

First and second for the Porsche 963 at the Le Mans dress rehearsal in Spa

11/05/2024 The customer team Hertz Team Jota has clinched the maiden victory for a privately run Porsche 963 in the FIA World Endurance Championship WEC. At the end of an action-packed six-hour race, Callum Ilott and Will Stevens from the UK benefited from an early refuelling stop before an extended break. Using a similar strategy, Porsche Penske Motorsport achieved second place with Laurens Vanthoor, André Lotterer and Kévin Estre.

The race

The other works car was forced to retire after an accident. In the LMGT3 category, the Porsche 911 GT3 R fielded by Manthey EMA secured class victory. Second place went to the Manthey PureRxcing's sister car, the winner of the season opener in Qatar. Huge crowds witnessed the six-hour race at the Circuit Spa-Francorchamps with more than 88,000 spectators flocking to round three of the FIA World

Endurance Championship WEC over the weekend. In spring-like air temperatures of 23 degrees Celsius and asphalt reaching 32 degrees, the race was split into two parts over a total of almost nine hours: before and after a 120-minute interruption.

A collision after four hours and 15 minutes required the race to be red-flagged so that crash barriers on the Kemmel straight could be replaced. It took until 7:15 pm local time for the race to resume for another 104 minutes. At this stage, Proton Competition's Porsche 963 was running in third place. Julien Andlauer from France and Switzerland's Neel Jani initially led the race for long stretches. However, like many other vehicles, after the restart, the customer team's prototype had to pit to refuel and fell back to ninth place. As a result, Andlauer launched a spirited charge to catch up, which ultimately yielded him fifth place. The former Porsche Junior also set the fastest lap of the race in 2:06.459 minutes.

Things went better for Hertz Team Jota's No. 12 Porsche 963 and Porsche Penske Motorsport's No. 6 works car: both had already completed their penultimate pit stop shortly before the race was red-flagged. As a result, they promptly catapulted to first and second place. Fate seemed to be sealed: these two hybrid prototypes from Weissach would win. Jota's final driver Callum Ilott remained resolute despite coming under a determined attack by Kévin Estre. With 45 minutes left on the clock, Porsche Penske Motorsport opted for a different strategy in the last tyre change and fitted four new tyres for the decisive final sprint. However, the tactic failed to reap rewards. After their success at the season opener in Qatar, Estre (France), Laurens Vanthoor from Belgium and André Lotterer from Germany crossed the finish line in second place – a repeat of the Imola result. With this, the trio further extended the lead in the drivers' standings. Victory went to Ilott and his British teammate Will Stevens – the first win for a Porsche customer team with the 963.

The other works Porsche 963 driven by Frédéric Makowiecki, Michael Christensen and Matt Campbell started a WEC race from pole position for the second time this season. Starting driver Makowiecki managed to initially defend his lead. After a good 40 minutes, the Frenchman had to allow Julien Andlauer's Porsche to pass in a confusing lapping situation. Later, the No. 51 Ferrari also overtook. Shortly before the halfway mark, Denmark's Michael Christensen hit a curb at the end of the fast Blanchimont lefthander and scraped the side of the track barrier. The impact caused the high-voltage hybrid system to switch off for safety reasons. This signalled an early retirement for the No. 5 race car.

“There were a few major accidents that everyone involved escaped unharmed – that's the most important thing. Huge congratulations to Hertz Team Jota: What an amazing effort. They totally deserve this win. Proton Competition also delivered a top performance with the Porsche 963 and looked promising for a long stretch, but was ultimately hampered by the red flag. We've once again claimed the second step of the podium. Looking ahead to Le Mans, we feel excellently prepared.”

“While we're always looking ahead to the next challenge, we're proud to earn Team Penske's 100th sports car pole. Sports car racing is an important part of our team heritage, so this represents a significant milestone for our organisation,” underlined Roger Penske, Founder and Chairman Penske Corporation. “The success of Porsche Penske Motorsport this season is a reflection of the hard work

and commitment by our team members and our partners to build this programme. We appreciate the achievement of winning 100 poles and now we're focused on reaching our next milestone – earning our 100th win in a sports car competition."

LMGT3 class: First and second place for the Porsche 911 GT3 R as well

For Porsche customer team Manthey PureRxcing, starting the race already felt like a victory in itself: After a serious accident in the Hyperpole qualifying session, the No. 92 GT3 racing car had to be rebuilt overnight. This was completed at around seven in the morning. UK driver Alex Malykhin started the 6 Hours of Spa from eighth place and fought his way back to the front as the race progressed. At the helm of the Manthey EMA sister car, Australian Yasser Shahin set the fourth-fastest time in the Hyperpole session. Before the race was red-flagged, Morris Schuring (Netherlands) continued his formidable form and made the leap to first place.

After the restart, a nail-biting three-way battle for victory unfolded between the two Manthey racing cars and the two Lamborghini. The decisive moment came on the very last lap: the leading Iron Lynx car had to stop again for refuelling. Klaus Bachler's PureRxcing-Porsche had made better use of its fuel. However, the Austrian lacked the last reserves to fend off his compatriot Richard Lietz, who was charging from behind. As a result, first place went to Lietz, Schuring and Shahin ahead of Bachler, Joel Sturm (Germany) and Malykhin.

"After having rebuilt our No. 92 Porsche virtually overnight, this was an extremely intense race weekend," says Nicki Raeder, Managing Director of Manthey. "Nevertheless, we managed to bring home victory here. The number 91 sister car simply had more fuel reserves left at the end, while the other 911 GT3 R had to save a lot of petrol to keep the Lamborghini at bay. I'm extremely proud of the whole squad. That was a very special team effort."

The next round of this year's World Endurance Championship is considered by most to be the highlight of the WEC season: the 24 Hours of Le Mans on 15 and 16 June.

Drivers' comments after the race

Laurens Vanthoor (Porsche 963 #6): "This time, we had luck on our side in the midst of difficult conditions. But we also did everything we could to put ourselves in the right place. In terms of the championship, we're happy to take another second place – being championship leaders feels good. Nevertheless, we still have some work to do for the next race in Le Mans."

Michael Christensen (Porsche 963 #5):"I had a problem in 'Blanchimont' just before the end of the lap. The wind created changeable conditions in this high-speed corner – sometimes it worked flat-out,

sometimes it didn't. I veered a bit too far to the outside, but was still within the track limits when the underbody hit the kerb. As a result, I lost control of the car. That's a shame for the whole team. Until then, we were doing very well in the race. Sometimes small mistakes have big consequences."

Callum Ilott (Porsche 963 #12):"Unbelievable, absolutely unbelievable! I knew that we'd be strong this weekend. Our pace was good and we were able to use the red flag perfectly. At the end of the day, we benefited from that. Sometimes things just pay out the way they should!"

Julien Andlauer (Porsche 963 #99):"That was the best weekend so far for Proton Competition's Porsche 963. Our preparations went really well in the practice sessions for the first time this season. The setup was right, so were the tyres, strategy and energy management – the rest was pure racing. After the red flag, we initially slipped from third to ninth place. In the last two hours, I tried to make up as much ground as possible and gave it my all. But I couldn't do any better than fifth place. Now we're hugely motivated for the upcoming highlight of the year."

Morris Schuring (Porsche 911 GT3 R #91):"It was a rollercoaster of emotions – from the feeling of losing the victory completely all the way to Richie's fantastic final sprint. Now we've won the race, it's just incredible."

Joel Sturm (Porsche 911 GT3 R #92):"After yesterday's setback, I was barely even expecting to line up on the grid. But the team did an incredible job and rebuilt the car. Now we're on the podium in second place and even clinched a one-two with Manthey – you couldn't write a better story. I'm extremely happy for the whole team."

Race result

Hypercar class:
1. Stevens/Ilott (UK/UK), Porsche 963 #12, 141 laps
2. Estre/Lotterer/Vanthoor (F/D/B), Porsche 963 #6, 141 laps
3. Fuoco/Molina/Nielsen (I/E/DK), Ferrari #50, 141 laps
5. Andlauer/Jani (F/CH), Porsche 963 #99, 141 laps
DNF Campbell/Christensen/Makowiecki (AUS/DK/F), Porsche 963 #5, 64 laps
DNF Button/Hanson/Rasmussen (UK/UK/DK), Porsche 963 #38, 37 laps

LMGT3 class:
1. Shahin/Schuring/Lietz (AUS/NL/A), Porsche 911 GT3 R #91, 130 laps
2. Malykhin/Sturm/Bachler (UK/D/A), Porsche 911 GT3 R #92, 130 laps
3. Schiavoni/Cressoni/Perera (I/I/F), Lamborghini #85, 2:20, 130 laps

Points standings FIA World Endurance Championship, Manufacturer
1. Porsche, 83 points
2. Toyota, 60 points

3. Ferrari, 49 points

FIA World Endurance Championship, Drivers
1. André Lotterer/Kévin Estre/Laurens Vanthoor, 74 points
2. Callum Ilott/Will Stevens, 52 points
3. Kobayashi/Conway/de Vries, 46 points
4. Makowiecki/Campbell/Christensen, 23 points

FIA World Endurance Trophy, Teams
1. Manthey PureRxcing #92, 72 points
2. Team WRT #31, 37 points
3. Heart of Racing Team #27, 37 points
6. Manthey EMA #91, 25 points

FIA World Endurance Trophy, Drivers
1. Malykhin/Sturm/Bachler, 72 points
2. Farfus/Leung/Gelael, 37 points
3. Ribeiras/Mancinelli/James, 37 points
6. Schuring/Lietz/Shahin, 25 points

Full results at fiawec.alkamelsystems.com

The qualifying

The best Porsche 963 fielded by the Porsche Penske Motorsport works team will tackle the six-hour race in Spa-Francorchamps from the second grid spot. The cockpit of the hybrid racing car is shared by Matt Campbell, Michael Christensen and Frédéric Makowiecki. The three spearhead an impressive fleet of four identical Porsche 963, which concluded the Hyperpole session on the Belgian Formula 1 track in the top six. In the LMGT3 category, Yasser Shahin clinched the fourth grid spot in the Porsche 911 GT3 R campaigned by the Manthey EMA customer team. The sister car had an accident at the start of the qualifying session. Aliaksandr Malykhin from the UK escaped the incident unharmed.

At Spa-Francorchamps, the competitors again fought for the best starting positions in a two-phase system and separately in the LMGT3 and Hypercar classes: At the end of twelve-minute qualifying sessions, the ten fastest drivers advanced into the so-called Hyperpole sessions. The results from there determined who started from pole position.

In spring-like weather with an air temperature of 20 degrees Celsius and an asphalt temperature of almost 30 degrees, the session began with a scare for Porsche Penske Motorsport: While braking for the Les Combes curve at the end of the long Kemmel straight, the two works Porsche 963 racers touched slightly – but both managed to continue. Matt Campbell went on to set the third-fastest time in 2:02.675 minutes, while Kévin Estre qualified eighth and advanced into the Hyperpole. There, he

came up against two more Weissach-made hybrid prototypes: UK driver Callum Ilott had planted the No. 12 car from Porsche's customer team Jota Sport in seventh place. At the wheel of Proton Competition's 963, Julien Andlauer achieved the ninth best time. In the second Jota, Phil Hanson wrapped up the qualifying in 18th place.

In the Hyperpole session, the Porsche 963 race cars again showed their true colours. While the No. 50 Ferrari secured pole position, Matt Campbell led the closely matched field of pursuers. The Australian was a mere eight-thousandths of a second ahead of the sole Cadillac. Joined by his works driver teammates Michael Christensen from Denmark and Frédéric Makowiecki from France, Campbell will start from the front row on Saturday. Kévin Estre qualified in sixth place and tackles the race from the third row with André Lotterer from Germany and the Belgian Laurens Vanthoor. The two customer vehicles will line up directly in front of and next to Porsche Penske Motorsport's second hybrid prototype. Julien Andlauer qualified Proton Competition's Porsche 963 in fourth place – the best Hyperpole result for the German team to date. The former Porsche Junior from France shares the cockpit with Neel Jani from Switzerland. Callum Ilott finished fifth for Jota Sport. The Englishman teams up with his fellow countryman Will Stevens.

"The most important thing for us today is that Aliaksandr Malykhin is doing okay after his accident with the Porsche 911 GT3 R," explains Urs Kuratle, Director Porsche Factory Motorsport LMDh. "Four Porsche 963 in the Hyperpole underline that we're heading in the right direction with our developments. Our number five Porsche 963 struggled at the start of the weekend and was a little behind in terms of performance. I'm particularly pleased that the crew progressed to the front grid row with the second-fastest Hyperpole lap time. Tomorrow's forecast is for stable, friendly weather. I think we can expect a really interesting race."

LMGT3 class: Manthey EMA's Porsche 911 GT3 R will start from P4

Porsche's customer team Manthey initially managed to continue its strong performances in qualifying for the LMGT3 class in Belgium. Yasser Shahin from Australia qualified the No. 91 Porsche 911 GT3 R as the third fastest in 2:21.259 minutes. British driver Aliaksandr Malykhin was just as confident, achieving the fifth fastest time with the sister car. However, during the Hyperpole for the top ten drivers, he lost control of his car in the Eau Rouge/Raidillon passage and hit the tyre wall at the track barrier. Malykhin underwent a routine checkup at the circuit's medical centre. When the session returned to green, Shahin set the fourth fastest time. He will tackle the race from the second row of the GT3 class together with Morris Schuring from the Netherlands and the Austrian Porsche works driver Richard Lietz.

Round three of this year's FIA WEC gets underway tomorrow, Saturday, at 1 p.m. local time (CEST). The race on the 7.004-kilometre Spa-Francorchamps Grand Prix circuit runs over six hours and is considered an important test before the highlight of the season, the 24 Hours of Le Mans.

Drivers' post-qualifying quotes

Matt Campbell (Porsche 963 #5):"When I think about where we were initially in the practice sessions here in Spa, I reckon second place in the Hyperpole is a very good result – but we really had to fight to turn things around. Still, we succeeded thanks to great teamwork and cooperation with the sister car. Generally, a position in the front row is a fantastic starting position and, as past races have shown, was often the key to success."

Kévin Estre (Porsche 963 #6):"I'm not completely happy with sixth place – things could've gone better for us. The first qualifying was extremely close. We used a different tyre compound in the Hyperpole, which affected the car's balance and I couldn't quite pull it all together on the first lap when it mattered most. Pole position was out of reach for us today but we could've qualified a little further up the front. Now we have a long race ahead of us. In Qatar, we started from fifth place and won..."

Callum Ilott (Porsche 963 #12):"That was a solid qualifying for us. I immediately felt that our Porsche 963 was strong. The field is very close so we worked hard to bring every single element together. Our goal was to advance into the Hyperpole. We could have extracted more from the tyres and been closer to the front but I'm satisfied with fifth on the grid."

Julien Andlauer (Porsche 963 #99):"This time we managed to work our way through the test schedule more systematically during the free practice sessions and prepare for the qualifying. Even the baseline setup was better. Since Qatar, I've seen significant progress, also in terms of performance over longer distances. So I'm delighted that we made it into the Hyperpole and finished fourth there. We'll now tweak a couple of things to prepare for the race and then hope for a good result."

Yasser Shahin (Porsche 911 GT3 R #91): "If we take into account where we started from, then that was an excellent qualifying for our Porsche. I still lack experience here at Spa-Francorchamps and also with the current 911 GT3 R. We're absolutely thrilled with the progress we've made so far. The car feels fantastic and I'm looking forward to a great race."

TV / Stream

The German free-to-air TV channel Sport1 will broadcast the final phase of the race live on Saturday, 11 May from 17:00 hrs and will offer extensive summaries in the week following the event. Eurosport2 will also broadcast excerpts of the third race of the season. Live timing and a live stream of the entire race will be available via the FIA WEC app, which is subject to a charge.

Qualifying result

Hypercar class:

1. Fuoco/Molina/Nielsen (I/E/DK), Ferrari #50, 2:02.600 min.
2. Campbell/Christensen/Makowiecki (AUS/DK/F), Porsche 963 #5, 2:03.107 min.
3. Bamber/Lynn (NZ/UK), Cadillac #2, 2:03.115 min.
4. Andlauer/Jani (F/CH), Porsche 963 #99, 2:03.314 min.
5. Stevens/Ilott (UK/UK), Porsche 963 #12, 2:03.384 min.
6. Estre/Lotterer/Vanthoor (F/D/B), Porsche 963 #6, 2:03.448 min.
18. Button/Hanson/Rasmussen (UK/UK/DK), Porsche 963 #38, 2:04.553 min.

LMGT3 class:
1. Bovy/Frey/Gatting (B/CH/DK), Lamborghini #85, 2:20.755 min.
2. Caygill/Pino/Sato (UK/RCH/J), McLaren #95, 2:21.092 min.
3. Rossi/Al Harthy/Martin (I/OMN/B), BMW #46, 2:21.138 min.
4. Shahin/Schuring/Lietz (AUS/NL/A), Porsche 911 GT3 R #91, 2:21.285 min.
9. Malykhin/Sturm/Bachler (UK/D/A), Porsche 911 GT3 R #92, 2:21.377 min.

Full results at fiawec.alkamelsystems.com

MEDIA ENQUIRIES



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Video

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Image Sublines

Path: First and second for the Porsche 963 at the Le Mans dress rehearsal in Spa/Images/img_6.jpg
Title: Porsche 963, Proton Competition (#99), Julien Andlauer (F), Qualifying, Spa-Francorchamps, 2024, Porsche AG
Subline: Julien Andlauer

Path: First and second for the Porsche 963 at the Le Mans dress rehearsal in Spa/Images/img_7.jpg
Title: Urs Kuratle, Director Factory Motorsport LMDh, Qualifying, Spa-Francorchamps, 2024, Porsche AG
Subline: Urs Kuratle

Path: First and second for the Porsche 963 at the Le Mans dress rehearsal in Spa/Images/img_8.jpg
Title: Porsche 911 GT3 R, Manthey EMA (#91), Yasser Shahin (AUS), Morris Schuring (NL), Richard Lietz (A), Qualifying, Spa-Francorchamps, 2024, Porsche AG
Subline: Porsche 911 GT3 R, Manthey EMA (#91)

Path: First and second for the Porsche 963 at the Le Mans dress rehearsal in Spa/Images/img_9.jpg
Title: Hertz Team Jota (#12), Callum Ilott (UK), Qualifying, Spa-Francorchamps, 2024, Porsche AG
Subline: Callum Ilott

Path: First and second for the Porsche 963 at the Le Mans dress rehearsal in Spa/Images/img_10.jpg
Title: Porsche 911 GT3 R, Manthey EMA (#91), Yasser Shahin (AUS), Qualifying, Spa-Francorchamps, 2024, Porsche AG
Subline: Yasser Shahin

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