



Mechanical woes for Minassian at Petit Le Mans

Nicolas Minassian and his team-mate Jamie Campbell-Walter were two of eight drivers making their first ALMS start and 25 Petit Le Mans virgins, but despite best efforts Minassian failed to finish in his full ALMS debut at Petit Le Mans, well known as one of the toughest sports car races to win.

Minassian had a great start, staying with James Weaver in the pole sitting Dyson Lola and holding off the Audi's with ease. Minassian drove hard and was soon amongst lapped traffic pushing Weaver hard until he was baulked by a back marker and lost momentum in the DBA 'Blue Rocket'. The Audi of Pierre Kaffer, always waiting to pounce took immediate advantage.

An hour into the race and Minassian began to suffer from a slow puncture, which meant a slightly premature pitstop and a change of Dunlop rubber. Minassian exited in eighth and had yet another battle on his hands to work his way back into contention.

Never one to shirk from a challenge, the Frenchman continued to put in consistent lap times that matched and often bettered his rivals at the front of the field. With other competitors falling foul of mechanical gremlins and contact on track, Minassian kept his nose clean and by the second full hour of racing had moved into third spot behind the all conquering Audis of JJ Lehto and Johnny Herbert. 29 seconds down, he still had it all to do. A stop-go penalty for Herbert allowed the Blue Rocket to take advantage and move quickly into second place. 27 seconds adrift of the leader the chase was on...

A standard driver change to allow Jamie Campbell-Walter to do his stint in the Zytek machine dropped the team temporarily into fourth place. Unfortunately having made his way back up to third place, during a regular pitstop, smoke began to pour from the engine. "It looks like it's cooked itself," a Zytek engineering employee commented but the Creation Autosportif team and drivers were far from ready to call it a day after only three and a half hours.

Having diagnosed the problem as the oil pump, a plan to replace it and return to competition was formed. The team were desperate to get the car back out on track, but it was not to be their day as the inevitable realisation that it was over had to be admitted and the Blue Rocket was officially retired at the four hours and 33 minute mark.

"What a day! The confidence was so high in the team and we were in good shape you know," said a very downbeat Minassian. "You can't control these things but it's a bloody shame we didn't make it to the end, but what can you do, sometime things just happen. Team Creation did an awesome job this weekend and the atmosphere here was fantastic. We'll just have to come back at Laguna."





The David and Goliath battle will recommence at Laguna Seca next month, when the nature of the circuit should play right into the hands of both Minassian and the Creation team to allow the minnows to take on the giants of Audi once more.

Editorial Notes

Nicolas Minassian, 31, 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 is a front-runner in the inaugural four-round LMES Championship and will contest the final two rounds of ALMS at Road Atlanta (Petit Le Mans) and Laguna Seca.

Jane Darke
JARL Motorsport / Minassian PR
jane@jarlmotorsport.co.uk
www.nicolasminassian.com
(+44) 7811 876574
Sunday, 26 September 2004

