

ALPINE ELF ENDURANCE TEAM GEARING UP FOR THE CENTENARY 24 HOURS OF LE MANS

09/06/2023

- Alpine Elf Endurance Team returned to the track for free practice and qualifying ahead of the centenary edition of the 24 Hours of Le Mans.
- Caught out by a scrappy qualifying session with several interruptions and neutralisations, the team's two crews pursued their thorough preparations for the race.
- Determined to move up the order, the six drivers took advantage of the night sessions to get their bearings in the darkness ahead of the start of the world's most famous endurance at 4 pm on Saturday.



After accumulating many data during Sunday's Test Day and presenting the Alpine A110 R Le Mans in a parade in which the new limited edition series shared the track with the iconic Alpine M65 and a host of Alpine A110s, Alpine returned to action on Wednesday.

Under a blazing sun, Matthieu Vaxiviere and Olli Caldwell launched the team's programme in the first free practice session. Together with their teammates, the aim was to fine-tune the

set-up, check the different systems and run in the mechanical and electronic components of the two Alpine A470s entered in the LMP2 category.

Despite a slight setback when the British driver tripped up the final set of turns, the n°35 quickly restarted, thanks to the lightning intervention of the mechanics before a lengthy red flag period. Although not looking for pure performance, work accelerated in the final hour to complete a session in which the n°36 was the fourth quickest.

Two hours later, the temperature and tension rose a few notches in qualifying with an exceptionally nervous field. The task fell to André Negrão and Matthieu Vaxiviere, who were patient in their efforts to post a safe time before resuming their battle against the clock in the final sprint. However, both had to deal with traffic and numerous slow zones that penalised each of their endeavours. To make matters worse: Matthieu Vaxiviere's fastest time was deleted after a ruling that found him responsible for an incident with the #22 United Autosports car, which slightly damaged the flat bottom before its first flying lap.

Forced to settle for positions far down - 19th for the #35 and 23rd for the #36 - the team switched its focus to the rest of its programme. The crews made the most of the opening night session to get their bearings in complete darkness, particularly Olli Caldwell, who completed the compulsory five night laps for all rookies.

On Thursday, the team concentrated on finding the best race set-up in uniquely hot conditions while focusing on the long stints. Alpine re-entered the top ten in this constructive session before the final one-hour session. One last time, André Negrão, Memo Rojas and Olli Caldwell in the #35 car took turns behind the wheel to validate their final adjustments, as did Matthieu Vaxiviere, Charles Milesi and Julien Canal in the #36 A470.

After this busy programme, this Friday, Alpine will reveal its Hypercar, which will compete in the premier category of the FIA Endurance World Championship from 2024, in the brand new Alpine Paddock Centre. On the heels of this major event, the drivers will meet a huge crowd during the parade through the Le Mans town centre, ahead of other festivities celebrating the event's centenary.

The on-track action resumes at noon on Saturday with a short warm-up session, just four hours before the start of the 91st 24 Hours of Le Mans.

QUOTES

André Negrão

"Qualifying was fairly tricky with a lot of interruptions. It was a struggle to find a clear lap to put everything together, and we couldn't extract the full potential of our car. However, we've done a good job preparing for this long race where anything can happen, especially from a weather standpoint with a lot of rain forecast around the start, which will certainly create plenty of opportunities."

Olli Caldwell

"It's an amazing track, even more so at night, as I've discovered over the past two days. Driving at over 300 kph in total darkness is both strange and awesome. We've made small improvements to get the car to the competitive level we want for the race. The aim will be to avoid problems, penalties and damage throughout the 24 hours to make up positions and get a good result at the finish."

Memo Rojas

"The week got off to a slow start, despite some fine form last Sunday. We're working extremely hard with the team to find ever better performance and pace, but we're mindful that many other parameters come into play in the 24 Hours of Le Mans. It's a long race, and the weather could make it even more challenging. It promises to be a great centenary race, and we'll aim to excel."

Matthieu Vaxiviere

"There was a lot of frustration after qualifying, particularly because we'd been in the top half of the field since Sunday. Clearly, we were unlucky, but the most important thing is the race at Le Mans. During the free practice sessions, we focused on finding a comfortable car and more composure to see what we can do in what promises to be a highly animated 24 hours."

Charles Milesi

"The weather forecast is for mixed conditions at the start, so the aim will be to avoid taking unnecessary risks while gaining places in the early laps. It will be a new experience if it's wet, but I'm up for the challenge. Above all, we'll have to manage the transitions between dry and wet conditions. If we don't make any mistakes, I think we still have a chance to get a good result."

Julien Canal

"Free practice got off to a pretty good start despite the car being a little too responsive, but we made small adjustments to our set-up to be more comfortable over the length of the race."

That's positive, but we still have some work to do. Anything is possible if we perform well in conditions that can reshuffle the hierarchy. We can't wait for the start of the race."

Philippe Sinault, Alpine Elf Endurance Team Principal

"The week got off to a good start, but qualifying was very frustrating. The misunderstanding between Matthieu and Filipe Albuquerque cost us dearly, with a red flag setting a bad trend as our two cars were on the same strategy. Our backs were against the wall, and we still hadn't set any representative times as the final sprint approached. With these tyres, the fastest time is set on the first attempt, and a few infringements of the track limits didn't help our cause, as did the sanction of Matthieu's best time being cancelled. It's all the more galling that the result doesn't reflect our performance level since we arrived in Le Mans. We, therefore, devoted all the other sessions to preparing for the race. If there's one race where something can happen, it's the 24 Hours of Le Mans. Our drivers are veterans, as is the team, and the race promises to be long, given that the field has been nervous since the start of the week. We'll have to be careful, and be impeccable to seize the slightest opportunity, no matter the weather conditions."

CLASSIFICATIONS

Free practice 1

- 4. Alpine Elf Endurance Team n°36 3:36.471s (33 laps)
- 22. Alpine Elf Endurance Team n°35 3'40.411s (27 laps)

Qualifying

- 19. Alpine Elf Endurance Team n°35 3:37.498s (12 laps)
- 23. Alpine Elf Endurance Team n°36 3:59.171s (12 laps)

Free practice 2

- 10. Alpine Elf Endurance Team n°36 3:39.450s (32 laps)
- 18. Alpine Elf Endurance Team n°35 3:41.018s (28 laps)

Free practice 3

- 15. Alpine Elf Endurance Team n°36 3:38.170s (42 laps)
- 24. Alpine Elf Endurance Team n°35 3:39.921s (39 laps)

Free practice 4

- 15. Alpine Elf Endurance Team n°36 3:38.972s (16 laps)
- 24. Alpine Elf Endurance Team n°35 3:43.623s (14 laps)

ABOUT ALPINE

Founded in 1955 by Jean Rédélé, the brand has set itself apart with its French-style sports cars. In 2018, the brand presented the new A110, a sports car faithful to Alpine's timeless principles of compactness, lightness, agility and driving pleasure. The Alpine Business Unit was created in 2021 and thus became the brand dedicated to innovative, authentic, exclusive sportscars of the Renault Group, benefiting from the heritage and craftsmanship of its historic plant in Dieppe and the Alpine Racing and Alpine Cars teams engineering mastery.

PRESS CONTACTS

Orianne TAMBURINI

Head of product communication Alpine

orianne.tamburini@alpinecars.com

+33 (0)6 26 63 28 14

India DE LA FRESSANGE

Press Officer Motorsport

india.deseignarddelafressange@fr.alpineracing.com

+33 (0)6 34 48 51 31

www.alpinecars.com

media.alpinecars.com/?lang=eng

Follow us on Twitter: @Alpinecars - @SignatechAlpine

Follow us on Facebook: facebook.com/alpinesportscars