



LARBRE COMPETITION



PRODUCTIVE FIA WEC PROLOGUE FOR LARBRE COMPETITION

- *#50 Corvette C7.R records best LMGTE Am lap time*
 - *Next event: 6 Hours of Silverstone*

Larbre Competition boosted its preparation for the 2016 FIA World Endurance Championship with a promising performance at the series' traditional Prologue, which took place at Paul Ricard in Le Castellet, France last weekend (26/27 March).

Once again fielding its trusty Corvette C7.R, the Le Vigeant-based team posted the best LMGTE Am lap time at the former French Grand Prix venue, which saw 29 competitors run in their 2016 machinery over two official testing days. Having built on the C7.R's assuring maiden WEC campaign last year with a successful programme of running, Larbre will continue to focus on fine-tuning the car's performance, as well as building relationships between the team and its new driver line-up.

Given that the Val-de-Vienne outfit's running was limited at last year's Prologue, Jack Leconte's squad took the opportunity to work extensively on the Corvette's set-up this time around. Not only that but, as the only LMGTE Am team entering a front engine car with Michelin tyres, Larbre will also work in partnership with the French supplier, helping to develop its entire 2016 range and collecting key data for tyre degradation.

Larbre veteran Paolo Ruberti returns to the driver line-up after racing for the team in 2015, and thus provides an excellent point of reference for his new crew-mates, Pierre Ragues and Yutaka Yamagishi. Having enjoyed a successful career in prototypes, Pierre has quickly adjusted to the squad's American GT car and demonstrated impressive versatility ahead of his tenth season in endurance racing.

In a bid to preserve the reliability of its Corvette racer, Larbre ultimately decided not to run on the second test day, with Yutaka set to complete an alternative preparation programme in due course. With his extensive experience competing in the Japanese Super GT series, Yamagishi can look forward to building on a solid base in his maiden international championship.

After a productive 2016 Prologue, Larbre Competition and its #50 Corvette C7.R are now fully prepared for the team's fifth FIA World Endurance Championship campaign, with the season-opening round – the 6 Hours of Silverstone – taking place on Sunday April 17.

Paolo Ruberti: "I'm delighted to have met up with the entire Larbre Competition team again at the Prologue. We were able to build upon our solid experience from 2015 and put in some competitive lap times. The car's set-up is even better than last year and the tyres provide additional grip so, all things considered, the car is looking very strong.

"It was also great to start working with my new team-mates. Pierre is an excellent Silver driver and Yutaka, our Bronze driver, only needs a bit more running to maximise his preparation, but we make a strong crew together.

"I'm now fully focused on the FIA WEC season-opener at Silverstone which, with its demanding circuit and unpredictable weather conditions, always throws up a real challenge."

Pierre Ragues: "We had an excellent Prologue and successfully completed our work programme. I was able to take the time to get a good feel for the Corvette, too; it was great fun to put the car through its paces and I'm already very comfortable with how it drives.

"Avoiding the prototype cars was a new experience but, seeing as the circuit is quite long and wide, I was able to get used to it easily.

"I had already met Paolo in the paddock several times and it was fantastic to get to know each other, especially with my Italian roots. Yutaka is more reserved, but we are nevertheless getting to know one another, too. We need to give each other time to build up a good relationship, which is important with new team-mates.

"As a highly technical circuit with slow and fast corners Silverstone is a challenging season-opener, but I can't wait to tackle it in a GT car."

Yutaka Yamagishi: "It was a great pleasure to participate in my first ever Prologue. I had taken a cautious approach in the run-up to the test, but I was surprised and delighted to see how competitive the car was once I had adjusted to the circuit.

“My team-mates set very impressive lap times and I would like to thank them for their diligence in working on the Corvette. On my side, I will continue to work hard and learn as much as possible about the car.”

Jack Leconte, Team Manager: “Such a successful FIA WEC Prologue is very encouraging for Larbre Competition. We were able to prepare ourselves for the upcoming season far more than last year, even if we were still missing some parts, which were being rebuilt in time for Silverstone.

“After a promising end to the 2015 season, we used the winter months to analyse data, work on parameters and enhance our Corvette’s set-up. As a result, we have a competitive car that the drivers are very happy with.

“Paolo has extended his amicable relationship with the Larbre family and, as always, gave his absolute best throughout the two-day test. Pierre settled into the team very quickly, and was very keen to drive a GT car. We wanted to offer Yutaka more track time as he had already driven at Val-de-Vienne with us during the winter, but we decided to be prudent at the end of the first test day in order to mitigate any mechanical issues.

“The FIA WEC is a highly competitive championship, but I’m convinced that we have fully acclimatised to LMGTE Am and are prepared for the first round in the UK.”

2016 FIA WEC Calendar

1. 6 Hours of Silverstone, April 17
2. 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps WEC, May 7
3. 24 Hours of Le Mans, June 18-19
4. 6 Hours of Nurburgring, July 24
5. 6 Hours of Mexico, September 3
6. 6 Hours of Circuit of The Americas, September 17
7. 6 Hours of Fuji, October 16
8. 6 Hours of Shanghai, November 6
9. 6 Hours of Bahrain, November 19





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