

MAZDA TEAM JOEST QUALIFIES NINTH FOR ROLEX 24 AT DAYTONA

JONATHAN BOMARITO SHOWCASES TEAM'S PROGRESS QUALIFYING ONLY 0.550-SECONDS BEHIND POLE POSITION

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. (January 26, 2018) – Demonstrating the progress that Mazda Team Joest has undertaken since the team's announcement in July, Jonathan Bomarito qualified the No. 55 Mazda RT24-P DPi in ninth position in the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship Prototype class for the Rolex 24 at Daytona.

Bomarito's fast lap of 1:36.633 was 0.550-second behind the pole-sitting car, but over three seconds faster than Mazda's qualifying performance at the Rolex 24 just one short year ago.

"Qualifying isn't going to make or break us in a 24-hour race, so we treated it more like a practice session – and it was a good session", said former Rolex 24 winner Bomarito, who along with teammates Harry Ticknell and Spencer Pigot will pilot the the No. 55 Mazda RT24-P DPi in the Rolex 24. "We made some progress on the car balance, which is important for a 24-hour race. But, we are in the top-10 against a very stout field with a lot of really good cars, teams and drivers. I feel like we are in a good position for the race and the team is doing a great job. We are definitely in the fight, so now it's just down to strategy, making good calls and staying out of trouble so we can be there at the end of the race."

Qualifying highlighted a strong first day of action at the Rolex 24 at Daytona for Mazda Team Joest. The day started with the No. 77 Mazda RT24-P DPi setting the fastest lap during the first practice session with Rene Rast at the wheel. Unfortunately, the No. 77 Mazda RT24-P DPi was unable to take part in the qualifying session after the team elected to make precautionary replacement of critical components based on data anomalies following the day's second practice, in which the car was eighth-quickest.

In the day's final practice session, held at night, Harry Tincknell drove the no. 55 Mazda RT24-P DPi to the fourth-fastest time of the session.

"If you had told me a year ago that we would be 3.3 seconds faster than we qualified in 2017, and that the top-13 cars in the field would be in the same second, I certainly wouldn't have believed you," said John Doonan, Director, Mazda Motorsports. "But what happened here today is a testament to the work of so many people. Multimatic has transformed this car in so many areas – overall weight, cooling, and suspension geometry, and the overall package is much better. Obviously, the entire series has stepped up several notches in terms of competitiveness which is good for the sport. But for us, practice has been about finding a raceable car that can be driven at that speed, and give the drivers a high level of comfort, for 24 hours. Taking extra precaution with the 77 was the right thing to do, but we definitely have a raceable car. Our goal is to be around Sunday afternoon for the finish."

The final practice session starts on Friday at 9:40 AM EST and the green flag drops at 2:40 p.m. EST Saturday with live television coverage starting on the FOX broadcast network at 2 p.m.

Mazda Motorsports

Mazda Motorsports boasts the most comprehensive auto racing development ladder system of any auto manufacturer in the world. The Mazda Road to 24 (#MRT24) program offers a number of scholarships to advance drivers up the sports car racing ladder, beginning with the Global MX-5 Cup series and culminating with the Mazda Prototype team. The Mazda Road to Indy (#MRTI) is a similar program that includes Mazda-powered categories of USF2000, Pro Mazda and Indy Lights. In grassroots road racing, more Mazdas are road raced on any given weekend in North America than any other manufacturer. Follow all of the latest news at MazdaMotorsports.com, @MazdaRacing on Twitter, and MazdaMotorsports on Instagram and Facebook.

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