

Two Porsche 911 GT3 R finish in the top 5 at Spa-Francorchamps

02/07/2023 The Porsche customer teams Manthey EMA and Rutronik Racing finished the Spa-Francorchamps endurance classic in fourth and fifth place. In the Bronze Cup category, Huber Motorsport and Pure Rxcing locked out the top two positions. At the first outing of the new-generation 911 GT3 R at the 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps, twelve of the 14 GT3 race cars that started crossed the finish line.

The race

The new 992-generation 911 GT3 R narrowly missed out on claiming a podium spot at the 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps. Works drivers Kévin Estre from France, Laurens Vanthoor from Belgium and former Porsche Junior Julien Andlauer from France fought for third place until the last lap at the wheel of the Manthey EMA car. At the flag, they were just 0.879 seconds shy. Directly behind them, Rutronik Racing's DTM driver trio Thomas Preining (Austria), Dennis Olsen (Norway) and Christian Engelhart (Germany) crossed the finish line in fifth. Twelve of the 14 ca. 416 kW (565 PS) Porsche racing cars

that tackled the race reached the finish line. With a 70-strong field, the endurance classic in the Belgian Ardennes is considered the biggest event for GT3 cars worldwide. This classic race counts towards the GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup and the Intercontinental GT Challenge (IGTC).

The three Porsche contesting the Pro class headed into the race with a handicap: Since they were crewed by three drivers instead of four as per the regulations, they had to skip the first segment of the four-heat qualifying on Thursday evening. However, in the first session, the drier track offered the best conditions. Since the average time of all drivers for each car was taken into account, only Manthey EMA's 911 GT3 R made it into the top-20 Super Pole. While the so-called "Grello" tackled the race from P14, the 911 racers fielded by Rutronik Racing and Dinamic GT Huber Racing had to start the race from 30th and 37th place respectively.

Manthey EMA was the first to chase down the leading group. At around 9:17 pm, Andlauer swept into first place for the first time. However, a 30-second penalty for exceeding the track limits cost the lead a good 45 minutes later. At about 1:22 on Sunday morning, the No. 92 Porsche was back at the front but was subsequently caught off guard by a full course yellow period. Nevertheless, the car maintained contact with the frontrunners. Despite another track limit penalty and a damaged rear diffuser, the "Grello" still had its sights set on a podium finish.

Rutronik Racing's 911 GT3 R crossed the finish line as the second-best Porsche. Preining, Olsen and Heinrich had largely stayed out of trouble over the 24-hour distance. From the early hours of the morning, the No. 96 car rejoined the leading pack and from then on remained within striking distance of the Manthey EMA car – and at times ahead of it.

For Dinamic GT Huber Racing's No. 54 entry, the race proved difficult. Nevertheless, the vehicle shared by Christian Engelhart from Germany and the two former Porsche Juniors Sven Müller (Germany) and Ayhancan Güven (Turkey) advanced to first place twice. After a caution phase on Sunday morning, their 911 GT3 R had settled into an excellent position to remain in the fight for overall victory as the leader. However, when the safety car gave the green light at 7:00 am, Engelhart was shunted into a spin by a rival at the La Source hairpin and lost a lot of ground. The trio reached the finish line in twelfth place.

Huber Motorsport's 911 GT3 R was trailing closely. The No. 20 Porsche had already attracted attention before the race with the best time in the Super Pole. Start driver Matteo Cairoli then catapulted off the line from pole into first place, which the former Porsche Junior from Italy defended until the driver change after just over an hour. With his teammates Antares Au from Hong Kong and the Germans Jannes Fittje and Tim Heinemann, Cairoli finished 13th overall. This result also handed the quartet victory in the Bronze Cup. DTM driver Heinemann set the fastest lap of the race in 2:17.087 minutes. Second place in this class was secured by the Pure Rxcing customer squad with German drivers Joel Sturm and Marco Seefried, Klaus Bachler from Austria and Aliaksandr Malykhin from the United Kingdom.

Car Collection Motorsport wrapped up the 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps in 23rd place. Nico Menzel from Germany as well as the Swiss trio Ivan Jacoma, Niki Leutwiler and Alex Fontana secured second

place in the Pro-Am division.

Comments on the race

Sebastian Golz (Project Manager Porsche 911 GT3 R):"Our first event with the new 911 GT3 R at the 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps was a resounding success. We brought twelve out of 14 cars safely over the finish line, which is not to be underestimated. We fought in the top 10 over the entire race distance and were within striking distance of a podium finish until the last lap – everything was still open, but at the end of the day, it just wasn't meant to be. Now we take home fourth and fifth place. Our customer teams achieved a terrific result with a one-two in the Bronze Cup. On top of that is a podium result in the Pro-Am category. At the same time, we managed to place five cars in the top 15. The teamwork with our customer squads worked perfectly."

Julien Andlauer (Porsche 911 GT3 R #92):"That was a very exciting race weekend. We were absolutely up with the play at all times and did our very best in difficult conditions. Unfortunately, we were handed two time penalties for exceeding the track limits – given the fierceness of the duels, it was practically impossible to always drive an absolutely clean line. But we never gave up. Kévin Estre, in particular, pulled out all stops again during his last stint with some incredible manoeuvres. Unfortunately, it didn't quite work out in the end. Still, we can be very happy with fourth place."

Laurin Heinrich (Porsche 911 GT3R #96): "From 30th on the grid we quickly ploughed our way into the top 10. After four hours we were already in seventh, then made it through the night without any mistakes and stayed on the same lap as the leader. Towards the end, it turned into more of a sprint race, with everyone going flat out. So it was close to the very end."

Tim Heinemann (Porsche 911 GT3R #20): "That was simply a great race – and kind of crazy too because I only got a call on Tuesday afternoon to ask if I could compete. It was great fun. Matteo turned heads on Friday with his pole position but we knew that a lot can happen in a 24-hour race – and it did. At one point we were no longer in the same lap as the leader but we fought our way back. To be honest, we didn't really expect to win our class, which makes this success even sweeter. I'm also delighted for Antares Au. On top of that, I set the fastest race lap. What more could you ask for?"

Klaus Bachler (Porsche 911 GT3R #911):"Just after the halfway mark, we damaged our Porsche 911 GT3 R quite badly. After that, the aerodynamics was a bit off. The most important thing at that point was to make it to the finish line. We had to fight hard for that. The fact that we were able to stay at the front of the Bronze Cup standings until the end under these conditions is a major achievement for the team."

Results 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps

1. Eng/Wittmann/Yelloly (A/D/GB) BMW M4 GT3 #98, 537 laps

2. Marciello/Boguslavskiy/Gounon (CHE/ND/AND) Mercedes-AMG GT3 #88, 537 laps
3. Engstler/Van der Linde/Thiim (D/SA/DK) Audi R8 LMS GT3 Evo II #17, 537 laps
4. Vanthoor/Estre/Andlauer (B/F/F). Porsche 911 GT3 R #92, 537 laps
5. Preining/Heinrich/Olsen (A/D/N), Porsche 911 GT3 R #96, 537 laps
12. Güven/Müller/Engelhart (TR/D/D) Porsche 911 GT3 R #54, 535 laps
13. (1st BC) Au/Heinemann/Cairoli/Fittje (HK/D/I/D), Porsche 911 GT3 R #20, 535 laps
15. (2nd BC) Bachler/Malykhin/Sturm/Seefried (A/UK/D/D), Porsche 911 GT3 R #911, 535 laps
20. (4th BC) Palette/Mateu/Makowiecki/Chevalier (F/F/F/F), Porsche 911 GT3 R #44, 534 laps
23. (2nd PAC) Leutwiler/Jacoma/Fontana/Menzel (CH/CH/CH/D), Porsche 911 GT3 R #24, 533 laps
27. (7th BC) Bohn/A. Renauer/R. Renauer/van Berlo (D/D/D/NL), Porsche 911 GT3 R #91, 532 laps
31. (4th SC) Sathienthirakul/Rappange/di Amato/de Leener (T/NL/I/UK), Porsche 911 GT3 R #56, 529 laps
33. (10th BC) /Jewiss/Meyrick/Maassen (UK/UK/UK/NL), Porsche 911 GT3 R #62, 527 laps
36. (4th PAC) Tjia/Shen/Simonsen/Beche (HK/HK/DKCH), Porsche 911 GT3 R #216, 522 laps
45. (13th BC) B. Grove/S. Grove/Bamber/de Pasquale (AUS/AUS/NZ/AUS), Porsche 911 GT3 R #23, 440 laps
48. (15th BC) Sager/Nakken/Barker/Zöchling (A/N/UK/D), Porsche 911 GT3 R #55, 396 laps
70. (12th PAC): Washington/Sofronas/Bleekemolen/Long (USA/USA/NL/USA), Porsche 911 GT3 R #132, 2 laps

Pro = Pro class; PAC = Pro-Am Cup; GC = Gold Cup; SC = Silver Cup; BC = Bronze Cup.

Full results

Interim 2

After a turbulent night with several, sometimes two-hour-long full-course yellow phases, the 24 hours of Spa-Francorchamps remains enthralling. By 8:30 this morning, five Porsche were still running in the same lap as the leaders. This means they still have a good chance of achieving a top result. After two-thirds of the race distance, the customer team Manthey EMA's 911 GT3 R holds the best position. The "Grello" drivers experienced an eventful night. At 9:17 pm, Julien Andlauer took the lead. Three-quarters of an hour later, during his refuelling stop, he had to serve a 30-second penalty for exceeding the track limits. As a result, the No. 92 car dropped back to fifth place. Furthermore, two early tyre changes disrupted the Porsche's pit stop rhythm. However, thanks to a clever strategy during the yellow flag phases, Andlauer, his French compatriot Kévin Estre, and Belgian Laurens Vanthoor never lost contact with the leaders. The "Grello" managed to take the lead two more times during the night. At 8:30 am, Estre was defending fourth place.

Virtually in the slipstream of the Manthey EMA car, Rutronik Racing's 911 GT3 R advanced to fifth place. The three Porsche DTM drivers Thomas Preining from Austria, Dennis Olsen from Norway and Laurin Heinrich from Germany made it through the night without any major problems.

Bad luck for GT Huber Racing

Dinamic GT Huber Racing's No. 54 Porsche was hit by bad luck. The car, piloted by German Christian Engelhart and the two former Porsche Juniors Sven Müller (Germany) and Ayhancan Güven (Turkey), took advantage of a caution phase to take the overall lead for the second time at around 6:30 in the morning. Once again, however, the joy was short-lived: when the safety car restarted the race half an hour later, a rival sent the 911 GT3 R spinning out of the La Source hairpin. At the 16-hour mark, the car was in 15th place.

Thanks to a largely problem-free performance, the Pure Rxcing customer team managed to advance into first place in the Bronze Cup in the early hours of the day. The driver-crew Klaus Bachler (Austria), the two Germans Joel Sturm and Marco Seefried, as well as Aliaksandr Malykhin from the UK, progressed to P13 in the overall standings. Directly behind them: Herberth Motorsport with the Dutch driver Kay van Berlo – Porsche Motorsport North America's selected driver – and the three Germans Ralf Bohn, Robert and Alfred Renauer.

The 24-hour race on the Belgian Grand Prix circuit is considered the most significant event for GT3 cars worldwide and counts towards the GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup as well as the Intercontinental GT Challenge (IGTC). Drivers and cars earn points for the GT World Challenge after six, twelve and 24 hours. The race will be live-streamed on the website www.intercontinentalgtchallenge.com.

Comments on the race so far

Sebastian Golz (Project Manager Porsche 911 GT3 R): "We made it through the night in one piece and are constantly pushing for a podium result. The guys are maintaining an incredible pace – whether it's Dinamic GT, Manthey EMA or Rutronik Racing. We're currently struggling a bit with the track boundaries but that also means we're driving at the limit. We're well within the top 10 however we also want to go for gold in the Pro-Am and Bronze Cup categories, where the situation also looks promising."

Laurens Vanthoor (Porsche 911 GT3 R #92): "The cool conditions don't make it easy. The tyres quickly pick up debris on the cold asphalt. If I had a say, it wish it would get warmer soon. But all in all, things are still looking good and we're heading in the right direction."

Dennis Olsen (Porsche 911 GT3R #96): "Up to this point, everything has gone pretty well. Unfortunately, we didn't make as much progress in the early stages as we would have liked. But when Laurin Heinrich climbed aboard for the first time, he demonstrated just how fast our Porsche 911 GT3 can go. From then on, we kept the pressure on. The car is running like clockwork so far. However, you have to manage the tyres properly over the entire stint. We're in for an exciting final phase – it's pretty intense out there on the track."

Ralf Bohn (Porsche 911 GT3R #91): "We don't want to count our chickens before they hatch, but we can be very satisfied. After Kay van Berlo's excellent start and great performances from Alfred and Robert Renauer, I was able to complete my first three stints without any problems. We only had one puncture, but Kay spotted it in time and we were able to change the tyre in the pits swiftly. The Porsche is performing brilliantly and so is the team. We're currently in second place in the Bronze Cup. Of course, everyone wants to win but for now, our goal is to make it to the finish line."

Latest results: https://www.intercontinentalgtchallenge.com/watch-live

Interim 1

The endurance classic on the 7.004-kilometre Grand Prix circuit had started on a drying track. However, an accident involving the Porsche of GMG Racing by Car Collection Motorsport behind the leading car delayed the start of the race by 20 minutes. Huber Motorsport's 911 GT3 R got off the line cleanly from pole position to maintain its front spot. Start driver Matteo Cairoli was able to defend first place for the next 60 minutes. The No. 20 Porsche also held its position among the frontrunners for a long stretch. After the first sixth of the race, the car was running in P30 and fifth in the bronze category.

Laurens Vanthoor grabbed his chance in the opening phase of the 24-hour race to launch a brilliant pursuit. Tackling the race from P14, the Porsche works driver stormed to the front at the wheel of the Manthey EMA customer team's "Grello". After 120 minutes, the Belgian reappeared among the top 3. Unfortunately, he slightly nudged a slower car at the La Source hairpin. Subsequently, the No. 92 entry was handed a ten-second pit stop penalty. Nevertheless, Vanthoor's teammate Kévin Estre has succeeded in maintaining second place overall after four hours of racing. Almost 45 minutes after the four-hour mark, Julien Andlauer finished the job: With a daring manoeuvre, the former Porsche Junior from France skilfully outbraked the leader and moved into first place.

Reaching the top 10

By 8:30 pm, Rutronik Racing's No. 96 car had also reached the top 10. In the early stages, the DTM drivers Thomas Preining from Austria and Laurin Heinrich from Germany made up 23 places to now rank seventh.

As the fourth-best 911 GT3 R, the No. 54 Pro-Porsche fielded by Dinamic GT Huber Racing is currently in 16th place. This race car also faced a challenging path: The two Germans Christian Engelhart and Sven Müller as well as Ayhancan Güven from Turkey had started the race from the 37th grid spot.

Pure Rxcing delivered another notable performance, with the team currently in 24th overall and second in the Bronze Cup after four hours. In 35th, Ivan Jacoma, Niki Leutwiler and Alex Fontana from Switzerland and Germany's Nico Menzel led the Silver Cup with the Porsche fielded by Car Collection Motorsport.

The 24-hour race on the Belgian Grand Prix circuit is considered the most significant event for GT3 cars worldwide and counts towards the GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup as well as the Intercontinental GT Challenge (IGTC). Drivers and cars earn points for the GT World Challenge after six, twelve and 24 hours. The race will be live-streamed on the website www.intercontinentalgtchallenge.com.

Comments on the race so far

Sebastian Golz (Project Manager Porsche 911 GT3 R):"We headed into the 24-hour race with mixed feelings and on a damp track behind the safety car. Matteo Cairoli put in a strong first stint and used his pole position to pull clear of the field. At the moment we're maintaining a very good rhythm. Manthey EMA has now taken the lead, Rutronik Racing and Dinamic GT Huber Racing are also gaining ground lap by lap. Car Collection is currently in first place in the Pro-Am Cup and their teamwork is slick. Unfortunately, the GMG Racing by Car Collection car slid on a wet curb early on and crashed heavily. Now we're heading into the night. We want to continue to remain calm and make it to the morning unscathed."

Laurens Vanthoor (Porsche 911 GT3 R #92):"My first double stint was great fun! We started from position 14 and I handed over the car in third. At the beginning of the race, half of the track was wet, so I took it easy in the difficult conditions. Unfortunately, two laps before the end of my stint I touched a car slightly. That was clearly my mistake but luckily it didn't have any major consequences."

Marco Seefried (Porsche 911 GT3R #911):"The race is going quite well for us so far, even though we had to relinquish the lead in the Bronze Cup. We didn't receive any penalties, didn't have any contacts and are perfectly on track. With the grip improving on the track, the balance of our Porsche should also improve, which we had some problems with at the beginning. Let's see what else happens."

Jannes Fittje (Porsche 911 GT3R #20):"As expected, Matteo gave a superb performance as the start driver – he is simply incredibly fast this weekend. When I took the wheel I noticed that the tyres had deteriorated significantly over the distance. Then when Tim Heinemann got in, we tweaked the setup slightly, which also helped. Antares Au has also had a stint in the car, so we've all been able to get a feeling for the 911 GT3 R and the race. Now we're trying to get through the night in one piece."

Latest results: https://www.intercontinentalgtchallenge.com/watch-live

Super-Pole

The Porsche customer team Huber Motorsport tackles the 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps from pole position. The endurance classic is considered the most important race in the world for vehicles complying with the FIA GT3 regulations. Matteo Cairoli set the fastest time on the Belgian Grand Prix

circuit on Friday afternoon with a time of 2:16.880 minutes. The former Porsche Junior from Italy shares the 911 GT3 R fielded by the German racing team with Antares Au from Hong Kong and the two Germans Tim Heinemann and Jannes Fittje. Austrian Klaus Bachler qualified in third place for Pure Rxcing. Eighth place went to French Porsche works driver Frédéric Makowiecki driving for the CLRT squad.

In the rainy qualifying session on Thursday evening, a total of six 911 racing cars qualified for the Super Pole individual time trial for the fastest 20. This gave them entry into the Super Pole session on Friday and a chance to fight for the best grid positions for the endurance race on the 7.004-kilometre Formula 1 circuit. Matteo Cairoli was the third to last driver to attempt his two flying laps. At his first attempt, the Italian promptly topped the timesheets. At the end of the session, he was still ahead by 0.116 seconds and secured pole position for himself, his Hubert Motorsport squad and his teammates.

Klaus Bachler also had his sights set on pole position. In the four-heat qualifying on Thursday, Pure Rxcing's 911 had set the best average time of all contenders. Subsequently, the Austrian was the last to head out on the track in the Super Pole session. In his first attempt he posted a time of 2:17.232 minutes, in his second lap he left the track briefly. Joining forces with his teammates Joel Sturm and Marco Seefried from Germany as well as Aliaksandr Malykhin (United Kingdom), he will start from the second grid row on Saturday.

The eighth fastest time went to Frédéric Makowiecki. The French Porsche works driver shares the 911 GT3 R fielded by the CLRT team with his fellow countrymen Clément Mateu, Hugo Chevallier and Steven Palette. With this, three Porsche racers lock out the first three grid spots in the Bronze Cup category. As the best Pro car, Julien Andlauer achieved P14 in the so-called “Grello” of the customer racing team Manthey EMA. The former Porsche Junior's first flying lap was cancelled after he exceeded the track limits. Andlauer shares driving duties with works drivers Laurens Vanthoor from Belgium and Frenchman Kévin Estre. Robert Renauer planted the 911 campaigned by Herberth Motorsport on P15. The German shares the cockpit of the GT3 race car with his brother Alfred, Ralf Bohn from Germany and the Dutchman Kay van Berlo. Tackling the Super Pole session in the sixth and last Porsche, Earl Bamber clinched the 17th spot. The New Zealander, who secured overall victory at the 24 Hours of Le Mans in 2015 and 2017 as a Porsche works driver, competes for Grove Racing with his Australian teammates Anton de Pasquale, Stephen and Brenton Grove.

The 24-hour race on the Belgian Grand Prix circuit is considered the most significant event for GT3 cars worldwide and counts towards the GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup as well as the Intercontinental GT Challenge (IGTC). Drivers and cars earn points for the GT World Challenge after six, twelve and 24 hours. The race will be live-streamed on the website www.intercontinentalgtchallenge.com.

Comments on the Super Pole

Sebastian Golz (Project Manager Porsche 911 GT3 R): “Congratulations to Huber Motorsport – Matteo

Cairoli drove a flawless lap. Klaus Bachler also gave a mega performance and was spot-on in his first lap. Our customer teams are very strong and have achieved excellent grid positions in all classes in which we are involved. Even though today was only half the battle, we have laid the foundation and we'll now stay focused as we head into the 24-hour race."

Matteo Cairoli (Porsche 911 GT3 R #20): "This pole position feels fantastic – especially since I didn't expect such a great result. In yesterday's pre-qualifying, we were still a bit off with our car setup in comparable conditions. We didn't know whether the changes we had made would work. However, the Porsche 911 GT3 R was really fast today and I felt great. I achieved my fastest lap on my very first attempt. I was even faster on the second lap, but then I made a minor mistake and abandoned the lap. It doesn't matter, it was good enough..."

Klaus Bachler (Porsche 911 GT3R #911): "Third place puts us in an excellent position for the race. Our 911 GT3 R ran beautifully and we're well prepared. Plus, our driver crew is in top form and highly motivated. Everything is going according to plan. We're excited to start the race."

Frédéric Makowiecki (Porsche 911 GT3R #44):"I'm proud of the team! It's their first time contesting the Spa 24-hour race. We're doing well. Sure, we can still tweak a few minor details but our Porsche is running very nicely. Now we'll build on the experience we have all gained. Our grid position is great, now we're looking forward to a strong race."

Super Pole results

1. (BC) Au/Heinemann/Cairoli/Fittje (HK/D/I/D), Porsche 911 GT3 R #20, 2:16.880 minutes
2. (1st Pro) Rovera/Shwartzmann/Nielsen (I/ISR/DK) Ferrari 296 GT3 #51, 2:16.996 minutes
3. (2nd BC) Bachler/Malykhin/Sturm/Seefried (A/UK/D/D), Porsche 911 GT3 R #911, 2:17.232 minutes
8. (3rd BC) Palette/Mateu/Makowiecki/Chevalier (F/F/F/F), Porsche 911 GT3 R #44, 2:17.399 minutes
14. (6th Pro) Vanthoor/Estre/Andlauer (B/F/F). Porsche 911 GT3 R #92, 2:17.791 minutes
15. (5th BC) Bohn/A. Renauer/R. Renauer/van Berlo (D/D/D/NL), Porsche 911 GT3 R #91, 2:17.835 minutes
17. (6th BC) B. Grove/S. Grove/Bamber/de Pasquale (AUS/AUS/NZ/AUS), Porsche 911 GT3 R #23, 2:17.997 minutes

The remaining grid positions

30. (15th Pro) Preining/Heinrich/Olsen (A/D/N), Porsche 911 GT3 R #96, 2:32.039 minutes
31. (9th BC) Pierce/Jewiss/Meyrick/Maassen (UK/UK/UK/NL), Porsche 911 GT3 R #62, 2:32.104 minutes
35. (2nd PAC) Leutwiler/Jacoma/Fontana/Menzel (CH/CH/CH/D), Porsche 911 GT3 R #24, 2:32.405

minutes
37. (16th Pro) Güven/Müller/Engelhart (TR/D/D) Porsche 911 GT3 R #54, 2:32.704 minutes
55. (17th BC) Sager/Nakken/Barker/Zöchling (A/N/UK/D), Porsche 911 GT3 R #55, 2:35.620 minutes
58. (8th SC) Sathienthirakul/Rappange/di Amato/de Leener (T/NL/I/UK), Porsche 911 GT3 R #56, 2:38.436 minutes
67. (10th PAC) Tjia/Shen/Simonsen/Beche (HK/HK/DKCH), Porsche 911 GT3 R #216, no time
68. (11th PAC): Washington/Sofronas/Bleekemolen/Long (USA/USA/NL/USA), Porsche 911 GT3 R #132, no time

Qualifying

Six of the 14 Porsche 911 GT3 R cars made it into the top 20 after the four-part qualifying for the 24-hour race at Spa-Francorchamps. This means they are eligible to take part in the Super Pole session tomorrow afternoon and fight for the best grid positions.

The average fastest time of all four drivers was achieved by Pure Rxcing's 911, driven by Aliaksandr Malykhin, Joel Sturm, Marco Seefried and Klaus Bachler. Subsequently, the quartet also secured first place in the Bronze Cup on Thursday evening. In the Pro classification, the 911 GT3 R fielded by Manthey EMA came out on top. The endurance classic starts on Saturday at 4:30 pm (CEST).

In increasingly difficult weather conditions, the Porsche customer teams delivered outstanding performances with the 911 GT3 R at Spa-Francorchamps. Averaging the fastest lap times of all drivers, the GT3 racer campaigned by Pure Rxcing, which contests the Bronze Cup, prevailed. This achievement was mostly thanks to Aliaksandr Malykhin: The UK racer set a fast time of 2:18.937 minutes early in the first quarter of the qualifying session. Afterwards, an accident interrupted the session. After the restart, the track conditions had deteriorated due to heavier rain that drivers struggled to improve their times. Malykhin's teammates Joel Sturm and Marco Seefried from Germany, as well as the Austrian Klaus Bachler then turned Malykhin's top performance into a surprising best time of the whole field.

Positions two, six and eight in the Bronze Cup also went to Porsche customer teams. Huber Motorsport's No. 20 Porsche 911 shared by Antares Au (Hong Kong), the German DTM driver Tim Heinemann, Matteo Cairoli from Italy and Jannes Fittje (Germany) occupied position three in the overall classification. CLMR's 911 GT3 R driven by the all-French quartet of Clément Mateu, Hugo Chevalier, Steven Palette and works driver Frédéric Makowiecki progressed to sixth overall, while the Herberth Motorsport car ranked eighth in the overall timesheet. Herberth Motorsport relies on Germans Alfred and Robert Renauer as well as Ralf Bohn with Dutchman Kay van Berlo.

The three Pro-911 racing cars tackled the qualifying with a handicap: with just three drivers per car, they were only permitted to head out onto the track in the second quarter – by then, however, the rain had already intensified. The so-called Grello run by the customer team Manthey EMA made the most of this disadvantage. Ex-Porsche Junior Julien Andlauer from France, as well as the two works drivers

Kévin Estre (France) and local hero Laurens Vanthoor still managed to advance to seventh overall. Rutronik Racing and Dinamic GT Huber Racing, however, missed out on reaching the Super Pole session.

In P20, Australians Stephen and Brenton Grove can look forward to taking part in the Top-20 time trial as the sixth and last 911 GT3 R crew. They will be supported in their Grove Racing team by fellow Australian Anton de Pasquale and Earl Bamber. The New Zealander won the 24 Hours of Le Mans with the 919 Hybrid in 2015 and 2017 as a Porsche works driver.

The final hunt for the top 20 grid positions begins on Friday between 3:35 pm and 4:05 pm (CEST). The 24-hour race on the Belgian Grand Prix circuit gets underway on Saturday at 4:30 pm local time. The long-distance classic is considered the most significant event for GT3 cars worldwide and counts towards the GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup as well as the Intercontinental GT Challenge (IGTC). Drivers and cars earn points for the GT World Challenge after six, twelve and 24 hours. The race will be live-streamed on the website www.intercontinentalgtchallenge.com.

Qualifying quotes

Sebastian Golz (Project Manager Porsche 911 GT3 R): "That was an excellent qualifying for us and the Porsche customer teams. Six 911 GT3 R cars in the top 20 – that's a fantastic result. Regardless of whether it's the Pro, Pro-Am or Bronze Cup category, the guys did a super job. Of course, some had luck on their side with the driest condition in the first session. But still, the last three qualifying quarters were very wet and tricky for everyone. Tomorrow we face the Super Pole session. Let's see what we can do there. Everyone's feeling positive, which is the most important thing this weekend."

Aliaksandr Malykhin (Porsche 911 GT3R #911): "I'm so proud of our team. We did a great job under tricky conditions. The mood among us drivers is great and we help each other tremendously by sharing information about the track conditions and our 911 GT3 R. I managed to lay the foundations with my lap time, and my teammates and our engineers then built on that perfectly to get us into the Super Pole."

Tim Heinemann (Porsche 911 GT3 R #20): "Of course, we're super happy to qualify for the Super Pole. That was quite unexpected. We were lucky enough to benefit from driving in the dry Q1 segment. A top-20 spot is a great place to start the race, which we will prepare for in tomorrow's warm-up."

Kévin Estre (Porsche 911 GT3 R #92): "What a crazy qualifying! The decisive factors for us were when to go out on track with which tyre and with which air pressure. The team did a great job in this respect. We were the best-placed car from the Pro category – which, because we're a three-driver crew, we weren't allowed to take part in the dry first qualifying heat. We all turned flawless laps which contributed to us making it into the Super Pole."

Laurin Heinrich (Porsche 911 GT3R #96):"Given that we weren't eligible to participate in the first

qualifying quarter in dry conditions, it was obviously very difficult to achieve a good average lap time. We did our best, but it wasn't quite enough, even though our Porsche 911 GT3 R was very fast in the rain. So we start my first 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps from the 30th grid spot. It's a long race, so nothing is lost yet."

Qualifying result

1. (BC) Bachler/Malykhin/Sturm/Seefried (A/UK/D/D), Porsche 911 GT3 R #911, 2:28.569 minutes
2. (1st GC) De Haan, Gamble, Fagg, Macdonald (GB/GB/GB/GB) McLaren 720S GT3 EVO #5, 2:28.923 minutes
3. (2nd BC) Au/Heinemann/Cairoli/Fittje (HK/D/I/D), Porsche 911 GT3 R #20, 2:29.103 minutes
6. (4th BC) Palette/Mateu/Makowiecki/Chevalier (F/F/F/F), Porsche 911 GT3 R #44, 2:30.323 minutes
7. (1st Pro) Vanthoor/Estre/Andlauer (B/F/F). Porsche 911 GT3 R #92, 2:30.456 minutes
8. (5th BC) Bohn/A. Renauer/R. Renauer/van Berlo (D/D/D/NL), Porsche 911 GT3 R #91, 2:30.497 minutes
20. (7th BC) B. Grove/S. Grove/Bamber/de Pasquale (AUS/AUS/NZ/AUS), Porsche 911 GT3 R #23, 2:31.502 minutes
30. (15th Pro) Preining/Heinrich/Olsen (A/D/N), Porsche 911 GT3 R #96, 2:32.039 minutes
31. (9th BC) /Jewiss/Meyrick/Maassen (UK/UK/UK/NL), Porsche 911 GT3 R #62, 2:32.104 minutes
35. (2nd PAC) Leutwiler/Jacoma/Fontana/Menzel (CH/CH/CH/D), Porsche 911 GT3 R #24, 2:32.405 minutes
37. (16th Pro) Güven/Müller/Engelhart (TR/D/D) Porsche 911 GT3 R #54, 2:32.704 minutes
55. (17th BC) Sager/Nakken/Barker/Zöchling (A/N/UK/D), Porsche 911 GT3 R #55, 2:35.620 minutes
58. (8th SC) Sathienthirakul/Rappange/di Amato/de Leener (T/NL/I/UK), Porsche 911 GT3 R #56, 2:38.436 minutes
67. (10th PAC) Tjia/Shen/Simonsen/Beche (HK/HK/DKCH), Porsche 911 GT3 R #216, no time
68. (11th PAC): Washington/Sofronas/Bleekemolen/Long (USA/USA/NL/USA), Porsche 911 GT3 R #132, no time

Pro = Pro class; PAC = Pro-Am Cup; GC = Gold Cup; SC = Silver Cup; BC = Bronze Cup.

The preview

The 24-hour race at Spa-Francorchamps is regarded as the annual highlight of the GT3 season. At the 75th running of the tradition-steeped event in the Ardennes region of Belgium, a record number of 14 Porsche 911 GT3 R will line up on the grid next weekend. In its debut season, the racing car based on the 992-generation is one of the hot favourites at the endurance classic. The customer teams in the top pro category have set their sights on bringing home the ninth victory for a Porsche in this race.

Just under a year ago, Porsche showcased the new 911 GT3 R at the 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps for the first time. The race debut took place at the 24 Hours of Daytona in January. This coming weekend, 14 of these racing cars developed in Weissach will line up on the grid at the Belgian endurance classic. They represent the largest contingent ever fielded by the sports car manufacturer at what is arguably the world's most important GT3 event. The new 911 GT3 R, based on the 992-generation, can produce up to 416 kW (565 PS). Eleven customer teams compete with a total of 53 drivers on the so-called Ardennes rollercoaster in four different classifications. To date, a Porsche has won this historic endurance race eight times. The last two wins came in succession: in 2019, Kévin Estre (France), Michael Christensen (Denmark) and Richard Lietz (Austria) secured overall victory with GPX Racing's 911 GT3 R. A year later, the works driver trio Nick Tandy (United Kingdom), Earl Bamber (New Zealand) and Laurens Vanthoor (Belgium) repeated the feat, this time for Rowe Racing.

"Fourteen Porsche 911 GT3 R – we've never been represented as strongly at the 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps! We're delighted with the tremendous support from our customer teams, which also reflects their trust in our new car," emphasises Sebastian Golz, Project Manager Porsche 911 GT3 R. "The race itself is likely to be a tough one again. A 72-strong field of almost equally matched GT3 cars on just seven kilometres of track, piloted by many potential winners: this gives the event, which has long since developed into a 24-hour sprint, a clear and unique selling point. It's everyone against everyone there. After the test drives, we feel well-prepared. I hope that a ninth victory for a Porsche at this endurance highlight is within reach for us."

The race

The Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps has thrown one of the greatest challenges at racing drivers from all over the world since 1921. In 1924, just three years after its inauguration, the first 24-hour race was contested in the east of Belgium, not far from the German border – making this classic just one year "younger" than the legendary 24 Hours of Le Mans, which celebrated its centenary in 2023. The racetrack back then measured about 15 kilometres and ran between the towns of Francorchamps, Malmedy and Stavelot. In 1979, the distance was shortened. Measuring 7.004 kilometres and featuring 21 turns, the storied Grand Prix circuit is still the longest track on the Formula 1 calendar. The "Ardennes rollercoaster" still deserves its nickname, by virtue of the spectacular steep section "Raidillon/Eau Rouge" and the downhill passage with the notorious "Blanchimont". At the end of the start/finish straight, however, drivers encounter the tight "La Source" hairpin – one of the slowest corners of the GT3 season. Before the 2022 season got underway, the storied racetrack underwent an extensive upgrade. As part of this modernisation, new gravel traps and grandstands were added, among other features. The basic layout, however, remained the same. Due to its location in the Ardennes, teams and drivers must expect unpredictable weather conditions at any time.

The 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps will once again run as part of the GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup and the Intercontinental GT Challenge (IGTC). With a 72-strong field of GT3 racing cars, the grid line-up for the 75th edition of the event sets a new benchmark. At the highlight of the GT3 season, drivers and cars receive points after six, twelve and 24 hours respectively.

The customer teams and drivers

The 14 Porsche 911 GT3 R cars will compete in four different classification groups at Spa-Francorchamps. The hot favourites for overall victory start in the 19-strong Pro Division, reserved for fully professional crews. Three 911 racers with three drivers per car tackle this class. Manthey EMA is represented by a powerful trio consisting of former Porsche Junior Julien Andlauer from France as well as works drivers Kévin Estre and local hero Laurens Vanthoor. Rutronik Racing puts its trust in three former Porsche Juniors: Laurin Heinrich from Germany and the Norwegian Dennis Olsen as well as works driver Thomas Preining from Austria. All three are causing a stir in this season's DTM with the new 911 GT3 R. The same applies to Dinamic GT Huber Racing: DTM drivers Ayhancan Güven (Turkey) and German Christian Engelhart, as well as his fellow countryman Sven Müller share the cockpit of the Italian-German squad's Pro car. Güven and Müller also came up through the Porsche Junior ranks.

In the Pro-Am classification, GMG Racing by Car Collection Motorsport, Modena Motorsport and Grove Racing will each campaign a Porsche 911 GT3 R. In this class, at least two drivers must hold "Bronze" status, share the wheel for at least eight hours and sit in the cockpit for at least 60 minutes per race quarter.

In the Silver Cup, Dinamic GT Huber Racing flies the flag for Porsche with a 911 GT3 R. In this category, the four drivers per race car must have a FIA "Silver" grading. Put simply, this class is reserved for semi-professionals.

The bronze class has been reorganised. With 25 entries, it makes up more than a third of the grid. In this category, four drivers may share a car however, no more than one may have "platinum" status and two "silver" status. The fourth driver must be "Bronze" graded. The Porsche customer teams Herberth Motorsport, Pure Rxcing, Huber Motorsport, Grove Racing, CLRT, Dinamic GT Huber Racing and Team Parker racing have entered a total of seven 911 GT3 R cars.

Live streaming of the event

The 24-hour race in Spa-Francorchamps gets underway on 1 July at 4:30 pm. A free live stream of the classic can be seen on the website http://www.intercontinentalgtchallenge.com.

Drivers' comments on the race

Laurens Vanthoor (Porsche 911 GT3 R #92):"The 24 Hours of Spa is something special for me. The track is only an hour's drive from my home and it's a very competitive race with a lot of drivers in the same class. I'm looking forward to it! Joining forces with Kévin Estre and Julien Andlauer, we have a strong driver line-up at Manthey EMA and a similarly great chance to fight for victory. I've won this race twice. I'll do my very best to finish on top of the podium a third time."

Christian Engelhart (Porsche 911 GT3 R #54):"With a record field of 72 cars, the Spa 24 Hours is a massive event and, as the biggest GT3 race in the world, a real challenge. I can't wait for it to get underway! Of course, we'd love to win – just like the 71 others. Unfortunately, we couldn't prepare as well this year because our Porsche was involved in an accident at the Nürburgring 24-hour race. That's why we weren't able to take part in the track test. We've got a tight schedule ahead of us at Spa to get the car set up as quickly as possible in the practice sessions. Nevertheless, we're heading to the event feeling very optimistic and we'll do our utmost to finish well ahead of the competition in this long and difficult race."

Thomas Preining (Porsche 911 GT3 R #96):"Our test at Spa went very well. In terms of the car, we're in the right performance window. I have a lot of faith in the team. We've learned a lot together and I think we can implement it very well now. I'm confident that we can squeeze the maximum out of the Porsche 911 GT3 R's potential. My teammates are also fired up. It's going to be a cool week with, hopefully, a good ending."

Klaus Bachler (Porsche 911 GT3 R #911):"Our expectation is definitely to compete for victory in our class. We have a very strong team and a very good driver line-up. But a 24-hour race is tough and with 72 GT3 cars on the track, it doesn't come without its challenges. We have to drive smart and stay out of trouble. If we can get through without any problems, we should be in a good position at the finish line."

Porsche's customer teams and drivers

Pro class

Dinamic GT Huber Racing (#54)
Ayhancan Güven (TR) / Sven Müller (D) / Christian Engelhart (D)
Manthey EMA (#92)
Laurens Vanthoor (B) / Kévin Estre (F) / Julien Andlauer (F)
Rutronik Racing (#96)
Thomas Preining (A) / Laurin Heinrich (D) / Dennis Olsen (N)

Pro-Am Cup

Car Collection Motorsport (#24)
Nicolas Leutwiler (CH) / Ivan Jacoma (CH) / Alex Fontana (CH) / Nico Menzel (D)
GMG Racing by Car Collection Motorsport (#132)
Kyle Washington (USA) / James Sofronas (USA) / Jeroen Bleekemolen (NL) / Patrick Long (USA)
Modena Motorsport (#216)
Francis Tjia (HK) / John Shen (HK) / Benny Simonsen (DK) / Mathias Beche (CH)

Silver Cup

Dinamic GT Huber Racing (#56)
Tanart Sathienthirakul (T) / Jop Rappange (NL) / Daniele di Amato (I) / Adrien de Leener (UK)

Bronze Cup

Huber Motorsport (#20)
Antares Au (HK) / Dennis Fetzer (D) / Matteo Cairoli (I) / Jannes Fittje (D)
Grove Racing (#23)
Brenton Grove (AUS) / Stephen Grove (AUS) / Earl Bamber (NZ) / Anton de Pasquale (AUS)
CLRT (#44)
Steven Palette (F) / Clément Mateu (F) / Frédéric Makowiecki (F) / Hugo Chevalier (F)
Dinamic GT Huber Racing (#55)
Philipp Sager (A) / Marius Nakken (N) / Benjamin Barker (UK) / Christopher Zöchling (D)
Team Parker Racing (#62)
Derek Pierce (UK) / Kiern Jewiss (UK) / Andrew Meyrick (UK) / Xavier Maassen (NL)
Herberth Motorsport (#91)
Ralf Bohn (D) / Alfred Renauer (D) / Robert Renauer (D) / Kay van Berlo (NL)
Pure Rxcing (#911)
Klaus Bachler (A) / Alex Malykhin (UK) / Joel Sturm (D) / Marco Seefried (D)

24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps – all outright Porsche victories

2020 Tandy / Bamber / Vanthoor (Porsche 911 GT3 R)
2019 Lietz / Christensen / Estre (Porsche 911 GT3 R)
2010 Dumas / J. Bergmeister / Ragginger / Henzler (Porsche 911 GT3 RSR)
2003 Ortelli / Lieb / Dumas (Porsche 911 GT3 RSR)
1993 C. Fittipaldi / Jarier / Alzen (Porsche 911 RSR)
1969 Chasseuil / Ballot-Léna (Porsche 911)
1968 Kremer / H. Kelleners / Kauhsen (Porsche 911)
1967 Gaban / Van Assche (Porsche 911)

The schedule (all times CEST)

Thursday, 29 July
11:20 – 12:50 hrs: Free practice 1
18:10 – 19:10 hrs: Pre-qualifying
21:20 – 21:35 hrs: Qualifying 1

21:42 – 21:57 hrs: Qualifying 2
22:04 – 22:19 hrs: Qualifying 3
22:26 – 22:41 hrs: Qualifying 4
23:00 – 00:30 hrs: Night practice

Friday, 30 June
15:35 – 16:05 hrs: Super Pole
20:35 – 21:05 hrs: Warm Up

Saturday, 1 July
16:30 hrs: Start 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps

Sunday, 2 July
16:30 hrs: Chequered flag 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps

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Video

Image Sublines

Path: 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps/Images/img_5.jpg
Title: Porsche 911 GT3 R, Manthey EMA (#92), Laurens Vanthoor (B), Kevin Estre (F), Julien Andlauer (F), Race, 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps, 2023, Porsche AG
Subline: Porsche 911 GT3 R, Pure Racing (#911)

Path: 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps/Images/img_6.jpg
Title: Porsche 911 GT3 R, Pure Racing (#911), Klaus Bachler (A), Alex Malykhin (UK), Joel Sturm (D), Marco Seefried (D), Qualifying, 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps, 2023, Porsche AG
Subline: Porsche 911 GT3 R, Pure Racing (#911)

Path: 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps/Images/img_7.jpg
Title: Sebastian Golz, Project Manager Porsche 911 GT3 R, 2023, Porsche AG
Subline: Sebastian Golz, Project Manager Porsche 911 GT3 R

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