

MissionH24 buoyed by first race

PLANS to run a hydrogen fuel cell-powered class at the Le Mans 24 Hours moved a step closer last month when MissionH24's electric-hydrogen-powered prototype completed its first race.

The Michelin Le Mans Cup event at Imola marked a crucial milestone in the MissionH24 programme: although the H24 had participated in practice sessions before, this was the first occasion on which it had raced with other cars.

Ultimately, three figures told the tale of the outing: 110 minutes of racing, 38 laps, and four hydrogen refuelling stops at the TotalEnergies station. But the

statistics don't do justice to the hard work behind the scenes, with the team working throughout the night to track down and solve the electrical gremlins that dogged the car throughout the practice sessions.

The event tested team and car alike, with temperatures of 35°C and the asphalt on the track exceeding 50°C. Nevertheless, the car completed the race. It set a fastest lap time in the region of 10 seconds slower than the top GT3 cars, which are over 100 kg lighter. But the team is confident that a lot more pace could have been extracted from the package had Stéphane Richelmi, the H24Racing team's driver, not lost so

much track time during practice.

"To finish an international endurance race with an electric-hydrogen-powered prototype was a real achievement," said Jean-Michel Bouresche, MissionH24 Operations Manager & H24Racing Team Principal. "Our aim was not to set the fastest laps, but go as far and for as long as possible, an aim we accomplished.

"One day to finish first, first you have to finish! We had to tackle very aggressive weather and track conditions for our fledgling technology, and we found solutions to overcome each of the obstacles that we had to face."

Pierre Fillon, president of the ACO and co-president of MissionH24, said: "A new page in motorsport has been written. For this milestone event I have to admit my impatience and also my patience. Like everybody involved in this project, I really wanted to overcome the hurdle of the first race while remaining realistic. This first event in which we competed in the experimental category had a major objective: to rack up the kilometres on the track to gather precious data that are impossible to collect in testing. The H24 is now a fully-fledged racing car." **RT**



LEFT The H24 takes the chequered flag in the Italian round of the Michelin Le Mans Cup

MissionH24/Jakob Ebrey Photography

