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Paul Drayson Achieves Second in Founder's Cup

Drayson Racing LMP1 Lola-Judd Has Wet Weather Baptism at Petit



BRASELTON, GA, USA – Drayson Racing had a full baptism of its No. 88 Drayson Racing Lola with Judd Power in a rain-soaked Petit Le Mans today. When it emerged at the end of the rain-shortened race, the Anglo-American team stood 10th in the LMP1 standings having completed 123 laps. The penultimate round of the American Le Mans Series (ALMS) hosted the debut of the team's new LMP1 class prototype with drivers Paul Drayson (London/Gloucestershire, UK), Jonny Cocker (Guisborough, Yorks, UK) and Rob Bell (St Helens, UK). Overall, it was a successful premiere for the Dale White (Bozeman, MT, USA) managed programme as the No. 88 ran as high as fourth in the opening hours and owner/driver Drayson finished second in the Founder's Cup.

All was not sunshine however. At the two hour, 45-minute mark, a left-front hub failure resulted in a heavy impact with the Road Atlanta tyre wall. The team rallied but the race was red-flagged for rain at 16:49 (ET) and never restarted.

Each driver showed the potential of the new prototype. Cocker, a two-time British GT Champion, had a strong start gaining from the first lap. Although this was only Paul Drayson's first start in a prototype, his lap times matched drivers who have years more experience. It was this performance which resulted in his achieving second-place in the Founders Cup – awarded to the driver whose primary profession is not racing. Bell showed that adapting to a high-downforce car was a natural transition. Through fast, intelligent driving and pit work, the car ran as high as fourth and steadily in the top-six. However, fate would have it all go pear-shaped when Drayson handed the metallic green racer over to Bell just short of the two hour, 45-minute mark.

As Bell entered Turn Seven, of 12, the left-front wheel separated from the car. With no steering, the two-time Le Mans Series GT2 Champion ploughed into the tyre barrier. The car was pulled from the wall and Bell returned it to the paddock. One hour and 34 minutes later, he pulled the car back out from under the awning to great applause by the large group which watched in the gathering rain. In that time, the team determined the car had no suspension damage but would require a new nose, side pod, left front brake disc, mirror and other bits of bodywork. The loss of the wheel was traced to the bolts which hold the brake rotor to the hub. These bolts had worked loose, interfering with the proper placement of the wheel.

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Bell had no more gotten on track, with wet weather Michelin Pilot tyres, than the rain struck with a vengeance. Cars went off in every direction and the No. 88 was not to be spared. At the last corner of the 2.54-mile facility even the deeply grooved tyres could not channel the water quickly enough. Bell spun entering the main straight and made light contact with the wall. He returned to the queue of cars lapping behind the safety car but conditions deteriorated so quickly that event organisers halted the cars in pit lane. The race was red flag for safety and remained so until shortly before 20:30 when it was called an “official” event and the chequered flag flew.

Quotes

Elsbeth Drayson, Owner/CEO: “I am delighted with the performance of the whole team today. It was amazing to see the Drayson Lola-Judd running so high in the rankings against such world class competition. The way the crew rallied to get the car repaired and back on track after the wheel failure was very impressive at such an early stage in our experience with the new car.”

Paul Drayson, Driver/Owner: “My first event racing a stint in a Le Mans Prototype, in the rain at one of the world’s best circuits; it doesn’t get any more intense than that. The cornering speeds are incredible. You certainly feel the 4.5g through Turn 12. I absolutely loved it and will always remember the experience. I’ve learnt a lot this weekend and go into the next race at Laguna totally fired up. What a blast!”

Jonny Cocker, Driver: “The car felt nice but obviously still learning at this stage. I keep improving on every lap. I had a good run in the wet, looked after the Michelin tyres pretty good and managed to make up some spaces. Later on in the stint I was able to pass people who had either changed to slicks early or who had worn out their tyres. The weather stopped it for us and we had a bit of the drama with the wheel problem. The car ran perfectly well and we showed we have great potential. For sure, going into Laguna, we have the knowledge we picked-up over this week. I think we’ll be looking really good.”

Rob Bell, Driver: “We came here to do the best job we could. In my case that was more than just driving around. I had to learn the circuit and I had to learn the car. It was a great experience. I am delighted to have been asked and I hope I have delivered to the Drayson team. I was delighted to have added to the team’s experience and knowledge of the car. It’s good information to help the guys to move forward.”

About the on-track incident: “The race itself, for me, was pretty short-lived. We had a problem with the front wheel and it actually came off. It was pretty hairy going towards the tyre barrier. Didn’t really know what happened to be honest. It lost all grip and the next thing I know I’m in the barrier. The team did a great job to get the car back on track and then the heavens opened.”

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Dale White, Team Manager: “That was one for the books. I’ve never been a part of race quite like this one. From our standpoint, we learned a lot and we showed that we can run at the sharp-end of the field. All three of our drivers were running very competitively in difficult circumstances. The crew again proved we have the right people here. The way they came together and attacked the car after the accident, an outsider would never know this was our first race with the car. We’ll take the positives to Laguna and study how we can minimise the negatives.”

To visit the official web site of Drayson Racing, please go to www.draysonstracing.com.

For more on the American Le Mans Series visit www.americanlemans.com. Drayson racing supports the Science: So What? So Everything! campaign aimed at raising the profile of science and the part it plays in our day-to-day lives. To find out more visit sciencesowhat.direct.gov.uk.

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Digital images and complete team and driver bios available upon request. Please do not publish contact information other than web sites. Thank you.

Contact: Tom Moore, Drayson Racing, VP of Marketing and Communications
+1-615-778-1614 (office), +1-615-509-5000 (cell),
tom.moore@draysonstracing.com