got underway with two hours of the six now complete. The DBA now on slick tyres, Minassian climbed rapidly through the field posting fastest lap after fastest lap as he hunted down those ahead, lapping consistently two to three seconds quicker than those at the head of the field by lap 50 he was up to ninth.

Another heavy impact for the GT class, as the James Watt Automotive Porsche was tipped into a spin, caused the second safety car session of the race on lap 51.





The team's decision not to pit on this occasion during the caution period, but rather to switch drivers as the safety car pulled off into the pits, meant the DBA remained in ninth position at the restart. It was though only a matter of time and once Campbell-Walter was up to speed he was soon pushing sixth place man, Juichi Wakisaka in the Dome, setting the fastest lap of the race so far (2:10.957).

**"It is so cold here," said Minassian. "The track is dry and we should be lapping in the eights [2:08.00s] but because it is so cold no-one is getting the full speed out of their cars. We thought it would warm up this afternoon, that's why we started on intermediates, but it was maybe not the best choice. Our main problem though, was not the tyre choice but the alternator that broke - the team fixed it as quickly as possible, but we lost a lot of time. The main thing is though that we don't have any more problems and Jamie [Campbell-Walter] is making good progress."**

Campbell-Walter was indeed making excellent progress, in fifth position and a pitstop ahead of fourth place man Martin Short in the second Judd powered machine for Rollcentre Racing.

With four hours elapsed (86 laps) and only two to go, the Creation Autosportif DBA was in fourth place, two laps down and pushing hard in the hands of Minassian's British team-mate.

A third safety car period, due to the #35 LMP2 hitting the wall and spreading debris across the track once again, closed up the field ready for the last hour of racing and Campbell-Walter had positioned himself perfectly for the restart.

An unusual mistake from Jean-Marc Gounon whilst behind the safety car, wiped out the whole front end of the Audi Oreca entry and put the #4 out of the race, the Creation Autosportif duo justifiably inheriting third place.

Campbell-Walter set the second fastest lap of the race (2:10.494) just two tenths adrift of Hayanari Shimoda in the Zytek entry. Both drivers had driven the wheels off the DBA and it seemed that once again it had paid dividends, reminiscent of last years fight back to the podium following first corner contact.

Then the unthinkable happened with just three quarters of an hour to go the car was pulled to the side of the track with a suspected driveshaft failure.

**"We came here thinking we could win," said Minassian. "And without all the problems we have had today I think we could have done it. The whole team have worked so hard to get us here and make us competitive from the off and it is so disappointing to go home with nothing. Especially having got into a podium position."**





**"That's racing unfortunately and now we have to pick ourselves up and move on to the next race," concluded Minassian.**

As a disheartened Creation Autosportif team pack up for the long journey back to the UK, they have three months to rebuild morale and improve on the reliability of the DBA for the Le Mans 24 Hours. It's a brave man that bets against them.

---

### **Editorial Notes**

Nicolas Minassian, 32, lives in England with his wife Jayne. Minassian was runner up in the French F3 Championship in 1995, British F3 in 1997 and the FIA F3000 Championship in 2000. He has tested with both Williams and Honda in Formula One and competed in the Champ Car World Series with Ganassi Racing before taking the 2002 ASCAR title with RML. With Creation Autosportif, Minassian took the LMES Championship by storm in the inaugural four-round series in 2004 and stays with the team for 2005.

---

Jane Darke  
JARL Motorsport / Minassian PR  
[jane@jarlmotorsport.co.uk](mailto:jane@jarlmotorsport.co.uk)  
[www.nicolasminassian.com](http://www.nicolasminassian.com)  
Cell: (+44) 7811 876574  
Fax: (+44) 7092 841723  
Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> April 2005

