

Challenging qualifying for the Porsche teams at Spa-Francorchamps

09/05/2025 Porsche Penske Motorsport wrapped up a difficult qualifying session at the Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps in positions 12 and 13. Qualifying 14th, the Porsche 963 fielded by the Proton Competition customer team missed out on advancing to the hyperpole session for the top ten, too.

In LMGT3 class, Manthey 1st Phorm's Porsche 911 GT3 R tackles the six-hour race on Saturday from the eighth grid spot. Iron Dames concluded the session for round three of the FIA World Endurance Championship 13th in the GT3 class.

After setting the fastest time in the second free practice session on Thursday afternoon, the Porsche Penske Motorsport factory team headed into the first qualifying session with high expectations. In spring-like conditions, the two hybrid prototypes struggled to match the pace of the top 10 on their first attempt. Only the top ten qualifiers can progress to the so-called hyperpole session. Hampered by an oversteer, Kévin Estre was forced to abandon his second attempt at a flying lap in the No. 6 Porsche

963. The Frenchman shares the race car with Belgian Laurens Vanthoor and Pascal Wehrlein. Estre and Vanthoor are the defending champions in the FIA World Endurance Championship. Wehrlein won the FIA Formula E World Championship last year. The German uses the 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps to prepare for his debut at the 24 Hours of Le Mans in June. There he will share the cockpit of the third factory Porsche 963 with Englishman Nick Tandy and Felipe Nasr from Brazil.

At the wheel of Porsche Penske Motorsport's No. 5 entry, Julien Andlauer began the session with two hot laps. After cooling down briefly, he launched his third attempt. Ultimately, the Frenchman was just two-tenths of a second off the top ten. In Spa-Francorchamps, Andlauer joins forces with Denmark's Michael Christensen and Swiss racer Nico Müller. Porsche works driver Müller competes for the Andretti Formula E customer team. He supports Porsche Penske Motorsport as their reserve driver at the 24 Hours of Le Mans.

"After the races in Qatar and Imola, we knew we were heading into another difficult race. Still, we expected the gap to the frontrunners to be smaller. Unfortunately, that isn't the case," stated Urs Kuratle, Director Factory Motorsport LMDh. "Obviously, our team and drivers are disappointed. Surprisingly, some big names didn't make the cut into the hyperpole. Nevertheless, we'll fight over the entire six-hour race. From our grid positions, we can definitely achieve a good result and score world championship points."

Proton Competition continued its upward trend in Belgium. The customer team will tackle Saturday's six-hour race from P14. Qualifying driver Nico Varrone from Argentina will share the No. 99 Porsche 963 with Neel Jani from Switzerland and Nico Pino from Chile.

Best Porsche 911 GT3 R starts from P8

In the first of the two-part qualifying session in the LMGT3 class, American Ryan Hardwick set the second quickest time in the 911 GT3 R campaigned by Porsche's Manthey customer team. Thanks to Hardwicks' effort, the car fielded by Manthey 1st Phorm made it into the top ten of the hyperpole. For this session, Italy's Riccardo Pera took the wheel, improving his lap time by over three-tenths of a second. However, this was ultimately only enough for eighth place on the grid.

Driving the Iron Dames 911 GT3 R, Frenchwoman Célia Martin set the 13th fastest time in the first qualifying. The successful initiative aimed at promoting girls and women in motorsport works closely with Porsche Motorsport this year.

The 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps, the third round of the FIA World Endurance Championship WEC, gets the green light on Saturday (10 May) at 2 pm local time (CEST).

Drivers' comments after the qualifying

Julien Andlauer (Porsche 963 #5): ⊠Qualifying at Spa-Francorchamps is always great fun. I felt good in the Porsche, but my lap wasn't perfect. Moreover, we clearly lacked performance, which is why we missed out on advancing to the hyperpole unfortunately. Now we're focusing on tomorrow's race. Hopefully, we can battle our way back up the order and score plenty of points."

Kévin Estre (Porsche 963 #6):⊠We might have made it to the hyperpole session had the lap been perfect, but unfortunately, I didn't manage that. Our Porsche 963 was okay, but not exceptional. I think we could've done a better job. The gap to the front seems pretty big. That's frustrating and disappointing. We're heading into a six-hour race tomorrow so let's see what we can do."

Nico Varrone (Porsche 963 #99):⊠I'm really pleased – we've improved even more since yesterday. For us, the free practice sessions always replace the test days. But we're gaining ground on the front runners and the factory Porsches, and I'm happy about that. I did my best, even though I would've preferred to have set an even faster qualifying lap. Now we need to see what else we can tweak for the race. We want to get the most out of our package."

Célia Martin (Porsche 911 GT3 R #85):⊠Compared to my qualifying simulation in free practice this morning, I improved by two-tenths of a second. Unfortunately, we needed five-tenths. I know where I can find that, but unfortunately, I didn't manage it in such a short time. Now we'll continue working on the race setup. We learned a lot in this regard at the last race in Imola. Our goal is to finish in the points."

Riccardo Pera (Porsche 911 GT3 R #92):⊠Our Imola win gave the entire team a big boost in motivation. Eighth place on the grid here at Spa-Francorchamps might not seem ideal, but a lot can happen in a six-hour race. We must drive as cleanly as possible and stay out of trouble. It's huge fun driving the Porsche 911 GT3 R on this fantastic racetrack."

Qualifying result

Hypercar class:
1. Fuoco/Molina/Nielsen (ITA/ESP/DNK), Ferrari #50, 1.59,617 minutes
2. Kubica/Ye/Hanson (POL/CHN/GBR), Ferrari #83, 1.59,964 minutes
3. Pier Guidi/Calado/Giovinazzi (ITA/GBR/ITA), Ferrari #51, 2.00,201 minutes
12. Estre/Vanthoor/Wehrlein (FRA/BEL/DEU), Porsche 963 #6, 2.01,512 minutes
13. Andlauer/Christensen/Müller (FRA/DNK/SUI), Porsche 963 #5, 2.01,588 minutes
14. Jani/Pino/Varrone (SUI/CHL/ARG), Porsche 963 #99, 2.01,837 minutes

LMGT3 class:
1. Robin/Gehrsitz/Nakayama (FRA/DEU/JPN), Lexus #78, 2.17,732 minutes

2. Deboer/Barrichello/Hasse Clot (USA/BRA/FRA), Aston Martin #10, 2.18,008 minutes
3. Sousa/Tuck/Barker (POR/GBR/GBR), Ford #77, 2.18,016 minutes
8. Hardwick/Lietz/Pera (USA/AUT/ITA), Porsche 911 GT3 R #92, 2.18,917 minutes
13. Frey/Gatting/Martin (SUI/DNK/FRA), Porsche 911 GT3 R #85, 2.20,320 minutes

Full results and championship standings https://fiawec.alkamelsystems.com.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES



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Video

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