

ASTON MARTIN TO RUN THREE CARS AT LE MANS 24 HOURS

Aston Martin Racing has recruited three new drivers to run a trio of Gulf-liveried LMP1 cars at this year's Le Mans 24 Hours, which marks the 50th anniversary of Aston Martin's first victory at La Sarthe in 1959.

Joining the existing Aston Martin drivers, who are currently also competing in the Le Mans Series, will be Anthony Davidson (GB), Stuart Hall (GB) and Jos Verstappen (NL).

The three LMP1 cars will be numbered 007, 008 and 009 and the exact configuration of the crews for the race, which takes place on June 13-14, will be announced at a later date.

Davidson, 30, recently tested Aston Martin's LMP1 car in Portugal, completing three one-hour stints. The Englishman is an experienced Formula One race and test driver and this year he has become well-known as a Grand Prix commentator on British radio. Davidson is a familiar face as he worked with the team in 2003, racing at Le Mans, Sebring and Petit Le Mans in the GT class.

"Particularly as a British driver, racing for a team as prestigious as Aston Martin is a fantastic opportunity," said Davidson. "I know the team and its capabilities extremely well from the past, and I'm convinced that there is nobody better prepared to tackle all the challenges that Le Mans will present us with. At the test I felt comfortable with the car straight away, and now I'm looking forward to taking the fight to the other teams at Le Mans. I'm certainly aiming for us to be the quickest petrol car there and hopefully we can get in amongst the diesels as well."

Stuart Hall, 24, is also from England and started his career in single-seaters before making the switch to sports cars two years ago. He finished in an excellent fourth overall on his Le Mans debut in 2007 and returned for a second crack at the epic race last year. He too tested the Aston Martin LMP1 car in Portugal and emerged impressed by the V12-engined prototype.

"This drive means everything to me," commented Hall. "It's a wonderful opportunity to be part of such a prestigious and successful team. When I was growing up and first

became interested in motor racing Aston Martin was one of those legendary names. I always hoped that one day I might have the chance to drive for the team and it's almost hard to believe that it's happened now. I think all the petrol cars might struggle against the diesels at Le Mans, but if there's ever going to be a team to challenge them, it's Aston Martin Racing. My personal feeling is that I'm in the best seat on the grid."

Having spent the best part of a decade in Formula One, Dutchman Jos Verstappen will be one of the most high-profile members of the Aston Martin Racing team at Le Mans. The 37-year-old has taken part in more than 100 Grands Prix, finishing on the podium twice, but he will only be competing at Le Mans for the second time after winning the LMP2 class on his debut at La Sarthe last season.

Verstappen commented: "I'm very excited to be joining Aston Martin Racing for such a legendary event as the Le Mans 24 Hours. Although I spent nine years in Formula One this will only be my second Le Mans but it is every bit as special to me. I said to myself that I would only do Le Mans if it was with a professional team at the very top level and in Aston Martin Racing I have certainly found that. I'm looking forward to testing the car soon, but the main thing for Le Mans is reliability. I'm sure that driving for Aston Martin Racing is going to be a fantastic and memorable experience."

The three newcomers, along with the existing Aston Martin crews, are due to test Aston Martin's LMP1 challenger in Italy at the end of the month, as part of the team's ongoing development programme for the unique round-the-clock challenge of Le Mans which takes place on 13-14 June.

Aston Martin Racing Chairman David Richards concluded: "I'd personally like to extend the warmest possible welcome to Anthony, Stuart and Jos, who collectively form a fantastic addition to the Aston Martin family. Our nine-strong driver line-up now allows us to run three LMP1 cars at Le Mans, and I am sure that our trio of blue and orange racing cars will make an amazing spectacle at what is almost certainly the toughest and most famous race in the world. I believe that we now have an excellent blend of youth and experience amongst our three cars on this very important anniversary in our rich racing history."

