

FIA WEC 2026 - 6 Hours of Fuji (Japan) - Fighting until the chequered flag!

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#News

The 6 Hours of Fuji, the sixth round of the FIA World Endurance Championship season, was an eventful race from start to finish, featuring on-track battles, safety cars and rain in the final hour. The Akkodis ASP Team fought hard from the first lap to the very last. Starting from third and seventh, the two Lexus RC F LMGT3s set a promising pace, though their final results did not fully reflect their potential. The #78 Lexus RC F LMGT3, driven by Tom Van Rompuy, Hadrien David and Esteban Masson, regularly featured in the leading pack, but a late penalty dropped it back to 10th place. Caught up in a collision at the start, the #87 car driven by Petru Umbrurescu, Clemens Schmid and José María López kept fighting until the chequered flag to finish 11th. Despite a relatively unsatisfactory result, both crews delivered some fine attacking drives on the home ground of Lexus. The final two races of the 2026 WEC season take the contenders back to Europe for races at legendary circuits: Barcelona (16-18 October) and Monza (6-8 November).



On form in free practice

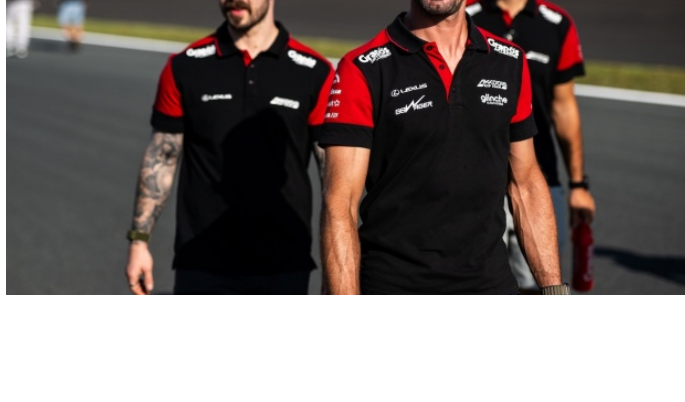
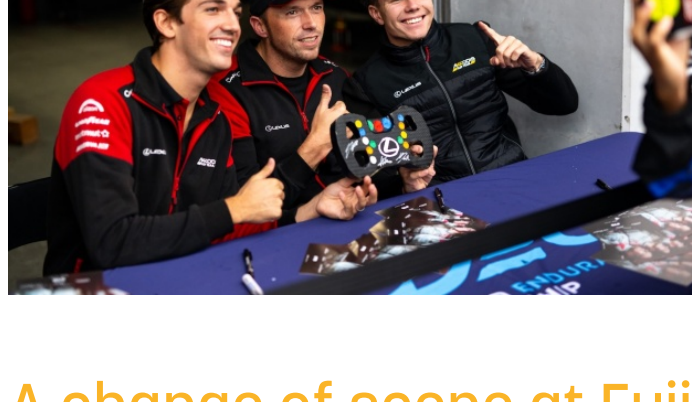
For the Japanese round of the FIA World Endurance Championship, the two Akkodis ASP Team Lexus RC F LMGT3s returned to home turf. The weekend got underway on Friday on a completely dry track, in stable conditions which allowed the six drivers to find their feet on the 4.563-kilometre Fuji Speedway, while the team fine-tuned initial set-ups.

At the end of the first session, Esteban Masson put the #78 car in sixth place with a lap of 1'40''605. In the sister car, José María López clocked an almost identical time of 1'40''621 to take eighth. Both Lexus finished the session within half a second of the fastest time, providing the team with a solid basis for the weekend.

The pace picked up in second practice. Despite two Full Course Yellow periods caused by debris, lap times improved quickly on a slightly cooler track.

Hadrien David broke the 1'40 barrier and put the #78 into third in its class, just 0.105s behind the pace-setting #77 Ford Mustang. Clemens Schmid also showed potential in the #87. The Austrian driver finished fifth, half a second off the top, putting both RC F LMGT3s in the top five at the end of a particularly close session.

After two sessions, both crews had already clocked up 169 laps and acquired valuable data on a dry track.



A change of scene at Fuji

On Saturday morning, the picture changed dramatically. Rain soaked the track and the temperature dropped to 17.2 °C (just 20.2 °C on the track). The reference points painstakingly established on Friday disappeared beneath the rain, with grip becoming difficult and visibility significantly reduced.

For the third and final free practice, the quest for lap times was put aside in favour of work on set-up, evaluating the wet tyres and searching for grip on the slippery track. Clemens Schmid's fastest time in the #87 earned 11th place, while Esteban Masson put the #78 in 13th.



Rain has the last word

Conditions deteriorated further before qualifying. The cars left the pits on wet tyres, but standing water, the risk of aquaplaning and very limited visibility made driving extremely difficult.

Just seconds after the session began, an accident for the #21 Ferrari brought out the red flags. Given the amount of water on the track and the lack of visibility, race control decided to cancel qualifying and Hyperpole.

The starting grid was therefore determined by the fastest lap set by each car during the three free practice sessions. Hadrien David's performance on Friday afternoon saw the #78 Lexus secure third in the LMGT3 class (20th overall), putting it on the second row of the grid.

Thanks to Clemens Schmid's time of 1'40''329, the #87 car took seventh (24th overall), on the fourth row of the grid.

Although rain denied it the chance to fight for a better position in a proper qualifying session, Akkodis ASP Team was nevertheless rewarded for the work carried out in dry conditions with promising starting positions for its two Lexus cars.



A race of twists and turns

As the lights turned green, the track was dry on the racing line but still damp in places. Tom Van Rompuy (#78) and Petru Umbrurescu (#87) started from third and seventh on the LMGT3 grid. The run to the first corner immediately set the tone. The #78 found its way safely through but the #87 was caught up in a collision in the midfield and spun. A safety car period froze the positions, with Van Rompuy in third and Umbrurescu in 15th. Later in the race, the #87 was hampered by a sensor issue, resulting in a reduction in engine power.

When the race resumed, both Lexus cars went on the offensive. Van Rompuy battled wheel-to-wheel with the #77 Ford for second, whilst Umbrurescu quickly fought his way back into the top 10 despite the power deficit. The pace was encouraging, but the safety car periods and the first refuelling stops shook up the order. Van Rompuy served a five-second penalty at his first pit stop and went on to complete a double stint.

In the #87, Clemens Schmid took over and began a determined charge through the field, battling with the BMWs, Ferraris and Fords. As the pit stops unfolded, the Austrian worked his way up to fifth. The team managed to quickly fix the sensor problem during a pit stop, but the #87 lost a lap at this early stage, which it was ultimately unable to make up.

In the #78, Esteban Masson took over from Tom Van Rompuy shortly before the two-hour mark. He gradually brought the Lexus back into the leading group, following an offset pit strategy. The first drops of rain began to fall, and grip became uncertain in places.

At the halfway point, Hadrien David took the wheel and set a consistent pace. He moved up the order, put the #77 Ford under pressure and took third with two hours to go. In the sister car, a 10-second penalty for contact hampered Clemens Schmid's progress, before he handed the wheel to José María López.

Interruptions continued to punctuate the race. As the final hour approached, the #78 was in seventh, while the #87, with Petru Umbrurescu in for another stint, continued its midfield battle. An accident involving a McLaren triggered another safety car and the rain, which had been intermittent until then, intensified. Esteban Masson took the wheel of the #78 for the final sprint, with José María López returning to the #87.

When the race resumed, there were only 20 minutes left. With visibility deteriorating rapidly, Masson set off in pursuit. In ninth at the restart, he put in a series of overtakes and closed in on the podium – a reward within reach for a solid race spent towards the front. But with two laps to go, a drive-through penalty shattered this momentum. In a field that had been bunched up by the latest safety car intervention, this pit visit cost the #78 six places, and Masson eventually crossed the line in 9th. In the #87, José María López finished 11th after a race that was compromised from the very first lap but fought with determination right to the chequered flag.

Whilst the final standings did not reflect the efforts made at Fuji Speedway, the #78 nevertheless demonstrated its ability to compete at the front, while the #87 crew and technical team showed tenacity to respond to the consequences of the early collision.

Now, the focus shifts to Europe for the final two rounds of the season: Barcelona (16-18 October) followed by Monza (6-8 November), which will bring the curtain down on the 2026 FIA World Endurance Championship.