



Minassian on front row for Monza

Nicolas Minassian ran ten laps in the 20 minute qualifying session for the Monza 1000km, setting his fastest time of 1:38.411 to put him on the front row of the grid for the six hour long battle on Sunday. The Pole Position was taken by Hayanari Shimoda driving the Zytek Motorsport entry with a time of 1:37.938 just under half a second ahead of the Creation Autosportif DBA.

"We did good today!" Said Minassian. "You know I'm never happy not to be first, but I am very confident for the race tomorrow. As we start the race on the tyres we run in qualifying, we opted to run the hard Michelin tyres this afternoon and we may not have got Pole but this decision will stand us in good stead tomorrow."

The harder Michelin rubber was tested for the first time by the team at the Le Mans 24hrs and was found to work excellently with the car, allowing the drivers to do longer stints behind the wheel without a change of tyres.

"I will start the race tomorrow and probably do a double or triple stint in the car before handing over to Jamie [Campbell-Walter]," explained Minassian. "This means I could be in the car for over two hours - this is a six hour race, but it is also like a sprint you know and we will have to push at a 100 percent right from the beginning and the tyres have to cope with that."

No less than 44 cars will take to the track for the endurance event, but with the long straights and heavy braking areas at the Italian circuit, traffic should not pose too much of an issue for the much quicker LMP1 class.

"There will be a lot of others on the track too, but the car is just so good I don't think this will be a problem for us."

The 20 minute warm up session begins at 9am CET Sunday morning with the race getting underway at 12.30pm CET.

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 was a front-runner in the inaugural four-round LMES Championship and will contest the series once again in 2005 for the team as well as driving in their Le Mans 24 hrs debut.

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