

The 2008 entry list - introduction

The entry list of the 24 hours of Le Mans is limited to 55 cars, spread across the 4 classes LMP1, LMP2, LMGT1 and LMGT2. This number is not random; it's actually set by the number of pits available at the racetrack. Fortunately the pit lane had been extended recently, until 2006 there were only 50 pits available.

Until some years ago there was a pre-qualification weekend a couple of weeks prior to the race. All teams willing to participate had to show up at Le Mans, drive their qualification laps and with a few exceptions, e.g. the winner of the previous year, only the fastest cars were qualified for the race. This has been changed to a system of "pre-selected" and "A.C.O.-selected" entries and the pre-qualification weekend became a compulsory test weekend for all participants.

So, how does it work nowadays? 28 out of the 55 entries are pre-selected: If these teams apply for an entry, they will be accepted. **The list of the 28 pre-selected entries is compiled using the results of the previous year:**

- 1st and 2nd at the 24 hours of Le Mans in each class (8 cars)
- 1st and 2nd in the Le Mans Series in each class (8 cars)
- 1st at the "Petit Le Mans" in each class (4 cars)
- 1st in the American Le Mans Series in each class (4 cars)
- 1st and 2nd in the FIA GT Championship GT1 and GT2 categories (4 cars)

This only applies if the entry is to the same class as it was pre-selected for. The privilege belongs to the team and is not related to a chassis or engine make. Teams cannot get more than 2 entries. If a team has already 2 entries, any more entries are skipped and given to the next highest competitor.

The remaining 27 slots – or more, if a pre-selected entry is not taken - are given away at the organizers discretion. The following is a quote from the A.C.O. regulations about their guidelines for the selection procedure of the remaining entries:

- A maximum of two cars per competitor
- Fame of the competitor (manufacturer, factory-backed team, well-known private team, private team)
- Previous "24 Hours of Le Mans" races
- Competitors' record
- Regular entries in "American Le Mans Series" and "Le Mans Series" events
- Recommended entry in a race prior to the Selection Committee meeting
- Quality of the cars
- Technical interest
- Relationship with the A.C.O. and its environment regarding legal and financial issues
- Maintaining the participation of "privateers"

Outlook:

Another Le Mans 2009 wildcard will be given to the winner of the 2008 "Michelin Energy Endurance-Challenge", a trophy for the LMS team with the most efficient fuel consumption, increasing the list of pre-selected teams for 2009 to 29.

The A.C.O. is also developing an "Asian Le Mans Series" due to be launched in Japan and China in 2009. A 1000 km race at Shanghai, China was planned already for November this year but has just been cancelled.



Le Mans 1995: WR LM94-Peugeot of the French Welter Racing Team on the grid

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Le Mans 1995: The Courage C34 of Bob Wollek, Mario Andretti and Eric Hélary

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