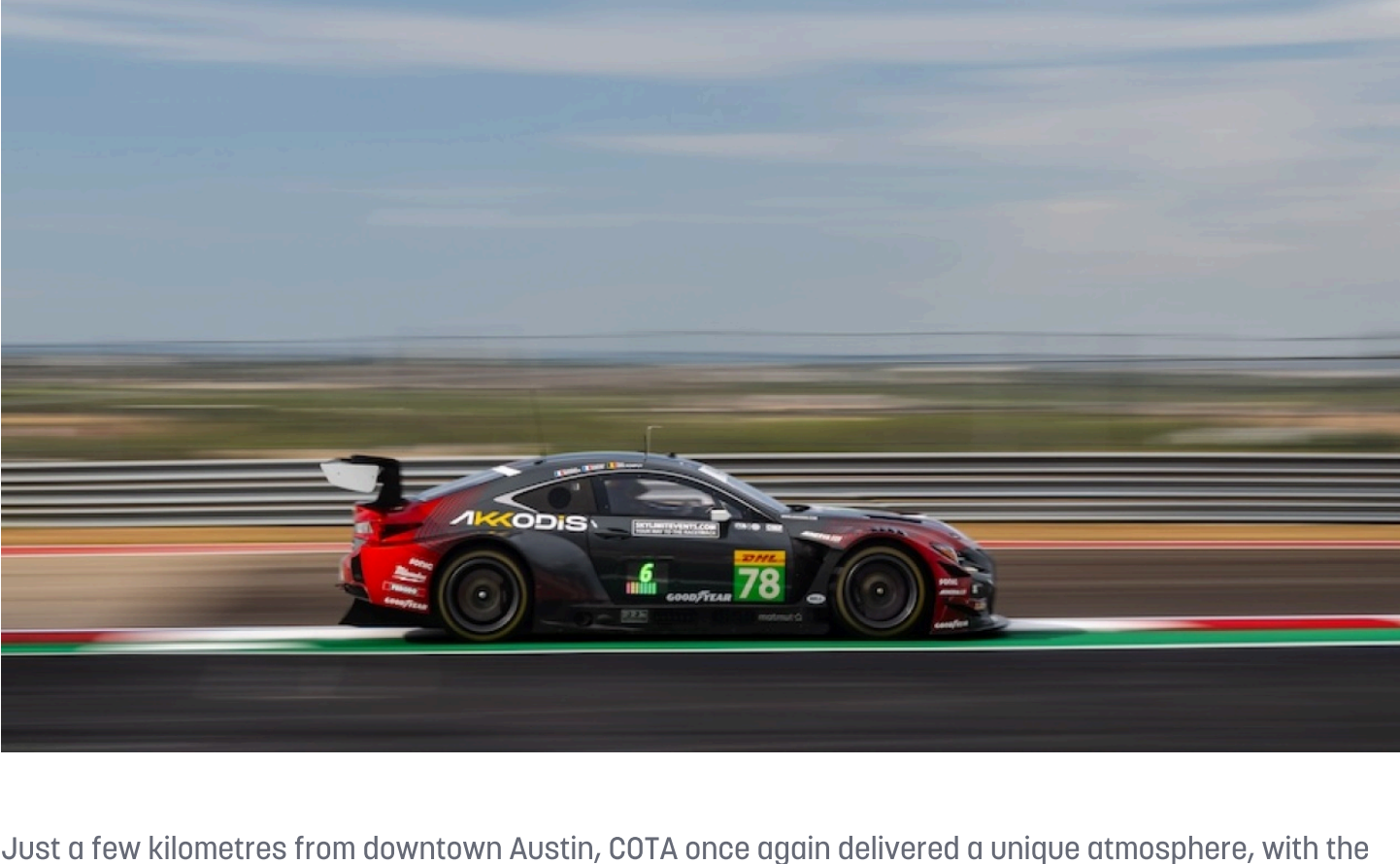


FIA WEC 2026 - Lone Star Le Mans - Austin (USA)

07-09-2026

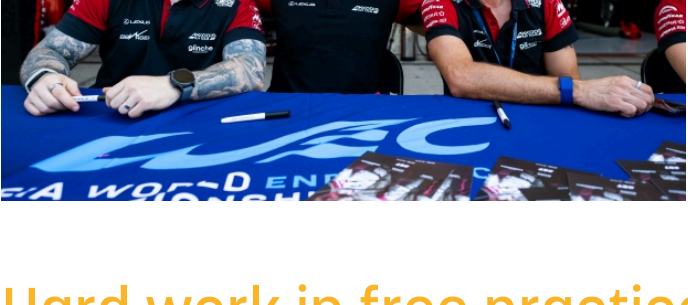
#News

After a break of nearly two months since São Paulo, the FIA WEC returned to the Circuit of the Americas for Lone Star Le Mans, the fifth of eight rounds in the 2026 season and the series’ only trip to the United States. After reaching Hyperpole with the #87 Lexus RC F LMGT3, the Akkodis ASP Team endured six hours of twists and turns in the race. Despite two drive-through penalties and several safety car periods, Petru Umbrărescu, Clemens Schmid and José María López remained on course for a top-10 finish when, with just seven minutes until the chequered flag, a minor collision sent the #87 into a spin. Restarting in 13th, José María López was unable to get back into the points. Starting 15th, the #78 driven by Tom Van Rompuy, Hadrien David and Esteban Masson had worked its way into the top 10 before an incident forced it to retire. The French team therefore leaves Texas empty-handed despite their fighting spirit, but is already focusing on the next round in Japan, at the legendary Fuji Speedway, on 25-27 September.



Just a few kilometres from downtown Austin, COTA once again delivered a unique atmosphere, with the red silhouette of its imposing observation tower, the stars-and-stripes track painting, and the vast expanses bathed in Texan sun. Heat quickly emerged as one of the defining aspects of the weekend, with temperatures rising steadily throughout the sessions.

At 5.513 km, the anti-clockwise COTA features 20 corners and is characterised by the spectacular climb towards the first corner, known as ‘Big Red’, followed by high-speed sequence of sweeping corners, numerous bumps and a twisty final sector. All these factors meant drivers had to strike a delicate balance between performance, stability and tyre wear.



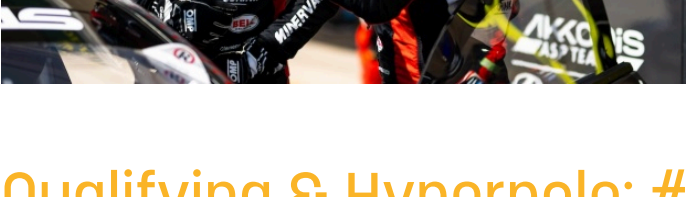
Hard work in free practice

On Friday morning, the first free practice session took place in comparatively mild conditions, at 30°C. Both Akkodis ASP Team crews were finding their feet, keeping a close eye on tyre degradation. José María López set the fastest lap for the #87 Lexus in 2’07’’410, ninth fastest in the LMGT3 class. Esteban Masson, in the #78, finished the session in 12th.

Conditions became more challenging during FP2, as the temperature continued to rise. Hadrien David (#78) recorded the seventh fastest time of 2’06’’582, whilst Clemens Schmid (#87) was ninth.

On Saturday morning, the third and final free practice was the last opportunity to fine-tune the cars ahead of qualifying. Esteban Masson quickly proved himself very competitive against strong opposition, finishing 10th, whilst Petru Umbrărescu put the #87 car in 15th.

At the end of the three practice sessions, the two Lexus cars had completed no fewer than 175 laps, providing valuable data ahead of a race in which tyre management would inevitably play a key role.



Qualifying & Hyperpole: #87 on the fifth row

Qualifying was reserved for Bronze drivers and the heat reached new heights. The thermometer read over 37°C, whilst the track temperature approached 54°C.

At the wheel of the #87, Petru Umbrărescu put in a solid performance (2’07’’095), securing ninth place and a spot in Hyperpole.

In the #78, Tom Van Rompuy was 15th in 2’07’’622. In a highly competitive field, the Belgian driver missed out on Hyperpole by just 0.474 secs.

A few minutes later, Clemens Schmid took over from Petru Umbrărescu to contest Hyperpole. In sweltering heat, the Austrian set his fastest lap of 2’06’’265. His Lexus RC F LMGT3 performed exceptionally well through the first two sectors, particularly on the high-speed corners, and he secured ninth, placing the #87 car on the fifth row of the starting grid.

For the upcoming six-hour race, strategy and tyre management in demanding conditions would be crucial.



A thrilling race from the first lap to the last

Just 15 minutes before the start, the Texas track featured contrasting conditions, with some sections wet and others dry, prompting race control to add two formation laps.

From ninth, Petru Umbrărescu made a cautious start at the wheel of the #87. Within the first few corners, the Romanian driver was forced to swerve off the racing line to avoid the troubled #58 car, dropping back to 12th. In contrast, Tom Van Rompuy, who started 15th in the #78, moved into the top 10 on the first lap.

The LMGT3 field then engaged in a fiercely competitive battle. Despite making contact with the #69 BMW, the #78 pressed on. Two Full Course Yellow periods briefly interrupted the action without dampening its intensity. The two Lexus continued to make progress, sitting in eighth (#87) and tenth (#78).

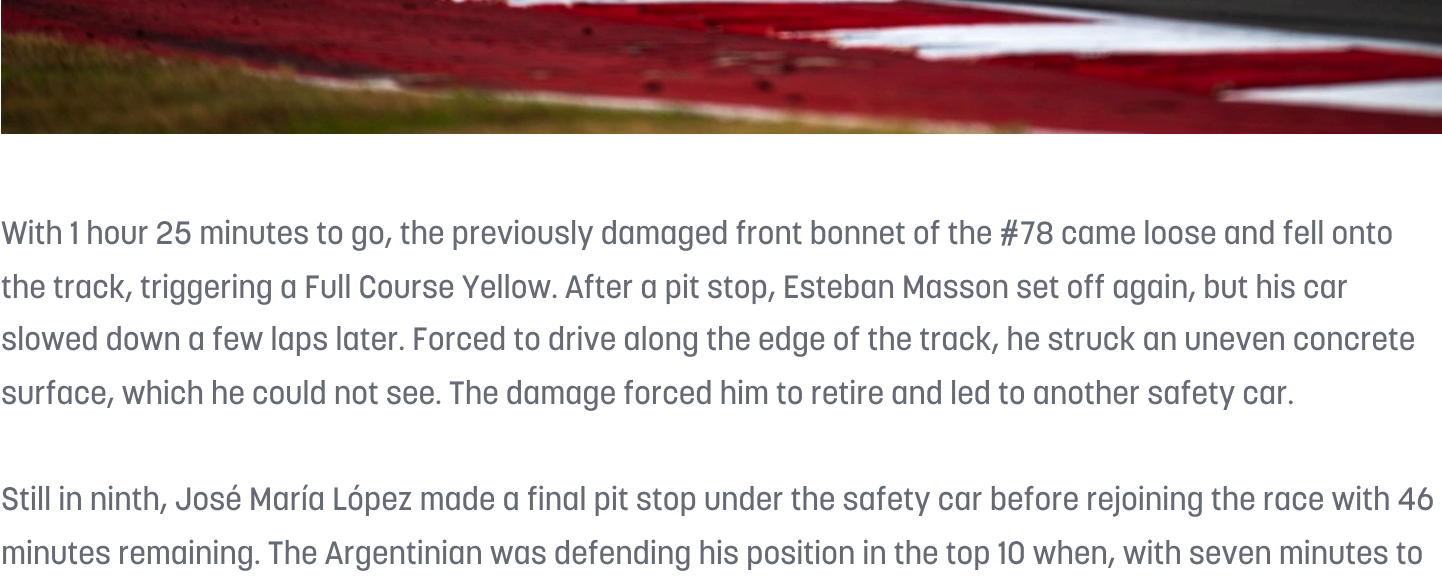
At the end of the first hour, both Akkodis ASP Team cars were in the top eight, with the #87 in seventh place just ahead of the #78.

The first pit stops took place on laps 26 and 28. Tom Van Rompuy continued his double stint in the #78, while Clemens Schmid took over from Petru Umbrărescu in the #87. The Austrian immediately went on the attack, but his progress was hampered by a drive-through penalty for five track limit infringements during his first stint.

Hadrien David then took the wheel of the #78, which had been delayed by a front bonnet change after a contact with a Hypercar (bonnet fasteners broken). Thanks to staggered pit stop strategies, Schmid temporarily climbed back up to third before his pit stop. After two hours, the #87 was in fifth, while the various pit stops had pushed the #78 back to 16th.

The two Lexus gradually gained positions until, at the halfway point, a safety car replaced a virtual safety car. When the race resumed, the #87 was handed a second drive-through penalty for track limit infringements, although it still managed to hold on to ninth place.

Esteban Masson then took the wheel of the #78, while José María López took over in the #87.



With 1 hour 25 minutes to go, the previously damaged front bonnet of the #78 came loose and fell onto the track, triggering a Full Course Yellow. After a pit stop, Esteban Masson set off again, but his car slowed down a few laps later. Forced to drive along the edge of the track, he struck an uneven concrete surface, which he could not see. The damage forced him to retire and led to another safety car.

Still in ninth, José María López made a final pit stop under the safety car before rejoining the race with 46 minutes remaining. The Argentinian was defending his position in the top 10 when, with seven minutes to go, a minor collision sent his #87 car into a spin. Restarting in 13th, he had no chance of getting back into the points and therefore the Lexus Akkodis ASP Team took the chequered flag in 13th.

The FIA World Endurance Championship now heads to Japan, where Fuji Speedway will host the next round on 25-27 September. See you in three weeks’ time in the Land of the Rising Sun.