

Lola-Judd B10/60 LMP1 Coupé



(Regis Lefebure)

(When ordering a car, teams may choose from a variety of engines, including a Judd V10, Aston Martin V12, Audi V8 and more besides)

This car is fired by one man's dream to race. It's a car that will take on the punishing Le Mans 24-hour race in June, and will challenge Aston Martin, Audi and Peugeot for a place on the podium. It will be driven by Lord Drayson, Britain's multi-millionaire minister for science and innovation, though "minister of speed" has a better ring to it.

Drayson's Lola B10/60 LMP1 Coupé has already competed in the American Le Mans endurance series. Behind its clunky name is a research laboratory with which the minister and his engineers hope to prove that biofuels can play a part in world-class racing. You and I are unlikely to buy one of these £675,000 coupés (they are built by Lola for race teams and the price excludes the engine), but we can at least support the Drayson team at the climax of the endurance racing season — the Le Mans 24-hour race on June 12-13.

The team completed its first race in the American Le Mans Series at the Sebring 12-hour event in Florida in March, finishing fourth. With five-time Le Mans winner Emanuele Pirro at the wheel, the team ran in second position early on, having muscled between Peugeot's two 908 HDi racers, which won at Le Mans last year. Only technical trouble saw it fall back from a podium finish.

The Lola's one-piece carbon composite monocoque has a survival safety cell encasing the driver. Its streamlined bodywork was developed in a rolling-floor wind tunnel (for a better simulation of driving conditions) and the V10 engine behind the driver transmits its 700-odd bhp to the rear wheels via a six-speed sequential racing transmission.

Drayson, who made his fortune in pharmaceuticals, only started racing in 2004, and formed Drayson Racing in 2009 — all despite lacking sight

in one eye. "The brain has an amazing capacity to adapt; the good eye develops a sort of super-capacity," he says.

His team's position as underdog has struck a chord with race fans. At Sebring, supporters were out in strength, some wearing only green body paint in Drayson Racing's two-tone green, which reflects the car's environmental credentials. In the American series, the V10 engine runs on E85 bioethanol made from waste wood, though for the European Le Mans series it will run on E10 — petrol with a 10% ethanol mix.

With its consumption of 5.6mpg, the Lola is no saint, but as spectator sports go, witnessing the green mean machine piling the pressure on the factory teams is riveting stuff. Even if you can't make it to Le Mans, catch it in action on the team's YouTube channel, DraysonRacing007.

Drayson Racing Lola B10/60 LMP1 Coupé

Engine 5.5-litre V10 by Judd Power
Power More than 700bhp @ 8000rpm
Torque More than 550 lb ft @ 6500rpm
Transmission Six-speed sequential with paddle shift
Acceleration 0-60mph: less than 3sec
Top speed 215mph approx
Fuel E85 bioethanol, or E10 at Le Mans
Price £675,000 (without engine)
Verdict Power to the politician
On sale Available on special order now