



Newsletter

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## GT3 + GT2: Hexis Racing AMR powers up!

The partnership between the reigning European vice-champions and Aston Martin Racing is blossoming, that's for sure! Just one week ahead of the opening race of the FIA GT3 European championship in which - not without justification - the team nurtures high hopes, Hexis Racing AMR announced that it is entering an Aston Martin Vantage GT2 in the FIA GT race due to take place during the same Silverstone Tourist Trophy meeting next May 2-3.

### Vantage GT2: a step up

Continuing its ascension of the GT pyramid, Hexis Racing, which has its home base on the Lédénon circuit, is taking a crack at the GT2 category. It is entering an Aston Martin Vantage in the upcoming Silverstone Tourist Trophy race, which counts as the first round of this year's FIA GT championship.

Hexis Racing AMR will be handed its chance to shine with the factory prototype that was used to develop the Vantage, the same car which took part in the Nogaro and Zolder races in 2008. Aston Martin Racing launched this magnificent 4.5-litre V8 model at the start of last season as the final link in its GT range, which now extends from GT4 to GT1. At the wheel will be two top-class drivers: Stefan Mücke (who was a member of the crew that took the Lola-Aston Martin LMP1 to victory in the Catalunya 1000km Le Mans Series race) and Frédéric Makowiecki. This development is emblematic of the entente between Hexis Racing and AMR. The German driver is a stalwart of Aston Martin Racing, whereas the Frenchman has played a key role in the French team's ascension since it embarked upon its European GT3 adventure in 2007. Nothing is finalised yet regarding what happens after Silverstone but the buzz is that Hexis Racing AMR will make two or three more starts in the FIA GT championships.

Philippe Dumas shared his assessment of the new challenge facing the team, which hails from the Gard region of France. «Having Aston Martin Racing asking us to take on this schedule is proof of our achievements,» he said. «What's more, two of their engineers will be with us to strengthen the team, along with two of their technicians. This will be step up for us - we'll be learning new skills, such as refuelling techniques and how to manage two top grade drivers. On the subject of drivers, I'm hoping this operation will enable Fred to gain a good foothold in AMR. The car is still under development though, so we'll be under no great pressure to get a result at Silverstone. However, that certainly won't be the case in the FIA GT3 category!»



## DBRS9 GT3: thorough preparation

Hexis Racing are the current European FIA GT3 vice-champions in both the Team and Driver standings, and no stone has been left unturned to properly prepare for 2009. No fewer than twelve practice days were organised over the winter months. After a limber up at Ledenon, the team's Aston Martin DBRS9's headed off to Adria to reconnoitre the circuit in readiness for the Italian leg of the new season. There followed two day's work on the Paul Ricard circuit, and two more in Montebianco (Spain) to get the cars properly balanced to FIA standards. Former F1 driver Jean-Marc Gounon and 1993 Le Mans 24-hour race winner Christophe Bouchut test drove all the GT3 cars present, in order to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each. This handicapping system forms the cornerstone of the GT3 category; it has been largely instrumental in the unqualified success of the category. Hexis Racing AMR also took part in FIA GT 'Media Days' on the Paul Ricard circuit, before bringing its winter tour to a close in Portimao, a venue which also features on this year's European championship calendar.

«Our aim was to make the car not only more competitive but also easier to drive,» explained Philippe Dumas. «Engineering-wise we have been working hard on testing items such as the front and rear sub-frames so that we make the most of the ground clearance allowance, and on new shock absorbers which give the Aston Martin more neutral handling over rumble strips and better overall handling. A new aerofoil pack is under development and a major engine upgrade is expected for Silverstone, because FIA test drivers Gounon and Bouchut both noted that the car was short on power and torque. We also focused on pit work. Today I'm very satisfied because we have turned into a properly structured outfit. We have taken on Antoine Penven as a full-time engineer. The team gelled very quickly, with drivers and engineers getting on very well together. Our driver crews were already in place during the break between seasons. Our drivers are team regulars and they all took part in testing, apart from the FIA performance balancing sessions on the Paul Ricard circuit. 2009 has to be payback time.»

Julien Rodrigues & Thomas Accary and Manu Rodrigues & Frédéric Makowiecki will be the Hexis Racing AMR standard-bearers in the 2009 European championships. Hexis Racing AMR staff are already hard at work in the Prodrive workshops in Banbury, putting the finishing touches to the DBRS9 GT3 cars and preparing for team's grand debut in GT2.

## News from here and there

**Manu Rodrigues will be taking part in the Le Mans 24 Hours!** Manu Rodrigues (46), who has been a vital cog in Hexis Racing's involvement in GT racing, will be taking part in Le Mans classic at the wheel of Ferrari 430 GT2 No.99 entered by JMB Racing. «It was important for me to line up in this gruelling race for the sake of my sponsors,» explained the driver, who is of French and Portuguese parentage. «I asked Philippe Dumas if he could find me a drive, and he'll be there with me.» Hexis Racing won't be at Le Mans this year, but is more than happy to see one of its drivers in the 24-Hour race. «I will also drive the Ferrari JMB in the Spa-Francorchamps 1000-kilometre Le Mans Series race so I should be well prepared when I arrive in Sarthe for the race come mid-June.»



**Barthez impresses at wheel of Aston...** World Football Cup and Euro 2000 gold medallist Fabien Barthez is a motor racing fiend, always keen to take up new challenges at the wheel. Following a meeting with Hexis Racing AMR's Clément Mateu, it was agreed that Fabien Barthez would take the wheel of one of the team's Aston Martin DBRS9 GT3 cars at the FIA GT Media Days event on the Paul Ricard circuit. He started out as a passenger in the car with Frédéric Makowiecki. Then the two men changed seats and finally Fabien took the car out by himself for a spin on the HTTT (High Tech Test Track). Clément and Philippe were in agreement, saying «he's a lovely guy and he put in some pretty decent lap times, too!»

**Coming up in the next episode:** the grand launch of HEXIS Energy!

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