



ASTON MARTIN

Aston Martin claims class one-two-three at Nürburgring 24 Hours

The Aston Martin V8 Vantage N24 – whose model designation is named after the classic 24-hour event – has claimed its best-ever finish at the Nürburgring 24 Hours, with three cars taking the top three positions in the class.

A team consisting of Japanese journalist Shinichi Katsura, Hong Kong-based writer Matthew Marsh, and German racing driver Oliver Mathai finished 18th out of 220 starters in the endurance classic, clinching the SP8 class victory. This eclipses Aston Martin's previous best finish at the event of 24th in 2006 using the very same car, nicknamed 'Rose'.

It could very easily have been two Aston Martin V8 Vantage N24 cars in the top 20, as another N24, 'Kermit' – fitted with the new 4.7 litre engine and Sportshift™ transmission – was actually running ahead of 'Rose' with just three hours to go. Unfortunately, another car failed to notice it coming past, and the result was a broken steering arm and a time loss of more than 20 minutes for the Aston Martin.

'Kermit' – crewed by Aston Martin Chief Executive Officer Dr Ulrich Bez, journalist Richard Meaden, Aston Martin Future Technologies Manager Chris Porritt and development driver Wolfgang Schuhbauer – finished 27th and third in class. Claiming second place in the class, with 26th overall, was the V8 Vantage N24 of customer team Swiss Gentle Racing.

Aston Martin Austria also entered a DBRS9 supported by Aston Martin Racing, with a driver line-up of Tomas Enge, Robert Lechner, Stefan Mücke and Karl Wendlinger. The car ran as high as third overall in the early stages of the race, and Enge also set one of the fastest laps of the event. The DBRS9's chances however were permanently compromised by another competitor driving into it at around the threehour mark.

The car was in the garage for repairs to the rear drivetrain for over an hour, but the impact had a more serious effect than was originally thought. The drivers reported inconsistent handling throughout the remainder of the event, which caused Wendlinger to go off at about 8am on Sunday morning. The resulting cosmetic and mechanical damage took yet more time to fix, and the car subsequently finished down the order. Nonetheless, the team fulfilled its objective of learning more about the DBRS9 in the uniquely challenging conditions of the Nürburgring, which is widely reputed to be the most demanding circuit in the world.

Weather forecasts before the start of the race, which got underway at 15:00 on Saturday, predicted heavy overnight rainfall but thankfully this did not entirely materialise. There were several patchy rain showers in the early hours of the morning, which made tyre choice extremely delicate. Despite these tricky conditions, all the Aston Martin V8 Vantage N24s were metronomically reliable throughout the race, with not one single component failure over the 24 hours and approximately 3795 kilometres.

Shin-ichi Katsura, competing with Aston Martin for the first time at the Nürburgring, said: "This is the most fun I have ever had in a racing car. I've competed at this circuit

before with different cars, but this is the most stability I have ever experienced here. The car is actually very easy to drive, and you can use all of its potential with no problems. I'm very happy and proud to be a member of the class-winning Aston Martin team."

Matthew Marsh, who had to cope with the worst of the wet and dry weather very early on Sunday morning commented: "The driving conditions then were extremely difficult. Often in those marginal situations you go into endurance mode, so I wasn't willing to risk anything at all. At the time I wondered if we were going too slowly, but this win makes it all worthwhile. It's been a great fight and an amazing result."

Oliver Mathai, the most experienced racing driver of the winning triumvirate, reported: "I have to say that the car was simply perfect from start to finish. This race went like a dream for us: we didn't have any problems at all and even the traffic and the weather wasn't too bad. I drove a lot during the 24 hours, but the time flew past as I was having a lot of fun behind the wheel."

Dr Bez, who himself competed in the race as part of the 'Kermit' crew – concluded after finishing his final stint today: "I'm delighted that Aston Martin has finished first, second and third in such a competitive class – where all the entered cars were capable of winning. We're very pleased to have three cars in the top 30, and I'd like to extend particular congratulations to the Swiss Gentle Racing team. By finishing second, they have proved again that the Vantage N24 can be competitively raced by independent customer teams. We have seen teamwork here throughout the weekend that fully represents the high standard of Aston Martin."

Aston Martin's next engagement will be even more high-profile, as the team tackles the legendary Le Mans 24 Hours from June 14-15.

Quelle: Aston Martin