

First row on the grid for the Porsche 963 at the WEC in Interlagos

12/07/2025 As at the 24 Hours of Le Mans, the best Porsche 963 will once again start the race from a very good position at Interlagos. Both hybrid prototypes of the Porsche Penske Motorsport factory team made it into the Hyperpole session for the top ten in Qualifying. There, Julien Andlauer initially put his number 5 race car on the second row of the grid. With one Cadillac being demoted, he was later promoted to second place.

Kévin Estre set the seventh-fastest time in the sister car. In LMGT3 class, Porsche customer team Iron Dames advanced to the Hyperpole session for the first time and set a season best with seventh place on the grid. The 6-hour race at the Autódromo José Carlos Pace starts on Sunday at 11:30 local time (16:30 CEST).

The Qualifying

The twelve-minute qualifying session was not a major challenge for the two Porsche 963 of the works

team. With 20 degrees Celsius air temperature and a comparatively cool asphalt temperature of 29 degrees Celsius, Julien Andlauer set a time of 1.23.279 minutes after two warm-up laps. This was enough for the Frenchman to finish fourth. His compatriot Kévin Estre even circled the Interlagos circuit three times to bring the Michelin racing tyres of his Porsche 963 up to temperature. He subsequently finished seventh with a lap time of 1.23.533 minutes. As a result, both Porsche Penske Motorsport hybrid prototypes were guaranteed a place in the Hyperpole session for the top ten.

The front grid positions were decided in this ten-minute time trial. Once again, both works drivers took the time to warm up their tyres thoroughly. On his first fast lap, Andlauer jumped into third position with a time of 1.22.834 minutes. He shares the hybrid race car with Michael Christensen. The Dane has also completed the Porsche Junior programme. The demotion of one Cadillac lifted the duo into the first row of the grid. Estre followed just under three tenths of a second behind in fifth place. He forms a team with the Belgian Laurens Vanthoor. The two cars then failed to make any further gains. The pole position went to Cadillac Hertz Team Jota.

"We saw an interesting qualifying session. After our start to the season, it was good to get both Porsche 963 into the Hyperpole," explained Urs Kuratle, Head of Works Motorsport LMDh. "We can be very satisfied with second place on the grid. Now we have to see what happens tomorrow in the 6-hour race."

"It was a good day for us today," emphasised Travis Law, Technical Director Porsche Penske Motorsport. "We wanted to achieve a good qualifying result with both Porsche 963. Second and seventh on the grid now give us a good starting position. Congratulations to Cadillac for pole position: they have done a good job. Now it's up to us to chase them down in the race."

The German Porsche customer team Proton Competition enters another Porsche 963 in the top Hypercar class. In the hybrid prototype, Nico Varrone missed out on promotion to the Hyperpole in twelfth place by less than a tenth of a second. Together with Neel Jani from Switzerland and Nico Pino from Chile, the Argentinian forms the driver trio of the number 99 car.

LMGT3 class: best qualifying result of the season for Iron Dames

Things went mixed for the two 911 GT3 R in Sao Paulo. In the first qualifying segment, Frenchwoman Célia Martin achieved the long-awaited top 10 position. Ninth place with a fastest lap time of 1.35.327 minutes enabled the Porsche from the Iron Dames customer team to make it into the Hyperpole session for the first time this season. Her colleague Rahel Frey took the wheel there. The Swiss driver was in the lead after her first attempt and was able to improve on her second flying lap to 1.34.433 minutes. After that, there was no further improvement. On Sunday, Martin, Frey and Michelle Gatting from Denmark will start the race from seventh on the grid. The successful Iron Dames initiative to promote girls and women in motorsport is cooperating closely with Porsche Motorsport from this year onwards.

The Manthey 1st Phorm sister car did not make it past qualifying. In Sao Paulo, the number 92 car has

to take some success ballast on board, which has a negative impact on lap times. Ryan Hardwick set the 13th fastest lap in 1.35.504 minutes. The American shares the Porsche with Italian Riccardo Pera and factory driver Richard Lietz from Austria. Together, the trio recently won the LMGT3 class of the 24 Hours of Le Mans and lead the drivers' standings before the start of the Brazilian round of the season.

New track surface at Interlagos: thorough analysis is the key

The 4.309-kilometre Autódromo José Carlos Pace has a special feature this year: a new asphalt surface. The teams have to take this into account when preparing for the 6-hour race. Michelin is at the forefront for the cars in the hypercar class. For the first time, Porsche Motorsport's tyre partner is using a new, further improved measuring device called AMES for the analysis.

"This equipment allows us to precisely determine the micro and macro structures of the asphalt," explains Philippe Rocher, the Tyre Advisor of the French manufacturer responsible for the Porsche Penske Motorsport works team. "It scans the road surface with two laser sensors and creates a precise 3D representation of the condition – how open or closed the asphalt is, how rough it is and so on. This can take up to six minutes per measurement point, but allows us to draw precise conclusions about the tyre wear and grip conditions we can expect."

Michelin measured the track in Interlagos at 29 individual points – usually at the corner entry points, at the apex and at the exit of corners. The position of these points is precisely recorded using GPS data in order to be able to recognise possible deviations at exactly the same points in future years.

The results of this in-depth analysis help Romain Gineste in his work. As Head of Track Engineering, the Frenchman is responsible for the set-up of the Porsche 963 in the WEC. New tarmac surfaces are nothing new for the Porsche Motorsport engineer. "If we can test on the revised circuits in advance, as we did recently at Spa-Francorchamps, for example, it's easy. Here in Interlagos that was not possible, which creates a certain amount of uncertainty. Of course, the information from Michelin helps us a lot,\" confirms Gineste. "But we also take a look at the surface ourselves during the track walk: is the track flat or bumpy, does the quality remain clean or is it changeable? In general, we don't tend to overreact to a new surface. In fact, the new tarmac here in Sao Paulo hardly has any effect: The track has become a little faster, tyre wear could increase slightly. We are using the same tyres as in 2024 and don't expect any surprises."

The 6 Hours of Sao Paulo on television

The endurance race on the outskirts of the megacity of São Paulo starts on Sunday at 11:30 local time (16:30 CEST). The FIA WEC's paid-for app supplements the live stream of the entire competition with live timing.

Drivers' comments on qualifying

Julien Andlauer (Porsche 963 #5):"For our number 5 Porsche, second place on the grid is an even better result as last time out at Le Mans. I'm quite happy with this outcome because we improved very well over the free practice sessions and optimised the performance potential of our 963 over one lap. In terms of lap times, we couldn't beat the two Cadillacs in front of us. It was a lot of fun on the track. But the race is still to come. We will prepare properly and hopefully finish on the podium."

Kévin Estre (Porsche 963 #6):"Seventh place on the grid is ok, but not what we wanted to achieve. Pole position was just as out of reach for us today as the third-fastest time for our sister car. We now have to analyse that. But no matter: at least we have a much better grid position than in the previous races of the season. We should be much more competitive in the race, but overtaking is difficult on this track. Nevertheless, we can still achieve a strong result."

Nico Varrone (Porsche 963 #99):"I think we did a good job. During the free practice sessions, we were able to do a lot of set-up work on our Porsche 963 and improve bit by bit. It's a shame that we missed the Hyperpole by less than a tenth of a second. We want to get the maximum out of the race tomorrow."

Rahel Frey (Porsche 911 GT3 R #85):"In the Hyperpole for the first time! Thanks a lot to Célia – of course it's great that we were finally able to take part in the top ten shootout! With new tyres and a light car, it's always a great feeling on the track. Seventh place is our best starting position so far. The steps we have taken have all been in the right direction: we are gaining speed and taking the momentum with us – that was the aim of the season. We now want to build on that. Tomorrow, we have to get through without any problems. In a long-distance race, you can't win the race on the first lap. We'll just carry on as before."

Ryan Hardwick (Porsche 911 GT3 R #92):"Due to the success ballast we have on board, we lose about half a second per lap here at Interlagos. Without this extra weight, we would have easily made it into the Hyperpole – but that's the price we have to pay for our victory at Le Mans and the lead in the championship. The potential of the 911 GT3 R is demonstrated by our Iron Dames sister car, which reached the Hyperpole for the first time."

Qualifying results

Hypercar class:
1. Lynn/Nato/Stevens (GBR/FRA/GBR), Cadillac #12, 1.22.570 minutes
2. Andlauer/Christensen (FRA/DNK), Porsche 963 #5, 1.22.834 minutes
3. Bamber/Bourdais/Button (NZL/FRA/GBR), Cadillac #38, 1.22.670 minutes (demoted by one position on the grid)
7. Estre/Vanthoor (FRA/BEL), Porsche 963 #6, 1.23.159 minutes

12. Jani/Pino/Varrone (CHE/CHL/ARG), Porsche 963 #99, 1.23.740 minutes

LMGT3 class:

1. McIntosh/Barrichello/Hasse Clot (USA/BRA/FRA), Aston Martin #10, 1.33.849 minutes
2. Umbrarescu/Schmid/Lopez (ROU/AUT/ARG), Lexus #87, 1.33.873 minutes
3. Robin/Gehrsitz/Nakayama (FRA/DEU/JPN), Lexus #78, 1.33.963 minutes
7. Martin/Frey/Gatting (FRA/CHE/DNK), Porsche 911 GT3 R #85, 1.34.433 minutes
13. Hardwick/Pera/Lietz (USA/ITA/AUT), Porsche 911 GT3 R #92, 1.35.504 minutes

MEDIA ENQUIRIES



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