



## Minassian climbs onto podium at Spa

In the final race of the inaugural LMES season, Minassian ended his day on the podium in dramatic style.

An exploding Dunlop tyre on the Creation DBA4 going into Eau Rouge on lap one dropped Minassian from Pole to plum last as he pitted to take on fresh rubber, his left rear tyre reduced to just a rim. The cause of the blown tyre is still in debate, contact from Kaffer as the pair battled for the lead, or a piece of stray debris from an earlier race... Regardless the result was the same for the unfortunate Frenchman.

Back in 38th place and one lap down Minassian began to charge through the field until Soheil Ayari had a heavy off for Pescarolo Sport bringing out the Safety Car. Ironically the team that Minassian competed with in the 24 hours of Le Mans unwittingly helped him out, allowing him to close up to the pack. When the green flag flew, at the 40 minute mark, he sat in 33rd place on track, but within five minutes had moved up to 12th, unbelievable commitment from the Frenchman.

Another place was afforded to him when Pierre Kaffer made contact with another car, which meant the end of the race for the Audi driver and the end of his Championship, as he returned to the pitlane with his car, minus its rear end and on fire.

The heavy rain that had been anticipated had everyone running for wet tyres, an expert in wet weather racing, Minassian was soon gaining ground again on his rivals and an hour and a half into the six hour race he was back in ninth position and rapidly catching eighth spot, lapping a full 29 seconds faster than the car he was chasing, it was only a matter of time.

At the change of driver, Minassian had worked his way courageously into fifth spot, but on his in lap was impeded by the driver of the Paul Belmondo Racing car, clipping his front wing, damage that was to mean a lengthy pitstop as Campbell-Walter entered the driving seat and the team repaired the damage.

**"This is not how I thought today would go, we should be winning this thing,"** commented Minassian. **"We are quick, everyone can see that, just sometimes things happen you can't control..."**

Having dropped down the order again to tenth, it was now all up to his teammate, who at the half way mark had moved the team back up into sixth, the fastest man on track at this point and fifth place was not far down the road. A fine drive by the Englishman, pulled the number three Creation Autosportif DBA4 into fifth only for the fourth place driver to put himself out of contention in the tyre wall and gravel.





Another safety car period allowed Campbell-Walter to pit for tyres and fuel, dropping him to sixth place again, but before Minassian returned to the car, he had fought his way up to third and a sure podium position, but with three laps between the Creation team and the Audi ahead of them, matching them for pace and just two hours left to go, a climb further up the order did not seem possible. The drivers didn't seem to understand this as Campbell-Walter set a blistering fastest lap of 2:06.774.

**"It is a special feeling to push so hard on a track like Spa-Francorchamps, but the car was so good to enable me to do this,"** commented Campbell-Walter

With Minassian back in the driving seat, he set off in pursuit of Capello in the second Audi, increasing the gap back to fourth to three laps until another puncture caused him to have to nurse the DBA around the 4.333 mile track back to the pits for a fresh rear tyre, losing a lap in the process but maintaining his hard fought third place to the chequered flag.

**"Sometimes you just think all the world's working against you. We drove the wheels off the car today, we made no mistakes but things just kept happening to push us backwards, what can you do?"** said Minassian. **"Of course I am happy to be on the podium again for Creation, they have been a fantastic team to work with this year and I wanted to give them more today. I wanted to win for them here, but I guess we'll just have to do it at Road Atlanta and Laguna Seca instead."**

**"There are many could haves and should haves in this race, but to have come from 38th to third is some achievement and I cannot fault the dedication and work these guys put in to make this happen. We'll be back next year with an even stronger car,"** said Mike Jankowski - Creation Autosportif owner.

Although further down on the steps of the podium than both Minassian and the team had hoped for, they are understandably very proud of their achievements in their first year with two pole positions and two podiums in the Audi dominated series. With the talented Frenchman behind the wheel, they will be sure to take their European experience to the US for the final rounds of ALMS.

An interesting thought - Audi spent in total approximately nine minutes in the pits - Creation 23 minutes, imagine if it had been the other way around, Creation's and Minassian's time will come.





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## 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.

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