



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

Porsche 911 RSR takes pole position with a new qualifying record

Stuttgart. Porsche takes up the first round of the FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC) at Spa-Francorchamps from pole position. Works driver Kévin Estre turned the 7.004-kilometre lap in the Belgian Ardennes at the wheel of his No. 92 Porsche 911 RSR in a time of 2:11.219 minutes and promptly set a new qualifying record for GTE-Pro vehicles. On his flying lap, the Frenchman was more than a second faster than his closest pursuer. His brand colleague from Austria Richard Lietz planted the No. 91 sister car on the third grid spot.

The new qualifying format for the World Endurance Championship guaranteed high suspense and plenty of action. In contrast to previous years when the average time of the fastest laps of two drivers per car was used to determine the grid position, the fight for top positions now follows the motto: “One driver, one car, ten minutes flat-out.” The result: The drivers, especially amateurs in the GTE-Am class, come under huge pressure in the extremely short session. The qualifying was interrupted twice due to accidents.

Despite this, Kévin Estre did not let the red flags ruffle him. Last year’s Spa-Francorchamps winner used the first lap to meticulously warm his tyres then promptly set a record time on his first flying lap. But then, to everyone’s surprise, on his second lap, the Frenchman once again undercut his time. The Porsche GT Team was incredulous: “That was a crazy lap,” the team radioed into the cockpit of the No. 92 car – Estre’s answer was a loud cheer. Teammate Richard Lietz got caught behind rival vehicles during his hot laps and was unable to make full use of the Porsche 911 RSR’s

enormous potential. Ultimately, the Austrian was just 0.019 seconds short of a front row spot.

“This pole is a perfect start to the season. To be more precise, it was a mega-pole!” stated Alexander Stehlig, Head of Operations FIA WEC. “That was typically Estre: the way he planted the car on the front grid spot in a record-setting time. We’re very pleased, but there’s a lot of pressure as we look ahead to race day. We want to make the most out of the good conditions and at least finish the six-hour race in the same positions.”

In the GTE-Am class, Andrew Haryanto was the fastest driver in a Porsche 911 RSR. At the wheel of the No. 88 car fielded by the Dempsey-Proton Racing customer team, the Indonesian qualified in third place. Britain’s Michael Wainwright put the identical number 86 vehicle of GR Racing on P8. Early on in the qualifying session, Project 1 driver Egidio Perfetti from Norway and the German Christian Ried (Dempsey-Proton Racing) had an accident in the Raidillon area – better known as Eau Rouge – and were unable to clock a lap time. Both drivers were uninjured in the incidents.

Round one of the World Endurance Championship WEC takes off on Saturday, 1 May 2021, at 1:30pm (CEST) and runs over six hours.

Drivers’ quotes on the qualifying

Kévin Estre (Porsche 911 RSR #92): “Everything perfect, simply unbelievable! I had huge grip, but I made tiny errors on the first lap. Still, even that lap time would’ve been enough for pole position, but we made another attempt. On lap two, everything came together perfectly. With an incredible setup, little fuel onboard and a lot of grip with fresh tyres, the Porsche 911 RSR drove like a dream. I’m very proud of this lap.”

Richard Lietz (Porsche 911 RSR #91): “First of all, it’s important that no one was injured in the accidents. The interruptions made the qualifying session a bit chaotic, obviously. We had to mount a second set of fresh tyres so we have one set less than

we'd anticipated for the race. It didn't go as smoothly as we'd hoped, but it's not too bad. The race runs over six hours, so anything is possible."

Andrew Haryanto (Porsche 911 RSR #88): "The qualifying was a little crazy, but I knew the team had provided me with a great car. For me as a newcomer, the setup was perfect. I only got one flying lap and I simply tried to keep the car within the track boundaries. That was the best I could do and I think I did pretty well."

Result GTE-Pro class

1. Estre/Jani (F/CH), Porsche 911 RSR #92, 2:11.219 minutes
2. Serra/Molina (BR/E), Ferrari 488 GTE #71, 2:12.315 minutes
3. Bruni/Lietz (I/A), Porsche 911 RSR #91, 2:12.370 minutes
4. Pier Guidi/Calado (I/GB), Ferrari 488 GTE #51, 2:12.443 minutes
5. Garcia/Gavin (E/GB), Corvette C8.R #63, 2:13.106 minutes

Result GTE-Am class

1. Keating/Pereira/Fraga (USA/L/BR), Aston Martin #33, 2:14.660 minutes
2. Dalla Lana/Farfus/Gomez (CDN/BR/BR), Aston Martin #97, 2:15.615 minutes
3. Haryanto/Seefried/Picariello (RI/D/B), Porsche 911 RSR #88, 2:16.319 minutes
8. Wainwright/Barker/Gamble (GB/GB/GB), Porsche 911 RSR #86, 2:18.813 minutes
10. Perfetti/Cairolì/Pera (N/I/I), Porsche 911 RSR #56, no lap time
11. Ried/Evans/Campbell (D/NZ/AUS), Porsche 911 RSR #77, no lap time

Full results and championship rankings on fiawec.alkamelsystems.com.

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