

Algarve Pro Racing, James Allen, Steven Thomas and Rene Binder fought to a remarkable LMP2 Pro-Am victory in the 90th edition of the 24 Hours of Le Mans (11-12 June) with an ORECA 07 LMP2 that was rebuilt from the ground-up following a crash in free practice. The Portugal-based squad completed a remarkable feat of endurance before the racing had even begun, reconstructing the damaged #45 prototype in a spirited team effort that ensured all six of its drivers could compete for a dream result in what is widely regarded as the world's greatest motor race.

The #45 machine, newly-constructed overnight on Wednesday, raced twice-around-the-clock with no issues, while Sophia Flörsch, John Falb and Jack Aitken in the sister #47 car recovered brilliantly from a lap-one mechanical malady to seal an unlikely fifth-place result in Pro-Am.

James Allen (#45 Algarve Pro Racing ORECA 07 LMP2): “It was a fantastic effort from everyone in Algarve Pro Racing. It was unfortunate that we missed quite a bit of running on Wednesday, including Qualifying-Practice, which meant we had to start from the back of the entire grid. Fortunately, Chief Mechanic Mark and the boys did a fantastic job getting the car back together for FP3 and FP4 on Thursday without any issues. The engineering crew worked well together to give us a fantastic car for the race and I was very quickly able to get through the GTE traffic and into the LMP2 fight in my first stint. Rene (Binder) and Steven (Thomas) were faultless during all their stints and I was able to take the lead of the Pro-Am field in the middle of the night. Everyone's joint effort put us two laps up on

the other Pro-Am cars, which we were able to hold onto until the end. I can't thank everyone on the team enough and I can't wait to get those extra few points we need to win the FIA World Endurance Championship LMP2 Pro-Am title!"

Steven Thomas (#45 Algarve Pro Racing ORECA 07 LMP2): "I feel great, like we really accomplished something special. It all started with my crash in free practice and Algarve Pro Racing's amazing effort to rebuild the car from the ground-up, then you have James Allen slicing through the field in the first race stint, Rene Binder's brilliant driving throughout and Sam and Stewart Cox's guidance and leadership.

"It all came together to achieve a remarkable victory in LMP2 Pro-Am and, having only started racing in January 2019, I'm truly grateful for the opportunity to compete in and win Le Mans. Honestly, I came to win. I've been completely open about that from the outset, and it never changed, even during the build-up to the race, with us starting at the back of the grid. The drama only makes for a better story. The 24 Hours of Le Mans is the biggest event in endurance racing, so to win it first time is quite an achievement."

Rene Binder (#45 Algarve Pro Racing ORECA 07 LMP2): "What a weekend and what a win! I just want to thank Algarve Pro Racing for all their efforts in rebuilding the #45 car from scratch mid-week. It was a great car to drive. Our original goal was to win the LMP2 Pro-Am category but everyone knows how difficult the 24 Hours of Le Mans is, so we are incredibly happy to hold the trophy."

John Falb (#47 Algarve Pro Racing ORECA 07

LMP2): “Our overall performance was good, as Sophia (Flörsch), Jack (Aitken) and I were all fast, the car was quick and we pretty much ran a flawless race, with the exception of the first-lap mechanical troubles. Even so, I believed we could make something of the race because it’s Le Mans and anything can happen, so at that point all we could do was push for everything. Ultimately, we went from five to three laps down, and no matter how fast you are relative to your competitors, it’s hard to regain that much ground on pace alone. It takes mistakes and misfortune for others to claw your way back.

“It’s quite difficult to take emotionally, because we clearly we had the speed to win LMP2 Pro-Am. Some say Le Mans chooses the winner. I’m not sure I buy into that, but it is a long race, a lot happens and you have to be flawless. Still, this year’s 24 Hours of Le Mans was really special with so many fans around and the Driver’s Parade, and while the result is disappointing, I had a lot of fun and enjoyed the experience.”

Jack Aitken (#47 Algarve Pro Racing ORECA 07

LMP2): “I think a lot of people come away from any endurance race with a lot of ifs, buts and maybes, and it is a shame that we couldn’t be in among the fight because it’s quite obvious we had the combined pace to win LMP2 Pro-Am – it’s a missed opportunity. I stepped into the car after Sophia’s (Flörsch) first stint and because we started a long way off the pack, we spent the early stints racing on our own, trying to make up ground, which is a very different dynamic.

“It wasn’t until we got into the longer stints during the night that we made contact with the back end of the field and started progressing up the leaderboard. Our speed was very good, there were no mistakes after the lap-one mechanical troubles and we picked off a few teams as they slipped up or had issues of their own. Overall, it was a good race and we finished strongly. In fact, the 24 Hours of Le Mans as a whole is amazing and it fully lived up to my expectations. Circuit de la Sarthe is a proper street track, which I love, the night driving is incredible because there’s a real variety of lighting conditions and it’s easy to make mistakes, and the sheer number of people who turned out for the race was impressive – it’s the biggest sporting event I’ve ever been to and I’ll never forget it.”

Algarve Pro Racing Team Principal, Stewart Cox, said: “The 24 Hours of Le Mans is one hell of a rollercoaster. In fact, this year has been full of ups and down. We managed to bounce back from losing our funding, to get all three cars out and running competitively for podiums and wins in the FIA World Endurance Championship, European Le Mans Series and Le Mans, and ensure all the people that work with us kept their jobs, so to come away from the 24 Hours of Le Mans with the LMP2 Pro-Am victory is just incredible. “I’m a little bit disappointed with what happened to the #47 car away from the start. We lost five laps, yet Sophia (Flörsch), John (Falb) and Jack (Aitken) finished only three laps off the sister #45 car that won Pro-Am, and their pace suggests they had a real shout of victory, too. It was all because a gearbox actuator overheated and failed, which is immensely frustrating.”

Cox continued: “However, what the team did to fix the #47 in the race and rebuild the #45 earlier in the week epitomises what endurance racing is about for me. It isn’t and shouldn’t all be perfect – there’s drama and issues that more money and staff might fix, but it’s all a bit too clinical then. The fans want to see some action and be there for the ups and the downs. We’re ultimately here to entertain, I love motorsport and I think we pulled off a remarkable recovery this week that I hope was great to watch.”