**LE MANS CHALLENGE AWAITS TOYOTA GAZOO RACING**

Wednesday 3 June 2015

TOYOTA GAZOO Racing is prepared and ready for the highlight of the World Endurance Championship season; the Le Mans 24 Hours race.

Over 250,000 spectators will witness the 83rd running of the famous race around the 13.629km Circuit de la Sarthe, which is part public roads and part race track, with four LMP1 manufacturers doing battle to win the world’s oldest endurance race.

World Champion TOYOTA enters two TS040 HYBRID cars, both featuring Le Mans-specification aerodynamics designed to reduce drag and optimise top speeds on a circuit where cars exceed 330km/h. Compared to the car seen already at this season, the visible differences are on the rear wing, engine cover and front bodywork.

The #1 car sees drivers’ World Champions Anthony Davidson and Sébastien Buemi joined by Kazuki Nakajima, who earned pole position for Le Mans last year with the fastest lap of any qualifying session.

Kazuki returns to racing after a rapid recovery from a back injury sustained in practice for the Spa-Francorchamps race at the beginning of May. His recovery was confirmed with a trouble-free test on 31 May and he will race in his fourth Le Mans.

In the #2 car, two-time winner Alex Wurz is joined by three-time pole position man Stéphane Sarrazin and Mike Conway in his second start at La Sarthe, his first in LMP1.

This year marks a special anniversary for TOYOTA as it represents 30 years since the company’s first official entry at Le Mans. Coincidentally, that original 1985 entry featured Satoru Nakajima, the father of current racer Kazuki.

The 2015 Le Mans 24 Hours is the 17th time TOYOTA cars have entered the race over the past 30 years. Throughout the past 16 attempts, 40 separate cars have raced, with a best finish of second place (1992, 1994, 1999 and 2013). During that time, drivers such as ex-Formula 1 World Champion Alan Jones, F1 race winner Eddie Irvine and three-time Le Mans winner Allan McNish have driven TOYOTAs.

A year ago, the #7 of Alex, Stéphane and Kazuki started on pole and led for most of the race before an electrical problem forced its retirement, while the #8 of Anthony, Sébastien and Nicolas Lapierre recovered superbly from an accident to finish third.

A difficult start to the 2015 season means TOYOTA travels to Le Mans searching for a first win of the year, knowing both cars face tough competition in the hotly-contested LMP1 category.

But thorough preparation and knowledge of the unique demands of Le Mans, as well as a positive test day last Sunday, mean the team heads to La Sarthe quietly hopeful that it will be a contender in the fight for honours.

As an event, Le Mans is a true endurance challenge, with almost 35 hours of driving until the chequered flag waves, starting on Wednesday 11 June with a four-hour practice session at 16.00 before two hours of qualifying begin at 22.00.

Qualifying continues on Thursday with a two more 120-minute sessions (19.00 & 22.00). The starting grid is decided by the fastest single lap from any of the qualifying sessions.

The traditional drivers parade in the city centre on Friday afternoon gives fans a unique chance to meet the drivers before race weekend, which begins with a 45-minute warm-up at 09.00. The race starts at 15.00 on Saturday.

**Toshio Sato, Team President**: “First of all, I speak for the whole team in saying how happy we are that Kazuki has recovered and can race with us at Le Mans. This shows his determination and spirit. Now our team is complete and we can take on the Le Mans challenge together. We have been preparing for Le Mans for almost a year so we are ready and motivated. The first two races did not go to plan so the team has worked incredibly hard back in Cologne to get the maximum performance from our Le Mans package. It has been a big effort and we hope it pays off at Le Mans. We do not start Le Mans as favourites but that does not affect our focus or our attitude. We will give everything for this race, with a target of zero mistakes and minimal time in the pits; I believe that with this approach we can challenge at the front. You can never guarantee anything in motorsport but we feel well prepared and I hope we can show this in the race.”

**Anthony Davidson (TS040 HYBRID #1)**

**Born**                          18 April 1979, Hemel Hempstead, Great Britain

**Le Mans debut** 2003

**Le Mans starts** 7

**Le Mans best result** 2nd (2013)

“I am absolutely ready for Le Mans this year. I think winning the World Championship last year helps because I feel I’ve proved what I needed to in endurance. It meant really so much, not just for me, for the whole team as well. Obviously you want to win everything and Le Mans is something I really want on my CV; it’s a challenge I want to overcome. It’s a fickle race which you can’t control; you can’t go there with a plan and expect everything to run smoothly. It just happens or it doesn’t and unfortunately I haven’t been lucky enough to win it yet. I’m much more relaxed this year and we go to Le Mans as underdogs so maybe that’s when it will finally happen for us.”

**Sébastien Buemi (TS040 HYBRID #1)**

**Born** 31 October 1988, Aigle, Switzerland

**Le Mans debut** 2012

**Le Mans starts** 3

**Le Mans best result** 2nd (2013)

“Le Mans is always a special moment in the season; being part of this unique race is always magical. The start of the race is a very special moment for me; there’s a big adrenaline rush and you fully understand that we are racing here in Le Mans. There are so many emotions. This year, we are in the role of underdogs so we have to take up that challenge and give it our best shot. Everyone is working very hard to reduce the gap with our rivals but Le Mans is a race like no other; there can be many surprises. We still hope to be at the front at the chequered flag; it’s a long week and a long race so let’s see what happens.”

**Kazuki Nakajima (TS040 HYBRID #1)**

**Born** 11 January 1985, Okazaki, Japan

**Le Mans debut** 2012

**Le Mans starts** 3

**Le Mans best result** 4th (2013)

“I have already won my first race this season; recovering my fitness in time for Le Mans. I want to say a huge thanks to the doctors in Verviers and Nice, plus the team physios who have performed miracles to get me ready for Le Mans. Without their hard work, I could not have done it. Last year I got the pole position which was a special moment but not my main goal, which is of course to win. We unfortunately didn’t achieve that so of course it is my dream for this year, even if we know it will be difficult. Everyone is really motivated and positive; we know from last year that there are no certainties at Le Mans so we hope to cause a surprise.”

**Alex Wurz (TS040 HYBRID #2)**

**Born** 15 February 1974, Waidhofen an der Thaya, Austria

**Le Mans debut** 1996

**Le Mans starts** 8

**Le Mans best result** 1st (1996 & 2009)

“Le Mans is finally here; this is the moment we been working towards for the past year. It’s the focal point of our racing season and, of course, an incredibly cool event with so much history. I have raced at Le Mans enough times to know that this race is full of surprises and nothing can be guaranteed in advance. The most important point is to focus on what we can control; find the right set-up for our car, get the right strategy and make no mistakes. This year we might not enter the race as favourites, unlike last year, but the race is long, mighty and brutal, so let’s see who is where after 24 hours.”

**Stéphane Sarrazin (TS040 HYBRID #2)**

**Born**                          2 November 1975, Alès, France

**Le Mans debut** 2001

**Le Mans starts** 13

**Le Mans best result** 2nd (2007, 2009 & 2013)

“Le Mans is an incredible, legendary race; the highlight of the year for me. The atmosphere and fans are amazing. When I am on the grid before the start of the race, with all the spectators in the grandstands, some of them shouting my name, and the French flags flying, this is a very special feeling. I can’t believe this is my fourth Le Mans with TOYOTA; I have the feeling it was yesterday! Winning Le Mans has always been my goal and my wish is that 2015 can be the year. Everyone is pushing to the maximum and we will give everything, then we see what Le Mans will bring for us.”

**Mike Conway (TS040 HYBRID #2)**

**Born** 19 August 1983, Sevenoaks, Great Britain

**Le Mans debut** 2013

**Le Mans starts** 1

**Le Mans best result** n/a

“I’ve experienced Le Mans just once before but that was enough to know it is a very cool event with a unique atmosphere. During the week you can really feel how it’s all getting busier and building up to the big race. When you’re part of that, it’s very special; the only event I’ve been part of that is in any way similar is the Indianapolis 500. The race itself is long and gruelling but when you’re in the car, that’s when you’re feeling at your best. I work really hard on my fitness so I feel ready and I’m looking forward to the challenge. We’re a strong team and I know everyone has done their maximum to prepare; now I can’t wait for it to start.”

**A lap of the Circuit de la Sarthe with Sébastien Buemi:**

“After the first straight, you have the first corner on the right; very difficult to stay flat. Very heavy braking into Dunlop Chicane, where you have to take a lot the kerb but not too much to upset the car, then you exit and go into the easy flat Virage de la Chapelle. But there is a big bump and you have to be very careful there. Then you arrive into the Esses de la Foret, you arrive in fourth and down shift to third. It’s a very quick left and right corner, then you exit and go into Tertre Rouge, a very quick right hand followed by the very long straight of Hunaudières. You go up the gears to top gear and this is where you reach the highest speed. You approach the first chicane, very late braking there, carrying the braking into the chicane until the apex of the second corner and then go early on the power and exit to carry the speed to the next chicane. The straight is again very long and you reach over 320km/h. You arrive at the next chicane, very similar to the first but you go to the left, brake very late, about 100m, downshift to second, exit then flat out. Back up to top gear, above 300km/h approaching Virage du Mulsanne, which is very tricky. Start to brake, turn at the same time, downshift to first gear, accelerate again towards Indianapolis. Back to top gear, then the very tricky Indianapolis corner; the first right hand is very difficult to do flat, you have to brake in the middle of the corner, then a very slow left corner with a lot of banking which you can use to carry more speed. A small acceleration then Arnage, the slowest corner of the circuit, first gear, but it is very important to exit well because the straight into the Porsche Curves is important. Back to top gear, above 300km/h again, you enter the quickest corner, the Porsche Curves, downshift to fifth, go flat for the second, stay flat for the third then downshift to fourth for the Corvette Corner. You go back on the power, fifth gear for the Karting Corner, then you arrive at this very small chicane that is flat, just before the first Ford Chicane. There you arrive in fifth, downshift to third and finish the chicane in second gear, you take the kerb as much as you can and there you go, that’s a lap of Le Mans.”

**TOYOTA at Le Mans:**

(Chassis name in brackets)

**1985** #36 (85C-L): Qualifying 29th; Race 12th. #38 (85C-L): Qualifying 22nd; Race DNF (mechanical).

**1986** #36 (86C-L): Qualifying 40th; Race DNF (mechanical). #38 (86C-L): Qualifying 30th; Race 20th.

**1987** #36 (87C-L): Qualifying 14th; Race DNF (mechanical). #37 (87C-L): Qualifying 16th; Race DNF (mechanical).

**1988** #36 (88C): Qualifying 8th; Race 12th. #37 (88C): Qualifying 10th; Race 24th.

**1989** #36 (89C-V): Qualifying 24th; Race DNF (mechanical). #37 (89C-V): Qualifying 17th; Race DNF (accident). #38 (88C): Qualifying 25th; Race DNF (accident).

**1990** #36 (90C-V): Qualifying 10th; Race 6th. #37 (90C-V): Qualifying 14th; Race DNF (accident). #38 (90C-V): Qualifying 16th; Race DNF (mechanical).

**1992** #7 (TS010): Qualifying 3rd; Race DNF (mechanical). #8 (TS010): Qualifying 4th; Race 8th. #33 (TS010): Qualifying 5th; Race 2nd. #34 (92C-V): Qualifying 11th; Race 9th. #35 (92C-V): Qualifying 15th; Race 5th.

**1993** #22 (93C-V): Qualifying 10th; Race 5th. #25 (93C-V); Qualifying 12th; Race 6th. #36 (TS010): Qualifying 2nd; Race 4th. #37 (TS010): Qualifying 5th; Race DNF (mechanical). #38 (TS010): Qualifying 4th; Race 8th.

**1994** #1 (94 C-V): Qualifying 4th; Race 2nd. #4 (94 C-V): Qualifying 8th; Race 4th.

**1995** #27 (Supra LM): Qualifying 30th; Race 14th.

**1996** #57 (Supra LM): Qualifying 36th; Race DNF (accident).

**1998** #27 (TS020): Qualifying 8th; Race 9th. #28 (TS020): Qualifying 2nd; Race DNF (accident). #29 (TS020): Qualifying 7th; Race DNF (mechanical)

**1999** #1 (TS020): Qualifying 1st; Race DNF (accident). #2 (TS020): Qualifying 2nd; Race DNF (accident). #3 (TS020): Qualifying 8th; Race 2nd.

**2012** #7 (TS030 HYBRID): Qualifying 5th; Race DNF (mechanical). #8 (TS030 HYBRID): Qualifying: 3rd; Race DNF (accident).

**2013** #7 (TS030 HYBRID): Qualifying 5th; Race 4th. #8: Qualifying (TS030 HYBRID): 4th; Race 2nd.

**2014** #7 (TS040 HYBRID): Qualifying 1st; Race DNF (mechanical). #8 (TS040 HYBRID): Qualifying: 3rd; Race 3rd.

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**About TOYOTA Racing in the World Endurance Championship:**

TOYOTA first competed in the World Endurance Championship (WEC) in 1983, marking the start of a long period of participation in endurance racing. Since 1985, TOYOTA cars have raced in 16 Le Mans 24 Hours races, achieving a best result of second place on four occasions (1992, 1994, 1999 and 2013). TOYOTA entered the revived WEC in 2012, as TOYOTA Racing, with its first hybrid LMP1 car, the TS030 HYBRID, which won five of the 14 races it entered over two seasons. It was succeeded in 2014 by the four-wheel-drive TS040 HYBRID, which won its debut race and subsequently the 2014 drivers' and manufacturers' World Championships. They were designed and built by TOYOTA Motorsport GmbH (TMG), where the race team is based. TMG is the former home of TOYOTA's World Rally and Formula 1 works teams, and was responsible for design and operation of TOYOTA's TS020 Le Mans car in 1998-99. TMG now combines motorsport participation with work as a high-performance engineering services provider to third party companies, as well as the TOYOTA family.

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