



PORSCHE

Press Release

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Preview, FIA World Endurance Championship, Race 1, Spa-Francorchamps (Belgium)

Porsche takes up the hunt for the 2021 title at Belgium's endurance classic

Stuttgart. The Porsche works team tackles the opening round of the FIA World Endurance Championship at Spa-Francorchamps on 1 May with two 911 RSR. For the six-hour race in the Ardennes region of Belgium, the factory drivers Gianmaria Bruni from Italy and Richard Lietz from Austria share the cockpit of the ca. 515-PS GT racing vehicle with the starting number 91. The crew in the identical No. 92 sister car has changed from previous years: this season, Frenchman Kévin Estre, the 2018/2019 WEC champion, shares the vehicle with Neel Jani. In preparation for his WEC mission with the Porsche 911 RSR, the experienced Swiss racer contested the final round of the 2020 IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship in Sebring and took part in extensive tests.

“We’re thrilled that the management of the World Endurance Championship has succeeded in putting together a racing calendar with six events – despite the ongoing restrictions caused by the global pandemic. Our factory squad is ready to take up the hunt for FIA WEC crown. I’m very much looking forward to the upcoming duels, especially between Porsche and Ferrari,” says Fritz Enzinger, Vice President Porsche Motorsport.

The race

The Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps is located in the far east of Belgium close to the German border. Opened in 1921, the 7.004-kilometre racetrack is the longest dedicated racetrack on the FIA WEC calendar. With 21 corners and several long straights, the track undulates through the Walloon countryside – not surprisingly, the circuit is

also known as the “Ardennes rollercoaster”. Fast passages like Raidillon/Eau Rouge and Blanchimont are as notorious as the La Source hairpin at the end of the start-finish straight.

“Our team has prepared meticulously for the 2021 season. With a top result at the opening round in Spa-Francorchamps, we’d like to send a clear signal from the very start that there can only be one goal for us: to win the world championship,” clarifies Pascal Zurlinden, Director Factory Motorsport. “Our class win in 2020 at the first round in Belgium clearly underlined that the latest version of the Porsche 911 RSR suits the special characteristics of the ‘Ardennes rollercoaster’ very well,” explains Alexander Stehlig, Head of Operations FIA WEC. “During test drives at Hockenheim, among other venues, we gave our teams and cars the final touches. At the two-day prologue in Spa, we’ll do our utmost to find the best setup for the special characteristics of this track. We’re ready to race!”

Before the start of the race weekend at Spa-Francorchamps, a so-called prologue will be held at the venue. Porsche and its customer teams take part in the two-day test session on 26 and 27 April with a total of seven 2019-generation 911 RSR.

The Porsche GT Team drivers

In the No. 91 Porsche 911 RSR, the works team relies on Gianmaria Bruni and Richard Lietz for the third year in a row. In 2019, the experienced pair won the season-opening round at Silverstone in Great Britain. Kévin Estre, who shares driving duties in the No. 92 car with Neel Jani, travels to Spa-Francorchamps as last year’s winner. Last season, the Frenchman also won the finale in Bahrain and concluded the year ranking third. Jani returns to the WEC after competing for the Porsche TAG Heuer Formula E Team.

The customer teams

Dempsey-Proton Racing fields two Porsche 911 RSR at the start of the WEC season. Works driver Matt Campbell from Australia joins forces with the team owner Christian Ried (Germany) and the former Porsche Junior Jaxon Evans from New Zealand. Andrew Haryanto from Indonesia, German Marco Seefried and Alessio Picariello from Belgium have been announced as the drivers in the No. 88 sister car. The German customer team Project 1 also campaigns two 911 RSR in all six events this season. The squad from the German town of Lohne in Lower Saxony tackles round one with the Norwegians Dennis Olsen and Egidio Perfetti as well as the Italians Matteo Cairoli and Riccardo Pera. The all-British driver crew, Michael Wainwright, Ben Barker and Tom Gamble, compete for GR Racing in the No. 86 car.

The schedule (all times CEST)**Thursday, 29 April**

3:30 to 5:00 pm – Free practice 1

Friday, 30 April

9:30 to 11:00 am – Free practice 2

2:00 to 3:00 pm – Free practice 3

6:20 to 6:35 pm – Qualifying GTE-Pro and GTE-Am

Saturday, 1 May

1:30 to 7:30 pm – Race

2021 WEC calendar

26/27 April – Prologue in Spa-Francorchamps (Belgium)

1 May – 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps (Belgium)

13 June – 8 Hours of Portimão (Portugal)

18 July – 6 Hours of Monza (Italy)

21/22 August – 24 Hours of Le Mans (France)

26 September – 6 Hours of Fuji (Japan)

20 November – 8 Hours of Bahrain (Bahrain)

Drivers' comments before the race

Richard Lietz (Porsche 911 RSR #91): “We’re all excited for the season opener on this wonderful racetrack. We’ve celebrated many successes there in the past. We’re expecting a tough fight in Spa. This year we’re working with a new engineer and a few new mechanics on our number 91 car. First we have to get used to each other. We made a lot of progress during our Hockenheim tests. Now we want to build on that in Spa-Francorchamps and win the class if possible.”

Gianmaria Bruni (Porsche 911 RSR #91): “It’s hard to imagine a more beautiful setting to start the season than Spa-Francorchamps. The racetrack is fantastic and is always good for action-packed racing. If you want to be fast in the spectacular and demanding passages, you must have a perfectly balanced car. This is exactly what we’ll focus on at the two-day prologue. I’m really looking forward to finally getting started again.”

Kévin Estre (Porsche 911 RSR #92): “Spa is always a huge challenge. The track demands a lot from the tyres, so it’s important to have a particularly good strategy. Plus, we know how the weather can be in the Ardennes: an unpredictable mix of cold and warm temperatures, rain, dry and sometimes even snow. It’s critical to be well prepared for all thinkable conditions. Last year we saw that our Porsche 911 RSR is particularly strong in Spa. We’re travelling there as last year’s winners and we want to celebrate another success.”

Neel Jani (Porsche 911 RSR #92): “Sebring cancelled, Portimão postponed – now the WEC season finally takes off. I’m super excited and very curious about the first laps in the Porsche 911 RSR at Spa-Francorchamps. I have many fond memories of this track from my LMP1 days. That’s what makes it so interesting. I’ve driven a lot of prototypes there and turned a record lap in the Ardennes with the Porsche 919 Hybrid Evo. I now have to find completely new reference points in the GTE-Pro car. So it’s very fortunate to have those two test days in Spa beforehand.”

*Further information, film and photo material in the Porsche Newsroom: newsroom.porsche.com
The Twitter channel @PorscheRaces provides live updates from Porsche Motorsport with the latest information and photos from racetracks around the world.*

