



Left: A Peugeot 908 turbo-diesel undergoing reliability testing at Sebring. Below: Armed with a 600-hp Aston Martin V12, the Lola B08/60 heads to Le Mans this summer, giving both English companies a shot at overall glory. Bottom: Fun Cup Beetle infestation at Spa.

Frenchmen in Florida

A Peugeot 908 turbo-diesel topped the time sheets during a three-day American Le Mans Series test at Sebring in January. With Frenchman Stéphane Sarrazin at the wheel, the prototype lapped the circuit in a record time of 1:42.8—beating the 1:45.0 set by an Audi R10 during qualifying for the 2007 12-hour race. Development of the 908's arch rival has not stood still, however, with an R10 posting a 1:43.6 during the same test.

Though Peugeot's stated aim for the test was to work on the 908's reliability in preparation for this summer's 24 Hours of Le Mans—mechanical difficulties hampered the French squad's efforts in '07—it had another motive for visiting Florida: It will be entering the 12 Hours of Sebring in March and needed to gain experience on the notoriously bumpy airport track. "This circuit is very different to what we are accustomed to in Europe," admits Peugeot Sport's Technical Director Bruno Famin.

Though Peugeot will not contest the full ALMS calendar—it is focused on gaining victory at Le Mans and defending its Le Mans Series title in Europe—the team is expected to enter the Petit Le Mans and the season-ending race at Laguna Seca, providing the Audi R10 with some much-needed competition in the LMP1 class.

Aston-powered Prototype

Peugeot 908s won't be the only LMP1 coupes at Le Mans this year. Lola has taken the wraps off its hard-topped contender—the B08/60. The first customer team to take delivery of the new chassis will be Charouz Racing System. Though a privateer outfit, Charouz



will receive engines and engineering support from Aston Martin. The powerplant is a Prodrive-developed 6.0-liter V12 usually found in the Aston Martin DBR9 GT1 machine. New-for-2008 rules specifically allow GT1 engines to be used in LMP1 cars, which makes us wonder if a Corvette-engined prototype is in the works. Meanwhile, Aston Martin will defend its '07 class victory with a pair of orange and blue Gulf-liveried DBR9s.

Playing with Beetles

So you caught the racing bug after running, say, the 24 Hours of LeMons and wonder what's next. If you're contemplating something a little more serious, but still want to have fun and not spend a ton of money, the Fun Cup may be your answer. Started a decade ago and billed as "Europe's fastest-growing amateur racing series," the Fun Cup is a spec series that features tube-framed race cars skinned as Volkswagen Beetles and powered by mid-mounted water-cooled VW Group inline-4 engines. A hard-to-fathom 175 of them lined up for last year's 25-hour race at Belgium's Spa-Francorchamps racetrack.

The 1,700-pound 150-hp machines cost \$34,950 ready to race. Organizers hope to host five races in the U.S. this year. Go to www.fun-cup.com for more information. ●



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