



RML AD Group Shares Historic Result

RML AD Group's trio of drivers; Mike Newton, Thomas Erdos and Ben Collins, shared in the euphoria of a remarkable race for Round 4 of the 2010 Le Mans Series at the Hungaroring near Budapest on Sunday. The team's Lola HPD Coupé took fourth place in a race dominated by the LMP2 category, with the top six positions all occupied by the second prototype class. It might have been even better for the team if a gear actuator issue had not cost the #25 Lola an extra six minutes in the garage - the difference between fourth and second.



The team had arrived in Hungary as championship leaders following a victorious run in the Algarve, but knew that the tight, twisty and narrow Hungaroring circuit was going to provide a far greater challenge for the Lola HPD Coupé. Three sessions of free practice on Saturday had suggested that the Strakka Racing HPD was going to be the dominant force in Hungary, not only in LMP2, but perhaps overall. Outright pole confirmed the status of the #42 chassis, leaving RML's team manager Phil Barker banking on strategy and racecraft to regain a competitive edge.



Thomas Erdos, digging deep into his Hungarian roots, qualified fifth in a car that was set-up purely for the race. "We elected to run the hardest compound we could in qualifying, knowing we'd be starting the race on those same tyres. This track is very abrasive, but we were confident we could still double-stint the Dunlops. It was a compromise on outright performance, but if there was a chance we could gain time in the pitstops, it was worth the gamble."

The plan worked, and the RML Lola was one of few cars in the race that consistently managed to get two stints out of each set, saving a minute on each pitstop. Erdos worked through to third before handing over to Mike Newton with two hours gone, but it hadn't been easy. "We had a issue with the gear actuator," explained Erdos. "The left paddle controls the down shift, but it wasn't always working, and I'd arrive at a corner in the wrong gear - typically Turn One in fifth!" During his second stint it grew progressively worse, and during the driver swap the engineers swiftly effected repairs, but lost the equivalent of five laps in the process.

Newton rejoined the race sixth in class, and completed a solid "stint and a half", including a splash'n'dash under the safety car, to be closing down on fifth before returning the Lola to Erdos. Instructed to "drive it like you stole it . . . but don't use any fuel!", Tommy then set some of the car's fastest laps as he demolished nearly three minutes out of the gap between the Lola and the two cars ahead. True to form, he'd regained fourth in class (and was lying fifth overall) when time came to hand on to Ben Collins for the final run.

Like many drivers in the race, Ben was suffering the effects of dehydration in the later stages of his stint. Even so, he still managed to consolidate the position and establish a healthy time advantage that safeguarded fourth place and assured a valuable haul of championship points. All three drivers ran cleanly, without incident or contact, from start to finish.

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"I'm a little disappointed not to be on the podium - any driver would be," conceded Erdos. "We had the pace today, and without the gear actuator problem, we could have finished second, but this result has strengthened our hold on the championship, and that's what really matters."



"Although we can't help but lament the loss of those six minutes in the pits, without which we'd have been on the podium again, we're delighted with the result," said Pauline Norstrom, Motorsport and Marketing Director at AD Group. "This maintains our lead in the championship, but the outright win for Strakka was an excellent result for them, and attracted special attention to the LMP2 class in which we compete. They're now second, thirteen points behind us, which leaves it all down to the last race." AD Group had about forty guests present in Hungary. "They were enormously engaged throughout the race," she suggested.

"The professionalism and teamwork displayed by the team as they completed the repairs to the car reflects well on our approach to business, and helps to build strong commercial relationships."

"This was a very tough race," admitted Mike Newton, "but fourth means we still lead the championship going into the final race at Silverstone next month. Although a finish alone might be sufficient to clinch it, we will still be looking for a podium in our home race, but it's never a done deal until the chequered flag." The final round takes place over the weekend of September 11th/12th.

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