

Porsche Motorsport Weekly Event Notes: Tuesday, June 10, 2019

10/06/2019 Wright On Top. 2017 Champions Return to SRO Victory Lane at Sonoma.

Porsche Profile. Event Story Lines. Le Mans Championship. Porsche Brings Full Force to Win 24 and WEC Title.

The 24 Hours of Le Mans, scheduled for June 15 – 16, marks the final round of the 2018/2019 Super Season of the FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC). After the Porsche GT Team clinched the WEC Manufacturers' title at the previous six-hour race at Spa-Francorchamps (Belgium), the focus now turns to the duel between the Porsche "works" pilots for the drivers' world championship title. At the 24-hour race, the championship drivers' title will go to either Kévin Estre (France) and Michael Christensen (Denmark) in the No. 92 Porsche 911 RSR or Gianmaria Bruni (Italy) and the Austrian Richard Lietz in the No. 91. As last year's Le Mans winners, Porsche will campaign four factory cars in the LMGTE-Pro class, like in 2018. A total of ten Porsche 911 RSR race cars will tackle the twice-around the clock endurance event on the legendary Circuit de la Sarthe. Three customer squads join the works efforts to field another six ca. 510 hp sports cars from Weissach, Germany at the Le Mans classic.

The 24 Hours of Le Mans is considered the most venerable long-distance event in the world; the "grandfather of all sports car racing". The first running of the race was in 1923 to showcase automotive innovation, durability and performance. This year marks the 87th running of the Le Mans 24-hour race. On the afternoon of June 15, 62 vehicles will start in four classes in the largest field to ever contest the race on the 8.47-mile (13.626-kilometers) racetrack. The course is a combination of permanent racecourse (Circuit Bugatti) and public roads that are closed to traffic during the event. The famous Mulsanne Straight – also known as Hunaudières – serves as the main route between Le Mans and Tours every other day of the year. The fast "Porsche Curves" are famous and notorious.

The 2018 race winners, Michael Christensen (Denmark), Kévin Estre (France) and Laurens Vanthoor (Belgium), join forces again in the No. 92 Porsche 911 RSR. The No. 91 sister car is driven by Gianmaria Bruni (Italy) and Richard Lietz (Austria) as well as Frédéric Makowiecki (France), who supported them at last year's Le Mans endurance race. To celebrate the Manufacturer's Championship, the pair of WEC-focused factory cars will replace the red stripe through the traditional corporate red, white and black livery with gold. The two 911 from the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship will be decked out in the livery of the highly successful North American team, Brumos Racing. Sharing the cockpit of the No. 93 car are Earl Bamber (New Zealand), Nick Tandy (Great Britain) and Patrick Pilet (France). The youngest Porsche crew, Sven Müller (Germany) and the two Porsche Young Professionals Mathieu Jaminet (France) and Dennis Olsen (Norway), split driving duties in the cockpit of the No. 94. The Porsche GT Team from the U.S. endurance series has won the three most recent WeatherTech GTLM

class races at Sebring, Long Beach and Mid-Ohio.

With support from Porsche Spokesperson and actor Patrick Dempsey (Malibu, California), the Porsche customer team Proton Racing faces its largest undertaking at the 24-hour race. Dempsey-Proton Racing brings four Porsche 911 RSR to Le Mans this year. Two-time 24 Hours of Le Mans-winner and Porsche factory driver Patrick Long (Manhattan Beach, California) shares the No. 99 cockpit with Tracy Krohn (Houston, Texas) and Niclas Jönsson (Sweden). Sharing the wheel of the No. 77 car is team owner Christian Ried (Germany), Porsche Young Professional Matt Campbell (Australia) and Porsche Junior Julien Andlauer from France. In the No. 88 sister car, Porsche Young Professional Matteo Cairoli (Italy) joins forces with Satoshi Hoshino from Japan and the Italian Giorgio Roda. Representing Proton Competition, the Italian father-son duo Louis and Philippe Prette as well as Vincent Abril (France) compete in the No. 78 Porsche 911 RSR.

The Team Project 1 fights for the title in the LMGTE-Am class entering the season's final race with works driver Jörg Bergmeister (Germany) as well as Patrick Lindsey (Santa Barbara, California) and Egidio Perfetti (Norway). In their maiden season in the FIA WEC, the customer squad heads to the final round at Le Mans leading the team and drivers' classifications. Project 1 lines up on the grid with the No. 56 Porsche 911 RSR painted as an Art Car. The American pop art artist Richard Phillips created the distinctive design that was unveiled at the Le Mans pre-tests on June 2. Porsche Young Professional Thomas Preining (Austria) shares driving duties in Gulf Racing's vehicle (No. 86) with the two British drivers Benjamin Barker and Michael Wainwright.

The 24 Hours of Le Mans takes the start on Saturday, June 15, 2019. Just one free practice is held on the previous Wednesday, June 12. One qualifying session then takes place on Wednesday, June 12 followed by two qualifying sessions on Thursday, June 13.

Fritz Enzinger, Vice President Motorsport.

"We've already claimed the manufacturers' title, and now one of our WEC driver teams will bring home the drivers' championship. The situation in the lead-up to the season finale couldn't be better. Still, we have big goals. We want to win the 24 Hours of Le Mans again. In the current era of the sports car world championship, no manufacturer has managed to win the GTE-Pro class at the French classic twice in a row. Porsche should be the first to do this. Perhaps the Porsche legend Hurley Haywood, who takes the honorary role of Grand Marshal this year, will bring us an extra portion of luck.

Pascal Zurlinden, Director GT Factory Motorsport.

"We've experienced unprecedented success this season. And our American Porsche GT Team is at an all-time high after three straight wins. All of the drivers, both teams and everyone involved are heading to the biggest race of the year feeling confident and motivated. When facing such a challenge, it doesn't get much better than this."

Gianmaria Bruni, Driver, No. 91 Porsche GT Team Porsche 911 RSR.

"Last year Porsche celebrated a two victories. This dream will be difficult to repeat at Le Mans. We, in

the number 91 Porsche 911 RSR, only have theoretical chances to claim the drivers' title. Still, we'll do our utmost, but at the same time we don't want jeopardize the success of the en-tire team. We want to enjoy the race and ultimately see where we end up in the drivers' world championship. One thing is certain: the title will go to Porsche drivers. That's what counts."

Richard Lietz, Driver, No. 91 Porsche GT Team Porsche 911 RSR.

"The Super Season went brilliantly for Porsche – completely independent of the results at the Le Mans finale. The manufacturers' title is safe; two Porsche crews will now battle for the drivers' world championship. Does this mean we have no goals left? On the contrary: The 24 Hours of Le Mans is so incredibly prestigious that you just want to win."

Frédéric Makowiecki, Driver, No. 91 Porsche GT Team Porsche 911 RSR.

"Le Mans is the highlight of every race season. Every driver thinks this, but even more so for me as a Frenchman. Porsche arrives as the world champions, so we have less pressure than usual. Ever since I started racing, I've been trying to finally win the Le Mans 24 Hours. I think the conditions are particularly good this year, because everyone is in a great mood and relatively relaxed. This often has a positive effect on the race."

Kévin Estre, Driver, No. 92 Porsche GT Team Porsche 911 RSR.

"I'm feeling a bit torn. On the one hand, Michael and I want to win the drivers' title. To do this we have to score decent points, but we don't have to risk everything. On the other hand, Le Mans is a race you definitely want to win. We experienced how wonderful it is to climb to the top of the podium at Le Mans in 2018. You can never get enough of it. So, do we adopt a strategic approach to win the title or do we risk it and go for victory? We're not yet ready to commit ourselves in this regard."

Michael Christensen, Driver, No. 92 Porsche GT Team Porsche 911 RSR.

"I'm super excited. It's a very special feeling to return as last year's winner to this venue. If you've conquered this huge challenge and climbed to the top podium step, you want to experience it over and over again. Aside from this, it would also yield us the drivers' world champion title. That would fulfill another dream."

Laurens Vanthoor, Driver, No. 92 Porsche GT Team Porsche 911 RSR.

"Porsche is making a huge effort, with four works cars contesting Le Mans. The preparation is massive, and the commitment is very intensive in every respect. Such dedication deserves success. Last year, Le Mans was kind to us. I hope it'll be similar this year. Aside from that, I'd like to help my colleagues in the number 92 car win the drivers' world championship crown."

Earl Bamber, Driver, No. 93 Porsche GT Team Porsche 911 RSR.

"Le Mans is the biggest race for us. For the past few weeks, Porsche has been on a real high, not least thanks to our victories in the USA. Now, we're travelling to Le Mans with four cars decked out in awesome designs. Even at the pre-test, the fans were delighted."

Patrick Pilet, Driver, No. 93 Porsche GT Team Porsche 911 RSR.

"I've raced at Le Mans a lot and I'm very familiar with the quirks of the track and the entire event. This year, I again expect the competition in the GTE-Pro class to be really tough with 17 cars from six different manufacturers. Porsche won Le Mans in 2018, so we know how it goes. We want to repeat this achievement."

Nick Tandy, Driver, No. 93 Porsche GT Team Porsche 911 RSR.

"For us drivers, it doesn't matter if you've contested Le Mans once or many times: the race is always something special. With our Porsche 911 RSR from the IMSA Series we're actually guest starters, because we can't earn points in the FIA WEC. That's why we're regarding it as a one-off event, which we definitely want to win following on the heels of our successes this year in North America."

Sven Müller, Driver, No. 94 Porsche GT Team Porsche 911 RSR.

"A year of waiting is finally over. We're now tackling the greatest automobile race in the world – the absolute highlight of every season. I think it's great that we get the chance to compete as one of the youngest driver line-ups. We're the youngsters of the works team in the number 94 car. But age is just a number. We all have racing experience and stand a good chance. The works squad from the USA managed to adjust quickly to the special characteristics at Le Mans last year. We're ready."

Mathieu Jaminet, Driver, No. 94 Porsche GT Team Porsche 911 RSR.

"As a Frenchman it was always my big goal to contest the 24 Hours of Le Mans. Now I'm finally fulfilling this dream. We're certainly the underdogs of the Porsche GT Teams because we have the least experience. Still, our expectations are high. We'll have a great car. If we concentrate and work flawlessly and consistently, anything is possible. I simply want to enjoy the whole thing."

Dennis Olsen, Driver, No. 94 Porsche GT Team Porsche 911 RSR.

"I'm coming to Le Mans as a rookie, and I'm one of very few Norwegians to have ever driven there. What's more, this is the first time I'll drive the Porsche 911 RSR for the works team. It's something very special for me to start at this classic race. I've prepared for Le Mans in a simulator. In this way, I not only familiarized myself with the extraordinary racetrack, but also learned a lot about driving efficiently and looking after the tires. That was exciting and very helpful."

Patrick Long, Driver, No. 99 Dempsey-Proton Racing Porsche 911 RSR.

"This is my 16th time in a row at Le Mans. No other North American has managed this, and that makes me very proud. Personally, I have a special relationship to Le Mans, because in 1999, early in my racing career, I lived there and learned a great deal about motor racing. This year I share a car with Tracy Krohn and Niclas Jönsson for the first time. I've already contested a number of races against these guys. Now we're finally a team. That'll be very interesting."

Jörg Bergmeister, Driver, No. 56 Team Project 1 Porsche 911 RSR.

"You can't plan for success at Le Mans. It's always a huge achievement just to get the car across the line after 24 hours. Our focus is to finish the race with the stunning Art Car. If we succeed and maintain a decent position then our chances of winning the championship look good. That's exactly what we want to do."

Matt Campbell, No. 77 Dempsey-Proton Racing Porsche 911 RSR.

"We won the GTE-Am class at Le Mans last year. That was a huge triumph that we're keen to repeat. But many, many factors play a role over the 24 hours; and you can't influence some of them. We'll have a fast car and we'll try to get the most out of what's possible again this year."

Porsche Performance. German Marque Sets Standard at Le Mans.

Porsche is by far the most successful marque in the almost 100-year history of the long-distance race in France. The sports car manufacturer has notched up 19 overall victories and 107 class wins. Porsche drivers have set many records on the storied racetrack. Hans Herrmann (Germany) and Richard Attwood (Great Britain) achieved the first overall victory for Porsche at Le Mans at the wheel of a 917K. A year later, Helmut Marko (Austria) and Gijs van Lennep (Netherlands) set a distance record of 3,315.21 miles (5,335.31 kilometers) in an identical car that remained unbroken for 39 years. Prior to this, Britain's Jackie Oliver posted a lap time of 3:13.600 minutes in the Porsche 917LH – an achievement that has yet to be matched in an official session. In 2018, Gianmaria Bruni set a new record for GT cars at Le Mans with a qualifying lap time of 3:47.504 minutes.

Wright On Top. 2017 Champions Return to SRO Victory Lane at Sonoma.

2017 SRO Blancpain GT World Challenge America championship-winning Wright Motorsports returned to the series formerly known as Pirelli World Challenge earlier this year after a year competing in the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship. Now, the John Wright-owned program returns to victory lane with a race win in the second 90-minute event of the weekend at Sonoma Raceway in California. Porsche Factory Driver Patrick Long (Thousand Oaks, California) and Porsche Selected Driver Scott Hargrove (Canada) piloted the No. 58 Porsche Consulting Wright Motorsports Porsche 911 GT3 R to the overall win on Sunday, June 9.

GMG Racing also returned to victory lane in the No. 14 Porsche 911 GT3 R. The Orange County, California-based operation had not campaigned a Porsche in the SRO GT3-spec series since 2018 but returned for two events starting with the race in Northern California. Porsche works driver Dirk Werner (Germany) was joined by owner/driver James Sofronas (Newport Beach, California) to capture the Pro-Am class title in the June 9 race. The No. 91 Wright Motorsports Porsche with Porsche Young Professional Matt Campbell (Australia) and Anthony Imperato (Brooklyn, New York) finished in third place in the Pro-Am category.

Sweet 16. Porsche Works Driver Long Becomes America's Le Mans Endurance Man.

With the conclusion of a successful pre-test for the 2019 24 Hours of Le Mans fading, and the drop of the green flag in sight, Porsche factory driver Patrick Long (Manhattan Beach, California) is closing in on a milestone. When the 2019 race starts, Long will take part in his 16th consecutive Le Mans endurance event, establishing a record for starts at the classic race by a driver from the United States. American drivers and teams have long held a fascination with the French race: Phil Hill, Carroll Shelby, Al Holbert, Hurley Haywood, Mario Andretti and Masten Gregory have all written chapters in the story of "Yanks" racing in France.

Since winning the GT class as a fresh-faced "works" debutant in 2004 with the American team White

Lightning Racing, Long has gone on to claim a second victory with the French IMSA Performance Matmut program in 2007, a pole position (2008), fastest race lap (2009) and a total of five podium finishes.

In 2004, Long shared driving duties with Germans Sascha Maassen and Jörg Bergmeister, as the upstart White Lightning team led home a Porsche 1-2-3 in the GT class.

For 2007, Long joined racing driver and IMSA Performance team owner Raymond Narac (France) and fellow factory driver Richard Leitz (Austria) atop the Le Mans podium, when they won the GT2 class. Long would go on to make three Le Mans starts with IMSA Performance.

Three times (2006, 2011, 2012) Long drove at Le Mans with the American and perennial fan favorite team Flying Lizard Motorsports, and his three-year partnership with actor, racing driver and Dempsey Proton Racing team owner Patrick Dempsey would net Long his fourth podium finish at Le Mans, a second-place, in 2015.

The media attention during the years when Dempsey and Long were teammates, particularly in 2013 (coinciding with the filming of the television miniseries Patrick Dempsey: Racing Le Mans) was intense, but Long famously gained admirers for a fracas with an aggressive photographer during a nighttime pit stop.

For 2019, Long will race in the LMGTE-AM class, driving for the seventh consecutive year with Dempsey Proton Racing. He'll team with fellow Tracy Krohn (Houston, Texas) and Sweden's Nic Jönsson for his 16th race start. Now, as ever, Long will be at the controls of the Porsche 911 RSR race car, looking to increase his tally of podium accolades at the most iconic endurance race in the world.

Patrick Long, Driver, No. 99 Dempsey-Proton Racing Porsche 911 RSR. "I attended my first 24 Hours of Le Mans in 2003 as spectator and thought to myself 'it would be awesome to one time, one day take part in this race'. Never have I taken the privilege of racing in what is considered the Super Bowl of sports car racing for granted. To be heading there for my sixteenth consecutive start is something that still hasn't sunk in. I'm not usually one to get my focus into stats, but this is a special milestone in my career. It's all down to the prestige of the race and all of my heroes who have also competed at Le Mans. In one aspect, it's business as usual, but in another there will be a few moments to pause and digest what a cool opportunity I've had over the years with Porsche."

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Frank Wiesmann - Motorsports and Brand Heritage

Manager, Product Communications

770-290-3414

frank.wiesmann@porsche.us

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