

**2018/2019 FIA World Endurance Championship
Round 1: 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps**

***A flying start for Michelin's latest endurance tyres at the
2018/2019 FIA WEC opener at Spa-Francorchamps***

As was the case when Mark Webber publicly expressed his satisfaction with his Michelin tyres after his FIA World Endurance Championship debut in 2014, during the first testing opportunities Fernando Alonso (Toyota Gazoo Racing) similarly praised his Michelins after they allowed him to focus on his driving without having to worry about tyre management thanks to their consistency over each stint.

Aided by the performance and reliability of his car, the Spanish ex-F1 champ succeeded in notching up his maiden FIA WEC success in the N°8 Toyota TS050-Hybrid which he shared with long-time Toyota runners Sébastien Buemi (2014 FIA WEC champion) and Kazuki Nakajima. Toyota Gazoo Racing also walked away with second place thanks to the N°7 TS050-Hybrid of Conway/Kobayashi/Lopez.

The first privateer entries past the flag were Rebellion Racing's Gibson-engined R13s which revealed their potential with third and fourth places in Belgium. The Swiss outfit has significant experience of world class endurance racing and has run two prototypes for several seasons.

Meanwhile, Michelin's partners in the LMP2 class showed strongly during the early part of the race when the N°29 Dallara of Racing Team Nederland spent two hours in front, ahead of DragonSpeed's N°31 Oreca 07. However, following its excellent start, which revealed the competitiveness of Michelin's latest-generation LMP2 tyres, the Dallara was forced to spend a lengthy period in its garage for repairs, while the DragonSpeed car lost ground during the numerous Safety Car periods.

The LMGTE Pro battle saw Ford Chip Ganassi Team UK and Porsche GT Team dominate Friday's qualifying before entertaining spectators with a close duel on race day, despite a spectacular early crash involving Harry Tincknell's Ford GT at Le Raidillon. Thankfully, the British driver walked away unhurt. Victory ended up in the hands of the crew of the N°66 sister car (Mücke/Pla/Johnson) which finished 14 seconds clear of the N°92 Porsche 911 RSR (Christensen/Estre). The N°71 Ferrari 488 GTE (Rigon/Bird) clinched third spot after Davide Rigon found a way past the N°91 Porsche 911 RSR (Lietz/Bruni) through one of the final turns of the six-hour race.

The top-two finishers in LMGTE Am were the Aston Martin Vantages of Aston Martin Racing's Dalla Lana/Lamy/Lauda (N°98) and TF Sport's Yoluc/Alers-Hankey/Eastwood (N°90). Third was the Clearwater Racing Ferrari 488 GTE (Sun Mok/Sawa/Griffin).





“We were looking forward to the 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps in order to see how our latest endurance racing tyres fared. Our engineers worked hard developing our new ranges over the winter break and they have all evolved significantly for the FIA WEC’s 2018/2019 ‘Super Saison’,” noted **Jérôme Mondain**, the manager of Michelin’s endurance racing programmes. “We are very pleased with the result, since the performance and consistency of our new tyres were satisfactory from every angle in every class, including in LMP2 where the early speed of our partners provided an indication of the real progress we have made here, too.”

For the early part of the race, the majority of Michelin’s partner teams opted for hard-compound slicks before gradually switching to mediums as the track temperature fell towards the end of the afternoon. Michelin Motorsport’s technicians carefully monitored the tyres’ respective operating windows as a function of the different cars, drivers and set-ups and this work will be valuable as Michelin prepares for June’s Le Mans 24 Hours where Michelin’s partners will have access to soft-compound slicks, as well.

“Although Toyota Gazoo Racing stands out as favourite at this point in the season, nothing can be taken for granted. Winning races is down to the performance you produce on the day and necessitates meticulous hard work. That is why I would like to congratulate our partner Toyota on its result today. I am also pleased for Sébastien Buemi, Kazuki Nakajima and endurance racing’s newcomer Fernando Alonso who got his FIA WEC career off to the best possible start,” said Michelin Motorsport Director **Pascal Couasnon**. “I would also like to underline the strength of all the LMP1 privateer teams. Their cars are all still very new but I am sure they will progress quickly; perhaps even by the time the field gathers again for the official pre-Le Mans test day at the beginning of June.

“Last but by no means least, I was delighted with the exciting and spectacular racing we saw in the two LMGTE classes today. Three different makes – Ford, Porsche and Ferrari – finished on the podium in LMGTE Pro, and Aston Martin and Ferrari stole the limelight in LMGTE Am.”

The next round of the FIA WEC’s 2018/2019 Super Season will effectively take teams to France for the official pre-Le Mans 24 Hours test on Sunday, June 3.

