

FIA WEC 2026 - Round 1 - 6 Hours of Imola - Strong performances but bad luck

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#News

The opening round of the 2026 FIA World Endurance Championship at the demanding Autodromo Internazionale Enzo e Dino Ferrari saw Akkodis ASP Team demonstrate promising performance throughout an eventful Italian race week. Solid in the Prologue and then at the front from free practice, the two Lexus RC F LMGT3s confirmed their potential with a double top-three finish in Hyperpole, giving the crews outstanding starting positions for the race. But after a confident start and an intense fight for the lead, the situation deteriorated before the end of the first hour. The #87 car was forced to retire while the #78 car was deprived of a result worthy of its promise. In less than three weeks, the contenders will meet again at the legendary Spa-Francorchamps circuit for a dress rehearsal for the season's highlight, the 24 Hours of Le Mans (10-14 June).



Prologue - First impressions for the Akkodis ASP Team

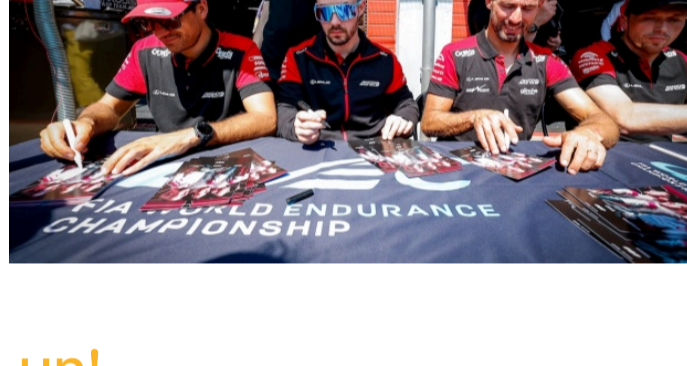
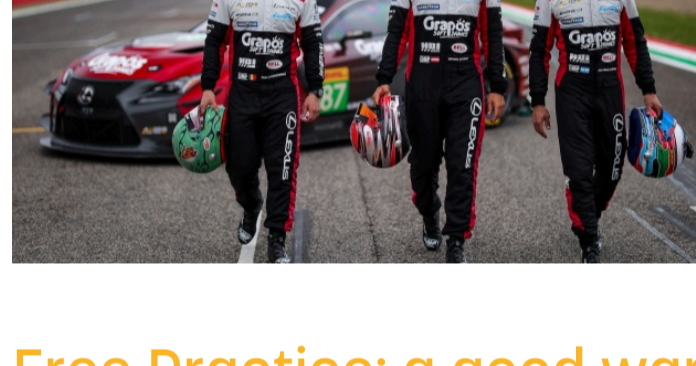
The team approached this curtain raiser with twin objectives: to gather as much data as possible and to fine-tune the set-up ahead of the first race. In LMGT3, the competition is already shaping up to be extremely close, with very small gaps between the main contenders.

In this highly competitive environment, the two Akkodis ASP Team Lexus RC F LMGT3s completed their laps with consistency, allowing the team to conduct in-depth work on tyre management, car balance and traffic management - a key factor on a narrow and technical circuit like Imola.

During the morning session, the #78 was close to the top five LMGT3 cars, just a few tenths of a second off the benchmark time, illustrating just how close the competition is. The afternoon continued this trend with gaps remaining tight, the #87 performing on a par with its main rivals.

Beyond the overall rankings, these two sessions primarily served to validate technical choices and test various set-ups, as part of preparations for the race.

The Prologue was marked by a few interruptions and off-track incidents, but there were no major incidents to report for the French team. With close margins in LMGT3 and the pecking order yet to be established, the Prologue suggested the battle would be wide open at Imola. For Akkodis ASP Team, this first taste of action in WEC 2026 provided a solid foundation on which to build ahead of the season opener.



Free Practice: a good warm-up!

The first free practice sessions saw Akkodis ASP Team steadily build momentum on the technical and fast Imola circuit. Taking place on a continuously evolving track surface due to changing weather, the first session was dedicated to optimising set-ups and assessing tyre wear, with only one specification of slick tyre now available.

From FP2 onwards, the Lexus RC F LMGT3s were at the forefront, with the #78 setting the second-fastest time, just 0.070 seconds off the lead, whilst the #87 secured a place in the top five. In a hard-fought final session, the team continued its momentum ahead of qualifying, remaining in the leading group: fifth for the #87 and seventh for the #78, less than 0.5s behind the leader. These performances bode well, showing the potential of both crews.



Qualifying & Hyperpole: on the front row!

Jérôme Policand's team demonstrated their performance in qualifying by securing Hyperpole positions for both Lexus RC F LMGT3s in a fiercely competitive field. The #78 car, driven by Tom Van Rompuy, distinguished itself by setting the fifth-fastest time, just a few thousandths of a second off the top four, whilst Petru Umbrurescu in the #87 car finished eighth, putting both cars into the Hyperpole.

In Hyperpole, the team set a new milestone by securing top-three positions with both cars. With a superb lap, Hadrien David secured a brilliant second place for the #78, just 0.226 seconds off pole, whilst Clemens Schmid put the #87 in third. This combined performance showed the speed of the two Lexus and gave both crews a promising starting position for the race.



Race - From the front row to disappointment

A record crowd of 92,175 spectators visited the Autodromo Internazionale Enzo e Dino Ferrari for this opening round of the FIA World Endurance Championship. Starting under warm sunshine (24°C air temperature and up to 41°C on the track), this Italian round lived up to expectations.

The two Lexus RC F LMGT3s from the Akkodis ASP Team got off to a flying start from prime grid positions after two formation laps: the #78 in second with Tom Van Rompuy at the wheel and the #87 in third with Petru Umbrurescu, both Bronze-class drivers taking the start.



As the laps went by, the #87 came under threat from the #69 BMW and the #88 Ford, dropping a place shortly after the half-hour mark. A few minutes later, the #78 went by as well, leaving the two Lexus cars in third and fourth place, then fourth and fifth place after 50 minutes.

The situation changed shortly before the end of the first hour. After 55 minutes, the #78 made its scheduled pit stop, but an issue prevented it returning to the track and forced the team to bring it back to the garage. Two minutes later, after refuelling on lap 30, the #87 came to a halt at the Acque Minerali. It was forced to retire.

A Virtual Safety Car was deployed, followed by the safety car, whilst the #78 remained in the pits for several minutes before being able to resume. From that point on, all hope of a positive result vanished. The car was 22 laps down and the remainder of the race turned into a real-world test session. Drivers Hadrien David and Esteban Masson took turns at the wheel until the chequered flag.

From now, the focus is on preparing for the highlight of the season, the 24 Hours of Le Mans. But before heading to La Sarthe, in less than three weeks' time, the championship will stop at the rollercoaster track in the Ardennes, in the heart of the Eifel Mountains: Spa-Francorchamps, for six hours of thrilling action.

