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The off-season is finally over! After a six-month break, LMPs and GTs are back on track to unveil their new aero or livery or even a brand-new car! The official test sessions are always a kind of leap in the dark for the teams and a voyage of discovery for the spectators, who are now welcome back on the legendary Le Castellet circuit to enjoy car-racing.

Ex-Formula One stars will make race-fans' toes curl either as new comers, like **Jean Alesi** or **Giancarlo Fisichella**, or as regular competitors, like **Olivier Panis**. **Nigel Mansell** and his sons, who raced at Silverstone last year, are back for the whole season, more excited than ever about endurance.

The official test days will be a rehearsal before the eight-hour race which will kick off the 2010 season on **April 9, 10 and 11**.

New comers and come back

41 competitors are on the entry list for the official test days, including the Formula Le Mans cars. These will race with the LMPs and GTs, even though they will have a special classification. This will be a very good opportunity for the young drivers to learn and gather experience for the future.

Experience: that is what **Honda Performance Development** will rely on for its Acura debut in Europe with Strakka Racing. Indeed, after many victories in North America, the Japanese car-maker decided to fight against Lola or Zytek in the highly competitive LMP2 class, with 23 cars on the entry list for the whole season.

The LMP1 class will be very exciting with a Peugeot 908-HDi FAP returning to the Series, though operated by the privateer ORECA, but spectators will have to wait till the first race for the dual with the Audis. **Aston Martin** will also be well represented with the official team as well as team **Signature Plus**, which enters a Lola-Aston Martin driven by Pierre Ragues and Franck Mailleux.

The two-day test sessions should provide a few clues to the new hierarchy even if some teams might keep their cards close to their chest. If a team appears to dominate testing, it won't be until the first qualifying session of the year that it can truly be sure of its real position.

In the GT1 class, an **Aston Martin DBR9** will run alongside three Ford GTs, which will enter the GT1 World Championship, and the **Larbre Competition** Saleen S7-R. In the GT2 class, **Team Schnitzer BMW M3's** noteworthy arrival should put an end to the traditional dual between Porsche and Ferrari.

Stars and youngsters

While **the Mansell family** is familiar with sports cars, this is the very first time that the three family members will drive all together in the Team Beechdean Mansell Ginetta-Zytek and this is a first for a father and his two sons to be teammates. They will share the headlines with ex-Formula One stars **Jean Alesi** and **Giancarlo Fisichella**, both driving a Ferrari F430 for AF Corse and **Olivier Panis** and his Peugeot-ORECA. They all will answer questions at the **Press Conference at 1:00 pm on Monday, March 8**.

The youngsters will also be important players in the mix with **Marco Andretti**, from another famous family and whose grandfather and ex-Formula One Champion Mario will be in the paddock this weekend, or **Neel Jani** or even **Nelson Panciatici**, a promising young French driver.

Schedule

The Test sessions are scheduled for Sunday, March 7, from 9:30 am to 1:30 pm and from 2:30 pm to 6:30 pm, and from 7:00 pm to 12:00 am for the night practice session and continuing Monday, March 8, from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm and from 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm on the 5.791-km Paul Ricard circuit.

Please visit www.lemans-series.com for further information.

