

Puncture Deals Blow to HK Le Mans team

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Hong Kong ([PRWEB](#)) August 2, 2005 -- A high-speed tyre blowout ended the new Hong Kong Le Mans team's hopes of a podium finish in their big-race debut in Italy.

Noble Group-GruppeM Racing were running fifth in their category in the prestigious 1,000km of Monza when the fates intervened, forcing them to retire. The rear left tyre on the baubinia-emblazoned Porsche GT3 RSR punctured and unravelled at 260kmh, ripping out the brake lining and causing driver Matthew Marsh to careen off the track and into the gravel trap on lap 46 of the 173-lap race.

"It's unfortunate but, all things considered, it could have been a lot worse," said Marsh. "A puncture at that speed is pretty dangerous, but the car is OK and so am I."

"We were in fifth position despite making two unscheduled pitstops and losing some time when I was shunted by one of the Ferraris and spun around, so we had genuine hopes of a podium finish. Then again, a lot of the teams that were forced out will be saying the same thing."

The retirement was especially frustrating for co-driver Darryl O'Young, who had been waiting to take over behind the wheel for the second half of the five-hour race. But he at least had the satisfaction of a solid qualifying session, posting a time good enough for the team to start seventh out of the 14 cars in their category.

"I was really looking forward to racing, but it wasn't to be," said O'Young. "Even so, we can take a lot of positives from the weekend. We qualified seventh and were running fifth, so that shows we are competitive. You need a little bit of luck in endurance racing and we didn't get it this time, but these things even themselves out over time and we're very confident about the rest of the season."

Noble Group-GruppeM Racing are attempting to become the first Hong Kong team to take part in the world's greatest endurance race, the Le Mans 24 Hours. They are competing in a series of warm-up races in Europe, China and the United States with the aim of being invited to Le Mans in June 2006.

Endurance racing cars are divided into four categories: P1 and P2 for prototypes (cars designed specifically for racing) and GT1 and GT2 for modified road cars. Marsh and O'Young, who both have plenty of experience in Porsches, are competing in GT2.

The Hong Kong team will be in action again in just over a month at the 1,000km of Silverstone in the UK, when they hope tyre supplier Pirelli can produce a more reliable set of treads.

"We had three punctures throughout the weekend and other cars with Pirelli tyres had the same problem," said Marsh. "In contrast, the winners in our class were on Dunlops. I'm sure this is something Pirelli will be looking at between now and Silverstone."

Marc Lieb and Xavier Pompidou, driving a Porsche GT3R for Sebah Automotive, won the GT2 class at Monza. Overall victory went to Pescarolo Sport's Jean-Christophe Boullion and Emmanuel Collard in a P1-category



Pescarolo Judd.

Both Monza and Silverstone are part of the Le Mans Endurance Series, a season of 1,000km races in Europe designed to help teams and drivers get in shape for Le Mans.

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