

JWA Looking Ahead with Aston Martin GT2 Silverstone Debut

Eccleshall, Staffordshire (September 08, 2008) – James Watt Automotive (JWA) is pleased to confirm that it will utilise this weekend's 'Autosport 1000km of Silverstone', Round 5 of the 2008 Le Mans Series, to officially launch its 2009 activities, using the 'home' event for the much anticipated debut of the team's #93 Aston Martin Vantage GT2 entry. The Staffordshire-based squad will field the car in the GT2 class in the Le Mans Series season finale with Tim Sugden, Alan van der Merwe and Michael Outzen sharing driving duties, Friday 12th – Sunday 14th September.

Having taken delivery of the car from Aston Martin Racing last week, the entire JWA organization has been working to prepare the all-new Vantage GT2 for a shakedown test at Pembrey in Wales tomorrow, Tuesday 9th September, before heading to Silverstone later in the week for its Le Mans Series competition debut.

"Needless to say I'm excited that we're finally in possession of the car and set to go racing," declared JWA Team Principal, James Watt. "That said, we're under no illusion as to what we're up against heading to an international sports car event with virtually no track time under our belts. We'll make the most of tomorrow's shakedown at Pembrey before continuing our education with the car at Silverstone. We're very much looking at the long-term plan with the Aston Martin Vantage GT2 but in the short-term we're viewing this weekend's race as a competitive test outing, one which will give us a platform on which to build ahead of a full-time campaign in 2009."

He continued, "Silverstone marks the start of an exciting time for JWA and we're extremely proud to be progressing as a company as ambassadors for Aston Martin. We're certainly very keen to maximise the commercial potential that comes from being associated with such a powerful and iconic brand while showcasing our own company's championship-winning talents and delivering results for Aston Martin in the GT2 class of the Le Mans Series, probably the most competitive class in sports car competition. We've secured a talented trio of drivers for our debut at Silverstone and I'm looking forward to working with Tim, Alan and Michael for our only 'home' race of 2008."

JWA's driver line-up for Sunday's 'Autosport 1000km of Silverstone' reflects a truly international blend of talent and experience with Great Britain, South Africa and Denmark represented respectively by Tim Sugden, Alan van der Merwe and Michael Outzen.

Bradford-based Tim Sugden (44) boasts a wealth of international sports car experience having forged a professional career as one of Great Britain's most versatile race car drivers. Sugden, a multiple British GT Champion (1997, 1998) has competed in the Le Mans Series, the 24 Hours of Le Mans, the American Le Mans Series, the Grand-Am Championship and the FIA GT Championship. Currently the reigning Porsche Carrera Cup Asia Champion, Tim's no stranger to James Watt Automotive having run three Le Mans Series races this season with the team in their other GT2 entry.

"I'm naturally very excited to be racing JWA's Aston Martin," stated Sugden. "It's my only race in the UK this season and it's always great to get the opportunity to compete at Silverstone. It's quite fitting to be racing there in a car as British as the Aston Martin. I happen to manage a driver who's racing the only other Vantage GT2 in competition over in America so obviously I've been hearing quite a bit about the car and I know it's been increasingly more competitive. I'm keen to see how it goes for myself around Silverstone and I'm delighted to be part of the team giving it its European race debut."

South Africa's Alan van der Merwe (28) may be a relative newcomer to the sports car scene but his resume speaks for itself. The Johannesburg-born racer put himself firmly on the motorsport radar with his triumph in the 2001 Formula Ford Festival at Brands Hatch. He duly graduated his talents to the British Formula Three Championship, winning the prestigious title in 2003 with Carlin Motorsport courtesy of nine wins from 15 podium appearances. A short spell in International F3000 followed before he joined the BAR Honda F1 driver development programme. Prior to the 2008 season Alan represented South Africa as a race/reserve driver in the 2006-07 A1GP World Cup of Motorsport.

"It's been a long time coming but I'm really excited to be getting back behind the wheel and competing for JWA this weekend," said van der Merwe. "Our test at Pembrey's going to be pretty important so we can get into the swing of things and we can all familiarise ourselves with the actual running of the car. Silverstone's a great track, I've won there in the past and it'll just provide us with a good place to gauge the car's performance versus the Ferraris and Porsches in the GT2 class. It'll be good for the Aston Martin to get that level of exposure against the competition in order to prepare for next season's campaign."

Denmark's Michael Outzen (26) completes the driver trio in JWA's Aston Martin Vantage GT2. Outzen has emerged as one of his country's leading touring car drivers having captured the Danish Touring Car Privateer Championship in 2007. The former national Formula Ford Champion is already a double race winner in 2008 competing in the Danish Touring Car Championship for the factory-backed Chevrolet Motorsport squad. While Silverstone's GP layout will be new to the Dane he holds one previous start at the famed Northamptonshire race track back in 2000 when he raced in the Formula Renault UK Winter Series.

"I'm really happy to be part of the team for Silverstone and I think we have a strong driver line-up heading into the race," commented Outzen. "This week we'll all be getting to know each other and obviously the car as well, starting with our test at Pembrey. It's a new challenge for us but if everything holds up during the race I don't see why we can't be out there being competitive. I have a couple of friends who race in the GT2 class and I've been asking them a lot about the racing and the series in general. We're going to be competing against drivers and teams with a lot more experience but it's important to remember this is just the first step for us. It'll be an exciting time for everyone involved and I'm really looking forward to getting out in the car."

JWA will continue to field the #95 Porsche 997 GT3 RSR in the GT2 class of the Le Mans Series, driven this weekend at Silverstone by series regular Paul Daniels, accompanied for the first time by Peter Bamford and Matt Griffin.

The fifth and final round of the 2008 Le Mans Series, the 'Autosport 1000km of Silverstone' gets underway in Great Britain on Friday with two free practice sessions. GT2 qualifying is set for 1:15pm GMT on Saturday before Sunday's six-hour endurance race kicks off at 11:20am GMT. For a full event timetable please log on to – www.lemans-series.com

Sunday's race will be broadcast live on TV across Europe by Motors TV – www.motorstv.com

ENDS – www.jwaracing.com

Photo Credit – 'JWA's #93 Aston Martin Vantage GT2 will make its LMS debut at Silverstone' – Peter Hall / Excipic

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