

Porsche Penske Motorsport also claims podium result in the WEC

16/04/2023 Porsche Penske Motorsport has wrapped up round two of the FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC) at the Autódromo Internacional do Algarve with a podium result. After six hours of racing, Laurens Vanthoor, Kévin Estre and André Lotterer crossed the finish line third with their Porsche 963. For the works team, this marks the second major success with the LMDh prototype within a few hours: In Long Beach, California, their team colleagues had won the 100-minute sprint race in the IMSA WeatherTech Sportscar Championship, with the sister Porsche 963 securing third place. In the GTE-Am class, a Porsche also clinched a podium result in Portugal. At the wheel of their Iron Dames' 911 RSR, Sarah Bovy, Rahel Frey and Michelle Gatting fought hard for victory over long stretches and ultimately reached the flag in third place.

The Race

This was the first time that the Porsche Penske Motorsport works team contested two races on two continents almost at the same time on one weekend. The transatlantic teamwork between the IMSA

and World Endurance Champion crews paid off for the sports car manufacturer. In Long Beach, Nick Tandy (United Kingdom) and Matthieu Jaminet (France) drove to victory in the Porsche 963 after a highly dramatic 100-minute sprint. Their teammates Felipe Nasr (Brazil) and Matt Campbell (Australia) were celebrated for their hard-fought third place.

The two Porsche 963 campaigned by the WEC team headed into the six-hour race on the Autódromo Internacional do Algarve from positions five and seven. In the first few metres, Laurens Vanthoor promptly overtook one of the two Ferrari in his No. 6 hybrid prototype, however after ten minutes, the Belgian had to relinquish his fourth place. The strategic gamble after the first stint yielded greater rewards: Both Porsche 963 opted against changing the tyres during a refuelling stop. The time saved in the pits gave them a good ten seconds, which put them in third and eighth place.

While problems hampered several of their rivals in the first three hours, the No. 6 car was still on course for a podium result and the sister car managed to progress to fifth place up until midway through the race. With a good 100 minutes left on the clock, a problem involving the power steering forced the No. 5 prototype into the pits for a longer repair stop. Just under an hour later, it rejoined the race in P11 in the hypercar class.

At the beginning of the final hour of racing, the safety car was deployed for the first time so that a vehicle could be salvaged. For André Lotterer in his Porsche 963, the timing could not have been worse: For the No. 6 car, which had reclaimed third place, a pit stop was almost due. After the race restarted at about 5:10 pm local time, the No. 51 Ferrari directly behind him also had to pit. Lotterer managed to defend his position. With only a few laps to go, another refuelling stop added extra suspense: At the previous pit stop, not enough fuel had been pumped into the car due to a faulty sensor. However, the advantage over the now fourth-placed Cadillac was enough for the Porsche to cross the finish line behind the victorious Toyota driven by Brendon Hartley (New Zealand), Sébastien Buemi (Switzerland) and Ryo Hirakawa (Japan) as well as the Ferrari of Antonio Fuoco (Italy), Miguel Molina (Spain) and Niklas Nielsen (Denmark).

“A first and two second places on the same race weekend: This fantastic result shows that our parallel commitment in the WEC and the IMSA is bearing fruit – we’ve picked up speed,” explains Urs Kuratle, Director Factory Motorsport LMDh. “We had to fight here in Portimão, but all in all it worked out and we’re more than happy with third place. Our No. 5 car had a problem with the power steering and we now need to analyse this. We also need to take another close look at the reason behind the last refuelling stop that our No. 6 Porsche 963 had to make shortly before the finish. Still, it was great to see how focussed and goal-oriented the crew reacted under such tricky conditions in both cases.”

In the GTE-Am category, the 911 RSR fielded by the Iron Dames customer team put in an impressive performance over long stretches at round two of the WEC season. Sarah Bovy headed into the race from second on the grid but initially lost one position. After a lengthy duel with Ben Keating (UK) in his Chevrolet Corvette, the Belgian fought her way to the front after 45 minutes and then again after the first pit stop. The Swiss racer Rahel Frey extended the lead. It was only in the final third of the race that the pink Porsche had to let the Corvette and the No. 83 Ferrari pass. The 911 RSR of Project 1 – AO

shared by Matteo Cairoli (Italy) and the two Portuguese Miguel Ramos and Guilherme de Oliveira reached the flag in sixth place. They were followed over the line by the identical No. 77 model driven by Julien Andlauer (France), Mikkel Pedersen (Denmark) and Dempsey-Proton team boss Christian Ried (Germany).

Drivers' comments after the race

Kévin Estre (Porsche 963 #6): "This podium finish is really cool. That was hard work! Our mechanics have had very short nights. Third place is the reward for that. Honestly, this feels like a victory. But we still have to develop and improve the car. And we also have to maintain a flawless performance in the future."

Frédéric Makowiecki (Porsche 963 #5): "Congratulations to our sister car! I'm happy that a Porsche 963 is on the podium. Our race was very tough. We couldn't match the pace of the others and now we have to take some time to analyse what caused it, what's right and what's wrong. We want to be back up with the play at the next race in Spa."

Rahel Frey (Porsche 911 RSR #85): "We'll happily take this podium, of course. The points are important. However, we thought there was more in it for us. Unfortunately, we again made some minor mistakes. We have to eliminate them before Spa, and most importantly, Le Mans. Still, our pace was good and I'm proud of the girls. Despite us going all out on the track today, the Corvette and the Ferrari were slightly faster. We still have to find a bit of speed."

Results

Hypercar class:
1. Buemi/Hartley/Hirakawa (CH/NZ/J), Toyota #8, 222 laps
2. Fuoco/Molina/Nielsen (I/E/DK), Ferrari #50, 221 laps
3. Estre/Lotterer/Vanthoor (F/D/B), Porsche 963 #6, 221 laps
10. Cameron/Christensen/Makowiecki (USA/DK/F), Porsche 963 #5, 189 laps

GTE-Am class:
1. Keating/Varrone/Catsburg (USA/ARG/NL), Corvette #33, 206 laps
2. Perez Companc/Wadoux/Rovera (ARG/F/I), Ferrari #83, 206 laps
3. Bovy/Frey/Gatting (B/CH/DK), Porsche 911 RSR #85, 206 laps
6. Ramos/de Oliveira/Cairoli (P/P/I), Porsche 911 RSR #56, 205 laps
7. Ried/Pedersen/Andlauer (D/DK/F), Porsche 911 RSR #77, 205 laps
9. Hardwick/Robichon/Tincknell (USA/CDN/UK), Porsche 911 RSR #88, 204 laps
11. Wainwright/Pera/Barker (UK/I/UK), Porsche 911 RSR #86, 204 laps
12. Schiavoni/Cressoni/Picariello (I/I/B), Porsche 911 RSR #60, 203 laps

Full results on: fiawec.alkamelsystems.com

Qualifying

The Porsche 963 tackle this year's first FIA World Endurance Championship WEC race on European soil from grid rows three and four. Kévin Estre posted the fifth-best lap time in the Autódromo Internacional do Algarve. As such, Porsche Penske Motorsport has established itself as the third major player. Within the 11-strong Hypercar class, the works team fields the fastest hybrid prototype complying with the LMDh regulations. In the sister car, Frenchman Frédéric Makowiecki qualified in seventh. Of the six Porsche in the GTE Am category, the Iron Dames 911 RSR was among the fastest. Sarah Bovy, Michelle Gatting and Rahel Frey tackle the six-hour race from the second grid spot in their class.

The Porsche Penske Motorsport works team heads to round two of the FIA World Endurance Championship WEC with high hopes. After the opening round in Sebring (USA), the team will compete with the new Porsche 963 for the first time on a European racetrack in Portugal. The hybrid prototype, which was built in accordance with the LMDh regulations, contests the Hypercar class in the WEC. Porsche customer teams fight for victory in the GTE-Am category with six 911 RSR.

Frenchman Kévin Estre and his works driver teammates André Lotterer from Germany and Laurens Vanthoor (Belgium) take up round two of the FIA WEC season from P5 on Sunday. In the 15-minute qualifying, Estré clocked a lap time session of 1:32.404 minutes, thus beating the Hypercars from Peugeot and Cadillac, among others. At the wheel of Porsche Penske Motorsport's second Porsche 963, his fellow countryman Frédéric Makowiecki was only slightly slower on the 4.653-kilometre rollercoaster track with a time of 1:32.560 minutes. He shares the cockpit with Michael Christensen (Denmark) and the American Dane Cameron.

“Our Porsche 963 was the fastest LMDh racing car in today's qualifying,” states Urs Kuratle, Director Factory Motorsport LMDh. “The systematic work in the practice sessions paid off in the lap times. We were able to make the best of the opportunities here in Portimão and did a great job overall. We've made progress but we're definitely still too far off the LMH vehicles. Our solid performance makes us optimistic for tomorrow's race, even though the nice weather and warmer racetrack don't particularly play into our hands. Right now, we wish our guys the best of luck for round three of the IMSA season.”

In the GTE-Am category, the pink Porsche 911 RSR fielded by the Iron Dames squad once again gave a gripping show for pole position in this class. At the season opener in Sebring, Sarah Bovy beat the Corvette driven by Ben Keating from the UK. In Portimao, the Belgian and her teammates Michelle Gatting (Denmark) and Rahel Frey (Switzerland) line up on the second grid spot, just 0.217 seconds off the pole-sitter. Her top time in the second sector of the track remained unbeaten. In the second-best Porsche, local hero Miguel Pedro Ramos planted the racing car campaigned by Project1 – AO on position eight. The Portuguese driver shares the No. 56 cockpit with the former Porsche Junior Matteo Cairoli from Italy and his young compatriot Guilherme de Oliveira. Position nine in the GTE Am class is occupied by Dempsey Proton's No. 77 Porsche driven by team boss Christian Ried (Germany), Mikkel

Pedersen (Denmark) and Julien Andlauer. The Frenchman also came up through the ranks via the Porsche Junior initiative.

The six-hour endurance race on the 4.653-kilometre rollercoaster circuit close to Portugal's Algarve coast takes off at noon on Sunday (1:00 pm CEST). The TV station RTL Nitro broadcasts the last race hour live on free TV. Large segments of the WEC season opener can also be viewed live on pay-TV Eurosport 2. For a fee, the FIA WEC app provides a live stream and live timing.

Also today, round three of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship will get underway in Long Beach (USA). There, the two Porsche 963 fielded by the Porsche Penske Motorsport works team tackle a sprint race over just 100 minutes at 2:05 pm local time (CEST: 11:05 pm). Outside the USA and Canada, the entire race can be viewed live on the website IMSA.tv.

Drivers' comments after the qualifying

Kévin Estre (Porsche 963 #6): "Not a bad session. We're certainly still too far off pole position, but we managed to further improve our qualifying package. At the moment we're behind Toyota and Ferrari. But unlike in Sebring, we're now ahead of Cadillac, and that's an improvement. Our race preparations are going well and that's definitely different from the qualifying. Peugeot and Cadillac are currently our closest rivals. Let's see if we can do better than Ferrari over the race distance."

Frédéric Makowiecki (Porsche 963 #5): "The qualifying was acceptable. However, I made two or three little mistakes and didn't quite pull a perfect lap together. All in all, our performance was good. Our preparation and the choice of tyres are geared towards the race. Let's see what we can achieve tomorrow."

Sarah Bovy (Porsche 911 RSR #85): "Second on the grid for tomorrow's race is definitely a great spot given the extremely high level of competition. This distance suits me and the other two ladies very much. We've already won the ELMS in Portimão. Still, it's very easy to make a mistake here. We'll stay focused and try to get the best out of it."

Results

Hypercar class:
1. Buemi/Hartley/Hirakawa (CH/NZ/J), Toyota #8, 1:30.171 minutes
2. Conway/Kobayashi/Lopez (UK/J/ARG), Toyota #7, 1:30.444 minutes
3. Fuoco/Molina/Nielsen (I/E/DK), Ferrari #50, 1:31.596 minutes
5. Estre/Lotterer/Vanthoor (F/D/B), Porsche 963 #6, 1:32.404 minutes
7. Cameron/Christensen/Makowiecki (USA/DK/F), Porsche 963 #5, 1:32.560 minutes

GTE-Am class:

1. Keating/Varrone/Catsburg (USA/ARG/NL), Corvette #33, 1:41.362 minutes
2. Bovy/Frey/Gatting (B/CH/DK), Porsche 911 RSR #85, 1:41.579 minutes
3. Alessi/Mann/de Pauw (I/USA/B), Ferrari 488 GTE Evo #21, 1:41.628 minutes
8. Pedro Ramos/de Oliveira/Cairoli (P/P/I), Porsche 911 RSR #56, 1:42.024 minutes
9. Ried/Pedersen/Andlauer (D/DK/F), Porsche 911 RSR #77, 1:42.105 minutes
10. Hardwick/Robichon/Tincknell (USA/CDN/UK), Porsche 911 RSR #88, 1:42.198 minutes
13. Wainwright/Pera/Barker (UK/I/UK), Porsche 911 RSR #86, 1:43.273 minutes
14. Schiavoni/Cressoni/Picariello (I/I/B), Porsche 911 RSR #60, 1:43.528 minutes

Full results on: fiawec.alkamelsystems.com

Preview

Next weekend, Portimão will host a round of the FIA World Endurance Championship WEC for the second time since 2021. The Autódromo Internacional do Algarve serves as the stage for the European debut of the new Porsche 963. After a solid performance at the 1,000 Miles of Sebring in the USA, the Porsche Penske Motorsport works team has set its sights on a podium spot at the second race of the season. The Mannheim-based WEC squad knows the circuit from extensive tests there recently. Consequently, the driver crews, engineers and mechanics are well prepared to tackle the six-hour race. Given the racetrack's undulating nature and fast corners, the so-called “Algarve rollercoaster” promises plenty of action. The demanding track layout puts the Michelin tyres under stress and throws physical challenges at the drivers.

“Our Porsche Penske Motorsport works team collected critical information from the season opener in Sebring,” says Thomas Laudenbach, Vice President Porsche Motorsport. “Using this data and experience as a basis, we now have to get much more potential out of the Porsche 963. I’m confident that the processes in our newly formed WEC squad are constantly improving. We aim to achieve our first podium result at the race in Portugal.”

“Our two teams are competing at the same time on both sides of the Atlantic – the WEC squad in Portimão and the IMSA crew in Long Beach,” explains Urs Kuratle. The Director Factory Motorsport LMDh adds: “Although the venues are very different due to their unique characteristics, the teams are in close communication with each other. Every kilometre driven in each series helps us to understand the car better. The circuit in Portugal is notorious for its rough asphalt. This means not only high grip levels but high tyre wear. Thus, the key to success lies in making the best possible use of the Michelin racing tyres.”

Jonathan Diuguid, Managing Director Porsche Penske Motorsport: “After Sebring, our WEC programme has a lot to build upon and we are encouraged as we head to Portimão. We had a great test there before the season and were able to simulate some race conditions, which really helped our team prepare for the opener and for this race. Then, we had a solid outing in Sebring where we didn’t experience any major issues and was able to get our team a full race weekend together. Now, we want to take what we

learned from all of that, plus some of the data we've been able to collect from the IMSA programme, and apply it to the second race of the year at Portimão."

The WEC race

Opened in 2008, the Autódromo Internacional do Algarve is nestled in the hilly hinterland of the Atlantic coast close to the resorts of Portimão and Lagos. The 4.684-kilometre circuit, which has hosted Formula 1 twice, features 16 turns and many rolling passages. The steepest downhill section of the track has an incline of over twelve per cent. Drivers also face several blind corners and deep gravel beds. The start-finish straight stretches over 969 metres.

Porsche teams and drivers

In the FIA WEC, the Porsche Penske Motorsport factory squad fields two LMDh-prototypes in the Hypercar class. In accordance with the current Balance of Performance (BoP), the power output is 516 kW (702 PS). In the No. 5 cockpit is occupied by Dane Cameron from the USA, Frenchman Frédéric Makowiecki and Michael Christensen from Denmark. Kévin Estre (France), André Lotterer (Germany) and Laurens Vanthoor (Belgium) share the No. 6 sister car.

Porsche's customer teams campaign six of the 911 RSR racers in the GTE-Am category. Iron Dames is the only all-female team in the WEC. The pink No. 85 nine-eleven is driven by Sarah Bovy from Belgium, Michelle Gatting from Denmark and Rahel Frey from Switzerland. Sharing driving duties in the No. 60 sister car of the Iron Lynx squad are Italians Claudio Schiavoni and Matteo Cressoni as well as Alessio Picariello from Belgium.

In Dempsey-Proton Racing's No. 77 entry, team owner Christian Ried from Germany joins forces with Mikkel Pedersen from Denmark and the former Porsche-Junior Julien Andlauer from France. In the No. 88 Porsche 911, Proton Competition puts its trust in Ryan Hardwick from the USA, Canadian Zacharie Robichon and UK driver Harry Tincknell.

The No. 56 Porsche 911 RSR campaigned by Project 1 – AO is helmed by the two Portuguese Guilherme de Oliveira and Miguel Ramos as well as Matteo Cairoli. The Italian has also come up through the ranks from the Porsche-Junior squad. Michael Wainwright and Ben Barker from the UK share GR Racing's No. 86 cockpit with Riccardo Pera from Italy.

Overview of the teams and drivers

Hypercar class (Porsche 963):
Porsche Penske Motorsport (#5): Dane Cameron (USA), Michael Christensen (DK), Fréderic Makowiecki (F)

Porsche Penske Motorsport (#6): Kévin Estre (F), André Lotterer (D), Laurens Vanthoor (B)

GTE-Am class (Porsche 911 RSR):
Project1 – AO (#56): Matteo Cairoli (I), Guilherme de Oliveira (P), Miguel Ramos (P)
Iron Lynx (#60): Claudio Schiavoni (I), Matteo Cressoni (I), Alessio Picariello (B)
Dempsey-Proton Racing (#77): Christian Ried (D), Mikkel Pedersen (DK), Julien Andlauer (F)
Iron Dames (#85): Sarah Bovy (B), Michelle Gatting (DK), Rahel Frey (CH)
GR Racing (#86): Michael Wainwright (UK), Riccardo Pera (I), Ben Barker (UK)
Proton Competition (#88): Ryan Hardwick (USA), Zacharie Robichon (CDN), Harry Tincknell (UK)

The schedule (local time, CEST -1 hour)

Friday, 14 April
10:30 am – noon: Free practice 1
3:30 pm – 5:00 pm: Free practice 2

Saturday, 15 April
11:15 am – 12:15 pm: Free practice 3
3:30 pm – 3:45 pm: Qualifying GTE-Am
4:20 pm – 4:35 pm: Qualifying Hypercar

Sunday, 16 April
Noon – 6:00 pm: Race

Drivers' comments ahead of the race

Michael Christensen (Porsche 963 #5): "I'm curious to see in Portimão if we can improve on our Sebring performance. The previous race didn't go as we'd hoped because we still lacked a bit of power. After the weekend we immediately went testing. We feel that we've made some progress. Hopefully, we can put that into practice in Portugal and fight for decent positions."

Kevin Estré (Porsche 963 #6): "We tested in Portimão in late February so we're not starting from scratch. Compared to the opening round in Sebring, we expect a familiar racetrack surface – without bumps. Everything will also be more 'normal' for the rest of our WEC crew, like the pit stops for example. The team has kept up the hard work between the two races and we anticipate a better performance."

Julien Andlauer (Porsche 911 RSR #77): "We had a good start to the season in Sebring with second place. Everything worked pretty well right off the bat. We're pleased with the car, the driver crew, the technical side, the engineers and the mechanics. Now we're heading to Portimão – a circuit that I particularly enjoy with the 911 RSR. I'm determined to earn more points there. We'll do our best to bring

home another trophy."

Rahel Frey (Porsche 911 RSR #85): "The race in Portugal's Algarve is another special one on the WEC calendar. The circuit is like a rollercoaster with its undulating layout, which always promises a lot of action. We know all about emotional rollercoaster rides from Sebring. After Sarah Bovy's great pole position performance in qualifying, I made a mistake that had unfortunate consequences and hampered us from achieving a better result. That means we have a lot to make up for. We feel incredibly comfortable in the Porsche and we have the pace. This was evident in Florida. We have a great crew and strong team members as support, which makes us even more competitive. We're ready to take on the challenge in Portimão and we can't wait."

Ryan Hardwick (Porsche 911 RSR #88): "At the season opener in Sebring, we were the unwitting victims of an accident in the second practice session which sadly heralded an early end to our race weekend. Now I'm very much looking forward to racing against the rest of the WEC field in Portimão. I tested the 911 RSR here last autumn and I like the track a lot. I think we have a strong driver line-up in the number 88 car with Harry Tincknell, Zacharie Robichon and me. I can hardly wait to finally get cracking in Portugal."

MEDIA ENQUIRIES



Holger Eckhardt

Spokesperson Motorsports LMDh, GT, Customer Racing
+49 (0) 170 / 911 4982
holger.eckhardt@porsche.de

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Title: Porsche 963, Porsche Penske Motorsport (#6), Kevin Estre (F), Andre Lotterer (D), Laurens Vanthoor (B), Portugal, 2023, Porsche AG
Subline: Porsche 963, Porsche Penske Motorsport: Kevin Estre, Andre Lotterer and Laurens Vanthoor

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Title: Urs Kuratle, Director Factory Motorsport LMDh, 2023, Porsche AG
Subline: Urs Kuratle, Director Factory Motorsport LMDh

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Dr. Ing. h.c. F. Porsche Aktiengesellschaft
Porscheplatz 1
70435 Stuttgart