



PORSCHE

Press Release

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FIA World Endurance Championship WEC, LMP1, Round 7, Fuji (Japan), Race

Porsche 919 Hybrid extends manufacturers' championship lead in Japan

Stuttgart. Porsche came third and fifth with its two 919 Hybrids in a thrilling six-hour race at the Fuji International Speedway. Porsche thus defended its lead in both, the manufacturers' and drivers' classifications, at the seventh out of nine rounds of the FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC). Toyota achieved a victory on home soil. After 244 laps all three manufacturers engaged in the top category LMP1 were within 18 seconds.

For quite a while Timo Bernhard (DE), Brendon Hartley (NZ) and Mark Webber (AU) had chances to win the race; in the end they finished third. The reigning world champions had started from second place on the grid. This year's Le Mans winners and current championship leaders, Romain Dumas (FR), Neel Jani (CH) and Marc Lieb (DE), had started from sixth position. They were unhappy with the car's balance for some of the time and came fifth. Because their closest rivals in the drivers' championship took more points than them, their advantage has shrunk to 23 points.

In the manufacturers' standings, Porsche (263 points) has increased its lead over Audi (204). Toyota follows with 174 points and there are two more six-hour races to come.

The race at the foot of Mount Fuji was held in constantly dry conditions at ambient temperatures of around 20 degrees Celsius.

How the race went for car number 1:

For a long time start-driver Mark Webber holds P2 behind the number 8 Audi. In lap 21 he lets his former Formula One colleague Kamui Kobayashi pass in his faster number 6 Toyota. The order at the top is: number 8 Audi ahead of the number 6 Toyota and the number 1 Porsche. This doesn't change for most of the race, including five stops for refuelling and driver and tyre changes. After 36 laps Webber hands over to Timo Bernhard, after 73 laps Brendon Hartley jumps in. After 110 laps once again Webber gets behind the wheel, followed by Bernhard at the end of lap 147. As clouds gather in the sky the track temperature drops and the number 1 Porsche gets closer to the second placed Toyota. On lap 156 Bernhard manages to overtake Stéphane Sarrazin in his Toyota who counter-attacks immediately. One lap later Bernhard snatches P2 and afterwards closes the gap to the leading Audi. After 183 laps Hartley takes over the number 1 car. After his stop he rejoins the race in P3 behind the number 6 car. A great duel evolves between the Kiwi and Kobayashi who change positions several times. Driving in second position, the Japanese driver refuels for the last time without changing tyres, while Hartley does change tyres after 220 laps and hands over to Webber. The Australian struggles from balance problems towards the end and can no longer fight for the race win. He brings the car home in third position.

How the race went for car number 2:

Romain Dumas improves temporarily from sixth to fifth at the start but is back to P6 after lap one. When the number 7 Audi gets in trouble on lap 15, the Frenchman is promoted to fifth. He reports a loose rear end of the car. After 36 laps Neel Jani takes over for a double stint. Initially he can close the gap but after the next tyre change after 73 laps he faces balance problems: tyre pick up that sticks inside the front bodywork disturbs the aerodynamics. Therefore, the front bodywork gets changed at the next stop after 110 laps. Marc Lieb continues driving, at the end of lap 147 it is Dumas again. After 183 laps Jani takes over for the final stints. The Swiss driver stops for fuel after 220 laps. Improving a position isn't within reach anymore, he brings home the car in fifth.

Quotes after the race:

Fritz Enzinger, Vice President LMP1: “Since Le Mans we have won all the WEC races. Today it is a podium finish, but after an exciting race. In the end only seconds decided the first three places. Congratulations to Toyota for their win on home soil. Respect to Audi for a strong performance as well. We were able to improve our position in the manufacturers’ standings. Now we head to the final stages of the season, we are looking forward to the last two races of the season.”

Andreas Seidl, Team Principal: “Congratulations to Toyota on a well deserved victory. We fell a little short today for getting a better position. Thanks to a strong performance from the three drivers and the entire team, halfway through the race our number 1 car was able to catch up to the two front runners. But with our last set of tyres we ultimately didn’t have the potential to fight for the race win. Our number 2 car had a difficult race and for some time could not go the speed of the leading cars. We will do everything to analyse why this was and make sure it doesn’t happen again at the next race in Shanghai. Nevertheless we have managed to increase our manufacturers’ championship lead in Fuji, which is the track that suits the characteristics of our 919 the least. In the drivers’ championship the number 1 crew still has a comfortable lead.”

Drivers Porsche 919 Hybrid number 1

Timo Bernhard (35, Germany): “I took over from Mark after the start stint and it was all okay. Later I had a nice and very fair fight with Stéphane Sarrazin in the Toyota. I overtook him twice. The first time he managed a counterattack but the second time I really got passed him. I even closed the gap to the leading Audi but then had to leave the racing line to avoid contact with an LMP2 car and picked up lots of rubber there. That’s normal endurance racing business, but here in Fuji you often have a huge amount of marbles. Afterwards I had to clean my tyres and then the gap increased again. All three of us had a great race today. It was very tight at the top and Fuji 2016 was a great advertisement for endurance racing.”

Brendon Hartley (26, New Zealand): “I was the third driver in the car and had a pretty smooth stint. When I got back into the car I had a nice fight with the Toyota. In the end he was in front and didn’t change tyres at the last pit stop. We did change tyres and were obviously hoping to benefit from the competition’s tyre degradation, but that didn’t happen and we remained third. After three race wins in a row we of course would have preferred another one, but regardless it was a very strong race today.”

Mark Webber (40, Australia): “The start and first lap of the race was pretty clean racing for everyone. Then we settled into the groove. The Audi and Toyota were faster than us in the beginning but we stayed in the game and improved when the track temperatures came down a bit. On my second stint I got some time back on the Toyota and to the Audi who apparently had a problem at the pit stop. The race was coming to us a little bit to us. For a very long time the three cars at the front could equally have won the race. Congratulations to Audi.”

Drivers Porsche 919 Hybrid number 2

Romain Dumas (38, France): “At the start I didn’t take any risks and then during my first stint I had big problems with the rear being very difficult to control. After we had changed the front bodywork the car’s balance improved a lot. On my second stint I had significantly more grip. Of course, I’m not happy with today’s result.”

Neel Jani (32, Switzerland): “We lost too much time at the beginning of the race. I drove a double-stint – the first half was okay, but in the second half there were pieces of rubber from the tyres that got stuck in the front hood and disturbed the aerodynamics. After we changed the nose of the car, I could drive at the same pace as the leading Audi. If we want to win the World Championship, we need to make progress.”

Marc Lieb (36, Ludwigsburg): “It was really difficult for us today. The car was not easy to drive, we missed the right balance and were too slow.”

All points standings: <http://www.fiawec.com/courses/classification.html>

All results: <http://fiawec.alkamelsystems.com>

Note: Text, photo and video material for the LMP1 programme is free to access at the Porsche Press Database on <https://presse.porsche.de>. The link <https://presse.porsche.de/motorsport> takes you straight to the Motorsport Media Guide. The LMP1 Twitter channel @Porsche_Team provides the latest information, photos and video clips live from the race tracks. Further live features are available at www.porsche.com/fiawec. Further journalistic content can be found in the Newsroom at www.newsroom.porsche.com. Video News can be viewed on www.vimeo.com/porschenewsroom.