



The Le Mans Series season opener in Le Castellet gave us a taste of what the 2010 season might be but, with no less than 52 cars on the entry list, the 1000Km of Spa should be one of the season's highlights.

The first round of the battle between the "factory" teams from Audi and Peugeot with the 2010-spec vehicles is promising and will hopefully bring a high level of suspense.

If there is a race track that every driver simply adores, it's Spa-Francorchamps. And there isn't one of the drivers heading there for the 1000Km race who doesn't rate it as one of their favorites, like Vanina Ickx, the Belgian driver who will enter her home race.

A LAP OF SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS WITH VANINA ICKX – TEAM SIGNATURE PLUS

"Spa-Francorchamps is renowned as one of the world's greatest drivers' circuit. Nested in the heavily-forested Ardennes Mountains, the track is unique because of the big elevation changes.

"The first corner is the Source hairpin. As it goes slightly downhill, with a wide exit, we can carry our speed all the way up to Raidillon. Eau Rouge flattens us in the bucket seat and shoots us up to the blind, highest point of the track at the end of the long Kemmel straight. We can use the right-left-right complex of Les Combes to make sure that the car is well-balanced for the direction changes. It is a great set-up indicator. Then we start to go down towards Bruxelles corner, a long and tight hairpin in which we suffer big understeer. The next left-handed corner is a little bit tricky because it is off-camber but we can use the kerbs at the exit. Next up is Pouhon double apex left-hander, which, to me, is the most "spicy" corner because we can feel the impressive downforce of a prototype. We just touch the brakes before gearing down and we head into the next corner at more than 200 km/h with only a steering adjustment till the exit. After the Fagnes chicane and right-hander, we arrive at the lowest point of the track. We arrive at Turn 14, where it is very important to have a good exit because we're flat-out all the way back to the pits. It is also a good reference for the balance of the car. If the car is well-balanced, we can be flat-out in qualifying. We go flat out into the left-hander at Blanchimont, which is still legendary although it lost a little bit of character because of the asphalt run-offs. Then the Bus-stop chicane puts an end to an awesome lap."

MORE THAN ONE DUEL

The weather can be unpredictable in the Hautes Fagnes region, but that unpredictability is part of the thrill of racing at Spa and will make the expected duels more exciting. Audi won the first round at the Paul Ricard circuit, but the Peugeot factory team will try to regain the psychological advantage before the 24 Hours of Le Mans.

But this fight should not put the other duels in the shade. In the LMP2 class, Strakka Racing demonstrated in early April how strong they are this year; nonetheless, the reigning championship Quifel-ASM Team, who couldn't fight back because of a mechanical issue, will come back stronger to honour their title. The now traditional duel between Porsche and Ferrari in the GT2 class held its promise during the kickoff of the season. If the German manufacturer took the first victory, don't discount the Ferraris coming back stronger than ever.

The gentlemen drivers will enjoy the racing weekend thanks to the Classic Endurance Racing and their old stars, being the Saturday's stars, and the Radical Masters, which are back to the Le Mans Series' weekend. Moreover, the Porsche Matmut Carrera Cup France and their very spectacular races should entertain the race-fans with their state-of-the-art GTs.

FOLLOW THE RACE

The 1,000Km of Spa are scheduled to start at 11:30 am on Sunday, May 9.

Please visit our website at www.lemans-series.com for live-timing

TV Broadcast times:

- Eurosport International – Live 11:15 am - 12:00 pm; 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm
- Eurosport International – Delayed 5:30 pm - 6:00 pm

