

Horag Racing Finishes Second in LMP2 In Sunday's 1000 km of Silverstone Team Also Finishes Third in Championship And Wins Michelin Energy Endurance Challenge

by Linda K. Mansfield

SILVERSTONE, England, Sept. 14 - Fredy Lienhard said that Sunday's 1000 Kilometers of Silverstone Le Mans Series season finale would be his last race as a driver, and he wanted to go out at the top of his game.

He certainly did.

As a crowd of 53,000 and a live television audience watched, Lienhard celebrated his 61st birthday on the podium at the historic circuit 80 miles north of London after he and co-drivers Didier Theys and Jan Lammers finished second in the LMP2 class with their Porsche RS Spyder No. 27.

In the process they earned enough points to regain third place in the Le Mans Series' LMP2 championship for the season, recording three podium finishes in the five-race series.

Horag Racing's entry also topped every other car in the series to win a separate championship called the Michelin Energy Endurance Challenge, which is awarded to the team that makes the best use of fuel during the season. The ranking is based on the Energy Efficiency Index (EEI), which is the ratio between a car's average speed, excluding pit stops, and its average fuel consumption.

Part of the prize is an official entry into the 2009 24 Hours of Le Mans, which possibly could be enough to draw Lienhard out of retirement.

But that's a question for another day. After Sunday's race Lienhard and the team were delighted to finish second in a very tough 14-car LMP2 class. The 2008 LMP2 champions, the Van Merksteijn Porsche RS Spyder team, won the class on Sunday, but the Horag team finished second in class and ninth overall in the 46-car field. Its Lista Office No. 27 had a two-lap advantage over the third-place LMP2 car, the Quifel ASM Team's Lola MG, after five hours and 40 minutes of torrid competition on the 5140.11-meter/3.194-mile, 14-turn road course.

Lammers qualified sixth in class and 17th overall on Saturday.

Theys drove the first stint. He battled an understeer that disappeared after he got a new set of Michelin tires prior to the start of his second stint. The team also dodged a bullet at that point because the pit stop was made before a slow leak in the car's right-rear tire caused any real trouble.

Since this race was the last chance to earn points for 2008, some drivers took more chances than usual. Theys avoided any skirmishes, and ran in fifth place in class during the early stages of the race before moving into fourth before 50 of the 195 laps were in the books.

Casper Elgaard was running third when he lost the left-front wheel of his Team Essex Porsche RS Spyder right before Theys' second stint was over. That put Theys in third place when he turned the car over to Lienhard around the two-hour mark.

Lienhard moved into second place right before the three-hour mark when the Embassy Racing WF01 Zytec pitted so Warren Hughes could replace Jonny Kane. Lienhard was still in second place when he pitted for Lammers to take over shortly thereafter. The entry dropped to fifth due to the pit stop, and Lammers got to work to bring his charge back up the monitor.

He was fourth with three hours and 18 minutes on the clock. Ten minutes later he took third by passing Miguel Amaral in the Quifel ASM Lola AER. Then he set his sights on second, held at the time by the Embassy WF01 Zytec No. 45.

Shortly thereafter that car stalled at the end of pit lane following a pit stop. The problem cost it a lap and allowed Lammers to retake second place around the three-hour-and-45-minute mark. He stayed in that



position until the end even as some positions shifted behind him.

Horag Racing owner Markus Hotz also saved time by not changing Lammers' tires on his last pit stop, which gave the team even more padding over third at the checkered.

Lammers set the car's fastest lap of the race with a 1:36.319 (192.149 km/h), which was the second-fastest lap posted among the LMP2 entries. It was also faster than the 1:36.338 he ran in qualifying.



All of the teams had limited practice time here in the dry this weekend due to rain and some caution flags. Qualifying was held in the dry on Saturday, as was Sunday's race.

Post-race quotes follow:

Didier Theys: "It's always enjoyable to come to Silverstone. It has fast corners where the driver really makes a difference, and I always enjoy racing here. There's a fast corner called Becketts that you take flat out in sixth gear, and every lap it's 'Wow!'"

After the Nurburgring we were a bit frustrated because we needed to get third place in the championship back. We did that today, and were able to give Fredy a good birthday present. I want to dedicate this podium to him, for all of the good times that we've had racing together.

Winning the Michelin Energy Challenge championship was also important to us. We're not 25 anymore, and we need to have something else to win! It's very valuable, as it gives us an entry at LeMans next year.

That second stint was a bit frustrating because when I came out of the pits I was running with a pack of three LMP1 cars. They were faster than me on the straights but slower than me in the corners. But that was the only frustration of the race for me. I didn't have any offs, and everything went fine. The team, Fredy and Jan all did a great job."

Fredy Lienhard: "I've been racing for 40 years, and there were so many good experiences and challenges. It is my 61st birthday today, and the present I got from my team couldn't have made me happier. It is just so valuable. I would like to thank everyone involved in this series and at this track and of course our team.

I have to say yes, this is my happiest birthday ever. I celebrated my birthday at Mont-Tremblant the year Didier and I won with my son as a co-driver, but my birthday was on Saturday that year and the race was on Sunday.

Winning with my son was very special. I have to say that my top three races ever were the Rolex 24 victory at Daytona; that win at Mont-Tremblant, and this race today.

I played it safe during my stint. Markus [Hotz, the team owner] told me to be consistent, and I did that. I followed his instructions. And I don't think I ever enjoyed driving so much as I did today. The car is just wonderful to race here."

Jan Lammers: "The Porsche RS Spyder is a fantastic car to drive. The team did a great job, as usual. I feel like I'm a lucky guy to be able to share this podium with Fredy. I'm grateful to him for the experience; it was a nice season.

Fredy did a great job today. He matched the times of the Van Merksteijn driver during his stint, and sometimes he was even quicker.

[About not changing tires on the last pit stop]: "I was worried about it for a little while, but Markus told me it would be OK so I just lived with it and he was right; it was OK. The Embassy car had a problem and wasn't on our lap at the end, which gave us some breathing room."

Markus Hotz (team owner): "Today was better than expected. We couldn't expect to win unless the Van Merksteijn car had a problem. On Thursday I told the team that we'll hope for the best, but be realistic and

take whatever happens. I told them that we'll just all do our best. I think everybody did that, and that's why we're here.

The Michelin Energy Challenge was a goal that we wanted to win. It was a nice thing to pack this energy challenge into the series. We won for the entire series; it covers all the classes, and we won it even over the efficient diesel cars.

On the last pit stop we were very careful to fill the car with exactly what was needed to go to the finish. It wasn't as easy as it looked.