

WEC: The Le Mans winners are the new World Champions

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19/11/2016 At the six-hour race in Bahrain the Porsche trio of Romain Dumas, Marc Lieb and Neel Jani secured the drivers' title in the FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC).

The 2016 Le Mans winners Romain Dumas (FR), Neel Jani (CH) and Marc Lieb (DE) finished sixth in the final round of the WEC. In the 2016 season, Dumas/Jani/Lieb have taken race wins in Silverstone and Le Mans.

Dumas/Jani/Lieb have shared a Porsche 919 Hybrid for the third consecutive season. From 2014 up until today they have set milestones, experienced highs and mastered lows. In 2014 they took the first three pole positions for the successful innovative Le Mans prototype. At the finale of the debut season, Brazil in 2014, they achieved the 919's maiden race victory to come third in the 2014 drivers' world championship. Again in 2015 the tally was three pole positions and one race win, as well as third place

in the championship. Their race win in the breath-taking 2015 season finale in Bahrain enabled Porsche's sister crew to become the drivers' world champions.

Oliver Blume, Chairman of the Executive Board of Porsche AG, said: "This is a great season end for Porsche and a huge success for Romain Dumas, Mark Lieb and Neel Jani! My congratulations are from the depth of my heart. After these three were able to win Le Mans in June and the LMP1 team successfully defended the manufacturers' world championship in Shanghai, now taking the drivers' title as well is the icing on the cake of what was a demanding WEC season. After 2015, Porsche has now managed to take all the titles again. I'm very proud of the effort of every single person in the team. Respect!"

Romain Dumas has clocked up eight overall wins at 24-hour races, the latest one being this year's Le Mans success with the Porsche 919 Hybrid. In 2010 he won Le Mans in an Audi together with Timo Bernhard and Mike Rockenfeller. He has won four 24-hour races at the Nürburgring-Nordschleife and two at the Spa circuit with Porsche. Now he is world champion for the first time.

Romain calls Le Mans his second home. He won a young talent competition here at the age of 16 – and stayed on. He went to school in Le Mans, made new friends, found sponsors and passed his driving test. Every year since then he has been collecting his racing licence from the Automobile Club de l'Ouest (ACO), the organiser of the 24-hour race. Le Mans is always different, always dramatic. This is where the Mediterranean character meets the Atlantic low pressure trough. It tends to rain heavily and persistently at the 24-hour race. Dumas knows every inch of it. 2016 was his 16th time there. "Le Mans is always going to be the greatest," he said. "Yes, you have to be fast. But you also have to be a team player, careful with the car, and you need the best team. If just one of these aspects is missing, it's not going to work."

Neel Jani moved from Formula Renault, GP2 and the A1GP series to Formula One. In 2004 he tested for Red Bull Racing for the first time and in 2006 he was the third driver in the sister team, Scuderia Toro Rosso. He took part in testing and raced in the American Champ Car series as well as the A1GP series. In 2008 he was a guest starter in the Porsche Supercup. "Unfortunately I did not get to finish the race," he recalled, "but I got to drive a 911 GT3 RS for a fortnight beforehand. That was quite something for me as a 24-year-old. The car has so much power and the steering is so precise – an impressive performance." He likes precision and calculation. The question as to what he would have done for a living if he hadn't become a racing driver yields an unexpected answer: "An accountant. I like numbers."

In 2009 he started in Le Mans for the first time and since then has done so every year – including 2013 with Rebellion in the LMP1 class. In 2011 he won the Le Mans Series with the Swiss team, and in 2012 he narrowly missed the Le Mans podium when he came in fourth. In 2012 and 2013 he took victory in the ten-hour race in Road Atlanta, better known as "Petit Le Mans". Since June 2013 he has been a Porsche works driver. "It was an outstanding opportunity, being involved in the LMP1 programme from the very start," he said. "The level of technology and drivers in the WEC is world class, and when I think Porsche, I think racing cars. Everything fits together."

Does he miss Formula One? “Not at all, because things always work out as they should. I'm happy to have good memories.” He married the most beautiful of those: Lauren from Indianapolis. Obviously, good karma can lead to good things even if you are only involved in practice on a Friday during a Grand Prix weekend and have the rest of the time off.

After being selected as a Porsche Junior, he promptly won the Carrera Cup Germany and was promoted to works driver. But Marc Lieb wanted more strings to his bow. He enrolled at the Esslingen technical college to study automotive engineering. After seven semesters and a thesis on differential locks, he earned his degree as an automotive engineer. While he was studying, he won international GT2 titles and took victories on the Nürburgring-Nordschleife. He married, and the first of his two sons was born. Marc Lieb's life seems to be a string of contradictions. The colourful and glamorous world of racing in the USA on the one hand and the return to his young family back home on the other. His passionate, competitive spirit as a driver versus sober analysis as an engineer. The combination of theoretical knowledge and practical vehicle control release a fascinating potential for the sports car manufacturer Porsche.

After graduating, he worked part-time in the Porsche Performance Department. Two of the vehicles he has been involved with are the 911 GT3 R Hybrid and the 918 Spyder. In 2013 he set a track record on the Nürburgring-Nordschleife with the super sports car – under seven minutes in a production-spec vehicle. Also the LMP1 programme fascinates him from both, the racing and the engineering perspective: “The speed of development is amazing, the young engineers are passionate. Whenever we drivers question something, they'll come up with a solution.”

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