



SUZUKA 8 HOURS

ELF MARC VDS RACING TEAM/KM99 TO START THE SUZUKA 8 HOURS FROM THIRD PLACE AFTER A HISTORIC QUALIFICATION.

Suzuka, Japan – July 4, 2026

The Belgian squad Elf Marc VDS Racing Team/KM99 will start the 47th Suzuka 8 Hours – the third round of the 2026 FIM Endurance World Championship – from third position on the grid, after Friday's qualifying classification, marked by an excellent performance, was confirmed as the final starting grid following the cancellation of Saturday's Top 10 Trial.

A Benchmark Performance from Friday Onward !

Friday's combined qualifying session set the tone for the Belgian team's weekend. Alessandro Delbianco set the fastest lap of the day on the #99 Yamaha R1, in 2'04.712, the quickest time of any Yamaha entered, and the third-fastest time of the entire session.





Florian Marino backed it up with a solid 2'05.208, and the average of the two times gave the team a combined 2'04.960, enough to rank third overall, behind Honda HRC and BMW Motorrad World Endurance Team.

This result secured the team's place among the ten best teams admitted to Saturday's Top 10 Trial, the traditional Suzuka-specific superpole-style session that normally decides the final positions at the front of the grid.

Weather Forces Cancellation of the Top 10 Trial

Saturday's session was disrupted by changeable weather conditions at Suzuka Circuit, swinging between dry and wet track through the afternoon. Since the teams entered in the Top 10 Trial go out one after another rather than at the same time, organisers judged that these changing conditions would not have given every team the same chances. The session was therefore cancelled in the interest of fairness.

Friday's qualifying classification was therefore retained and confirmed as the official starting grid. Elf Marc VDS Racing Team/KM99 will accordingly start Sunday's race from third position, an outstanding result for the Belgian outfit, on the eve of eight hours of racing at one of the most demanding events on the endurance calendar.





Team Reaction

"I'm incredibly happy with this result. Starting third here at Suzuka is simply outstanding. It's something we had never achieved before in the Endurance World Championship, and doing it here, against the factory teams and world-class riders present this weekend, makes it even more special," said Mario Kupper, Team Manager of Elf Marc VDS Racing Team/KM99.

"We built this performance step by step throughout the week. Every day we made progress without rushing. The whole team worked with method, managed to develop the bike in the right direction, and this third place is the reward for the efforts everyone put in."

"Of course, it's a bit of a shame that the Top 10 Trial couldn't take place, but all our focus is now on the race. We know the weather conditions will be particularly difficult, so we'll need to stay focused. What's encouraging is that we showed excellent pace in every condition this week, which gives us confidence heading into tomorrow."

See You Sunday

The 47th Suzuka 8 Hours will get underway on Sunday, July 5 at 11:30 local time. Randy de Puniet, Florian Marino and Alessandro Delbianco will share the #99 Yamaha R1 for the eight-hour race, with the goal of converting this excellent grid position into a strong result in the FIM Endurance World Championship standings.





ELF MARC VDS RACING TEAM/KM99 ALWAYS FURTHER

ALWAYS STRONGER !

