Le Mans: Porsche cars line up with special liveries

15/09/2020 On September 19th and 20th, Porsche will take on the challenge of the Le Mans endurance classic with vehicles finished with special liveries. The two 911 RSR fielded by the Porsche GT Team tackle the hotly contested GTE-Pro class featuring red-white and black-white liveries – to commemorate the first of 19 overall victories at the 24 Hours of Le Mans 50 years ago.

The preview

With crisp lines and shapes, the special colors of the foil wrapping resemble the digital RSR that successfully contested the virtual Le Mans race on June 13-14. The two factory cars will carry the lettering "1970" on the front lid and the roof. In that year, Britain's Richard Attwood and Hans Herrmann from Germany clinched the first overall victory at Le Mans for the sports car manufacturer from Stuttgart at the wheel of the legendary Porsche 917. On that occasion, the vehicle fielded by Porsche KG Salzburg flew the national colors of Austria. The No. 91 Porsche 911 RSR will race with the very same red-and-white paintwork. On the No. 92 sister car, black replaces the red. Of the 10 911 racing cars to line up on the grid, eight 911 RSR are campaigned by customer teams in the GTE-Am class.

The special liveries of the 911 RSR in Le Mans

The race on the 13.626-kilometre Circuit des 24 Heures is the highlight of the World Endurance Championship (WEC) every year. Contrary to the original plan, the classic, which was held for the first time in 1923, was deferred to September due to the coronavirus pandemic. The three-month postponement means different weather and light conditions. The latest generation 911 RSR runs for the first time at the world's greatest long-distance race. The cancelation of the important pretest throws a special challenge at the Porsche GT Team, because testing is not possible on the Circuit des 24 Heures: Most of the storied racetrack in the south of the city of 150,000 consists of public roads. Under normal conditions, hundreds of trucks and cars drive over the famous Mulsanne straight on their way from Le Mans to Tours. Treacherous ruts pose special challenges, especially in the rain.

The Porsche drivers

The regular WEC drivers Gianmaria Bruni from Italy and Austria's Richard Lietz share the wheel of the No. 91 Porsche 911 RSR. Like last year, they will receive support from Frenchman Frédéric Makowiecki. In 2018 and 2019, the experienced trio achieved second place in the GTE-Pro class. In the identical sister car sporting the starting number 92, the reigning World Endurance Champions Michael Christensen from Denmark and Kévin Estre from France are reinforced by Belgium's Laurens Vanthoor,

the defending titleholder of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship. Two years ago, the three drivers brought home a commanding class victory at Le Mans with the 911 RSR decked out in the legendary Pink Pig design. At the 24-hour race in the northwest of France, the WEC awards double points for the individual categories. In the manufacturers' classification, the Porsche GT Team ranks second after six of eight rounds. The reigning champions Estre/Christensen also sit second in the drivers' category, with their team colleagues Bruni/Lietz currently in fifth place.

The Porsche customer teams

In the GTE-Am class, three experienced customer squads field a total of eight 2017-spec Porsche 911 RSR. In the cockpit of the No. 56 entry, last year's Le Mans class-winning Project 1 team put their faith title defender Egidio Perfetti from Norway, the newly crowned champion of the Porsche Mobil 1 Supercup Larry ten Voorde from the Netherlands and Italy's Matteo Cairoli. The No. 57 sister car is shared by the American Ben Keating, Felipe Fraga from Brazil and Jeroen Bleekemolen from the Netherlands. The team from Lohne in Germany's Lower Saxony will announce the driver line-up for the No. 89 car at a later date. In the No. 86 entry, Gulf Racing relies on the all-British crew of Benjamin Barker, Michael Wainwright and Andrew Watson.

Dempsey-Proton Racing fields four Porsche 911 RSR at this year's 24 Hours of Le Mans. The team owner Christian Ried (Germany) shares driving duties in the No. 77 vehicle with the Australian Porsche works driver Matt Campbell and Riccardo Pera from Italy. Manning the No. 88 sister car is the Porsche Young Professional Thomas Preining from Austria, America's Dominique Bastien and Adrien de Leener from Belgium. Proton Competition campaign the No. 78 car with drivers Horst Felbermayr Jnr. from Austria, Porsche Supercup rookie champion Max van Splunteren from the Netherlands and Michele Beretta from Italy. In the 99 entry, Vutthikorn Inthraphuvasak from Thailand joins forces with the Belgian Lucas Légeret and Julien Piguet from France.

The schedule (all times CEST)

Thursday, 17 September

10:00 am – 01:00 pm: Free practice

02:00 pm – 05:00 pm: Free practice

05:15 pm – 06:00 pm: Qualifying

08:00 pm – midnight: Free practice

Friday, 18 September

10:00 am – 11:00 am: Free practice

11:30 am – 12:00 am: Hyperpole

Saturday, 19 September

10:30 am – 10:45 am: Warm-up

02:30 pm: Start of the 88th 24 Hours of Le Mans

Sunday, 20 September

02:30 pm: Finish of the 88th 24 Hours of Le Mans

Comments before the race

Fritz Enzinger (Vice President Motorsport): "I'm delighted that the 24 Hours of Le Mans can be held during the coronavirus pandemic – despite the very challenging conditions. I would like to thank the ACO and WEC management who worked alongside the authorities, manufacturers and teams to make this happen. In June, we gave our fans a great show with the virtual 24 Hours of Le Mans. Now the real race has arrived. I'm positive that we'll provide our loyal fans with another exciting event – and I hope that the thousands of spectators can return to the racetrack next year."

Pascal Zurlinden (Director Factory Motorsport): "Le Mans will be completely different this year because of the lack of spectators and the heavily modified schedule. Still, I'm expecting a fantastic highlight for the fans. This year's event is hugely significant for Porsche. Fifty years ago, Porsche's winning streak began with the first outright victory for the 917. We commemorate that triumph with spectacular vehicle designs. Our sporting aim is clear: After our win at the virtual 24 Hours of Le Mans in June, we now set our sights on claiming Porsche's 109th class victory with the real 911 RSR."

Alexander Stehlig (Head of Operations FIA WEC): "We're competing under completely different circumstances. The climatic conditions in September are different compared to June. There are still some unknowns in terms of weather, temperatures, performance and tyres. We'll use the existing data from our WEC and IMSA campaigns as well as the insights gained from testing so that we can hopefully be well sorted for the first free practice session. We're competing for the first time with the Porsche 911 RSR-19 here. It's not only new for us, but also for the ACO, which handles the BoP. We have complete confidence in the expertise and experience of the specialists. Remaining unchanged, however, are the two driver trios in the cockpits. This will be their third year of working together at Le Mans. That's a strength we will build on."

Further comments before the race you can find in the press release.

Porsche's outright Le Mans victories

1970 – Herrmann (D) / Attwood (GB) – Porsche 917 KH

1971 – Marko (A) / Van Lennep (NL) – Porsche 917 KH

1976 – Ickx (B) / Van Lennep (NL) – Porsche 936

1977 – Ickx (B) / Haywood (USA) / Barth (D) – Porsche 936/77

1979 – Ludwig (D) / Whittington (USA) / Whittington (USA) – Porsche 935 K3

1981 – Ickx (B) / Bell (GB) – Porsche 936

1982 – Ickx (B) / Bell (GB) – Porsche 956

1983 – Schuppan (AUS) / Haywood (USA) / Holbert (USA) – Porsche 956

1984 – Pescarolo (F) / Ludwig (D) – Porsche 956

1985 – Barilla (I) / Ludwig (D) / Krages (D) – Porsche 956

1986 – Bell (GB) / Stuck (D) / Holbert (USA) – Porsche 962C

1987 – Bell (GB) / Stuck (D) / Holbert (USA) – Porsche 962C

1994 – Dalmas (F) / Haywood (USA) / Baldi (I) – Dauer Porsche 962 LM

1996 – Wurz (A) / Reuter (D) / Jones (USA) – TWR Porsche WSC-95

1997 – Kristensen (DK) / Alboreto (I) / Johansson (S) – TWR Porsche WSC-95

1998 – Aiello (F) / McNish (GB) / Ortelli (F) – Porsche 911 GT1

2015 – Bamber (NZ) / Tandy (GB) / Hülkenberg (D) – Porsche 919 Hybrid

2016 – Jani (CH) / Lieb (D) / Dumas (F) – Porsche 919 Hybrid

2017 – Bernhard (D) / Hartley (NZ) / Bamber (NZ) – Porsche 919 Hybrid

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