

Porsche aims to add to its unparalleled track record in Le Mans

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06/06/2023 Porsche Penske Motorsport heads to the upcoming highlight of the 2023 endurance racing season with eager anticipation. At the 24 Hours of Le Mans on 10/11 June, three factory-run Porsche 963 will take on the Hypercar class.

The preview

As part of the “Racing for Charity” initiative, they will collect substantial donations for children in need with every race lap driven. On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the 24-hour event, the customer squad Hertz Team Jota campaigns another Porsche 963. In the GTE-Am category, five private teams will field a total of eight 911 RSR in round four of the FIA World Endurance Championship WEC.

The Porsche Penske Motorsport works team has one goal at the 100th anniversary of the 24 Hours of Le Mans and the 75th birthday of the sports car brand from Stuttgart: Outright victory on the Circuit des 24 Heures. To maximise the chances in the fiercely competitive new Hypercar class, Porsche fields a third hybrid prototype from the North American IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship in addition to the two permanent FIA WEC entries. The LMDh racing cars run by the factory squad will fly a special livery, the colours of which are a salute to Porsche's historic successes at Le Mans.

During recent tests on the racetracks in Watkins Glen (USA), Le Castellet (France) and Monza (Italy), Porsche Penske Motorsport prepared meticulously for the upcoming challenge twice around the clock. The UK customer squad Hertz Team Jota fields an additional Porsche 963 in the top class. In the fight for overall victory, Porsche goes up against competition from manufacturers such as Ferrari, Cadillac, Toyota and Peugeot.

“The 100th anniversary of the 24 Hours of Le Mans is a very important event, especially for Porsche,” states Thomas Laudenbach, Vice President of Porsche Motorsport. “Our brand turns 75 this year. No other manufacturer can look back on such an illustrious history at Le Mans as Porsche. We've achieved 19 overall victories and 110 class wins – and that's certainly not the end of it: we're aiming for our 20th success at the Sarthe! On the occasion of the big anniversaries, we're fielding three Porsche 963 with our works team. What's more, the Hertz Team Jota outfit tackles the race with another prototype from Weissach. We hope we're able to fight for the win in the highly competitive Hypercar top class.”

“We're very excited about the big anniversary at Le Mans,” explains Urs Kuratle, Director of Factory Motorsport LMDh. “At test sessions, Porsche Penske Motorsport has systematically prepared for the upcoming highlight. However, you can only simulate the unique features of the Circuit des 24 Heures to a limited extent on other racetracks. We used the test day at Le Mans intensively to set up our three Porsche 963 for this high-speed circuit. We're currently unable to make any statements about the balance of power in the Hypercar class. But one thing is certain: With three Porsche 963 fielded by the works team and another one run by the Hertz Team Jota customer squad, we're in the best possible position.”

“To get to this point really was a huge team effort on both sides of the Atlantic,” comments Jonathan Diuguid, Managing Director Porsche Penske Motorsport. “While one car has been prepared in Mooresville, USA and two in Mannheim, Germany, there is only one team - Porsche Penske Motorsport - and all entries are prepared to exactly the same high standard. We've now completed our rollouts at Weissach and Watkins Glen and our three Porsche 963 are en route to the biggest endurance race of the year, the 24 Hours of Le Mans. The pressure is about as high as it can be: to win the 100th 24 Hours of Le Mans on the 75th anniversary of Porsche sports cars would be a dream come true for us all. However, while that is the goal, we must focus first on each day as it comes.”

“Racing for Charity”: Porsche donates towards treatment for sick children

For each race lap completed by the three works-963, Porsche donates 750 euros in keeping with the 75th anniversary of the Porsche sports car. After the highlight of the year finishes on Sunday, the total amount will be donated to three non-profit organisations that, among other things, are dedicated to supporting and helping seriously ill children around the world.

The race

The storied circuit south of the city with its 150,000 inhabitants consists mainly of public roads. Normally, hundreds of trucks and cars drive over the legendary Mulsanne Straight every day on their way from Le Mans to Tours. The fast Porsche curves are both famous and notorious: high speeds and narrow run-off zones pose special challenges and ensure spectacular race action. The French long-distance classic is regarded as critical for the world championship season: The FIA WEC awards double points for placings at Le Mans – for example, the winner gets 50 instead of 25 world championship points.

Porsche teams and drivers

Sharing driving duties in the two works-Porsche 963 from the FIA WEC are the regular drivers from the 2023 season. Dane Cameron from the USA, Michael Christensen from Denmark and the French local hero Frédéric Makowiecki join forces in the No. 5 cockpit. The three-time Le Mans overall winner André Lotterer from Germany shares the No. 6 sister car with Laurens Vanthoor from Belgium and Kévin Estre from France. The IMSA drivers Felipe Nasr from Brazil, Mathieu Jaminet from France and Briton Nick Tandy helm the third No. 75 Porsche 963. The 38-year-old from Bedford won Le Mans in 2015 at the wheel of a Porsche 919 Hybrid – the No. 19 car was the third and additional Porsche fielded in the top class. Driving Hertz Team Jota's No. 38 entry is the works driver António Félix da Costa from Portugal, Will Stevens from the UK and Yifei Ye from China. The 22-year-old Asian receives support from Porsche Motorsport Asia Pacific as a Selected Driver.

In the total of eight Porsche 911 RSR tackling the GTE-Am class, works driver Richard Lietz will compete in Proton Competition's No. 911 entry. The Austrian shares the customer car with Martin Rump from Estonia and Hollywood actor Michael Fassbender. This marks the second outing at the Le Mans 24 Hours for the Irishman. The two former Porsche Juniors Julien Andlauer (France) and Matteo Cairoli (Italy) are among the drivers of the other privately-run 911 race cars. The Iron Dames squad relies on its all-female crew of Belgian Sarah Bovy, ex-DTM driver Rahel Frey from Switzerland and Michelle Gatting from Denmark.

Overview of 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)
Porsche Penske Motorsport (#75): Felipe Nasr (BR), Mathieu Jaminet (F), Nick Tandy (UK)
Hertz Team Jota (#38): António Félix da Costa (P), William Stevens (UK), Yifei Ye (CHN)

GTE-Am class (Porsche 911 RSR):
Proton Competition (#16): Ryan Hardwick (USA), Zacharie Robichon (CDN), Jan Heylen (B)
Project1 – AO (#56): PJ Hyett (USA), Gunnar Jeanette (USA), Matteo Cairoli (I)
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), Ben Barker (UK), Riccardo Pera (I)
Proton Competition (#88): Harry Tincknell (UK), Jonas Ried (D), Don Yount (USA)
Proton Competition (#911): Michael Fassbender (IRL), Martin Rump (EST), Richard Lietz (A)

Statistics, drivers' comments and schedule

Porsche Penske Motorsport and the customer teams of the sports car manufacturer from Stuttgart are ready to tackle the 24 Hours of Le Mans. The 91st edition of the long-distance classic in France marks the 100th anniversary of the event and coincides with the 75th birthday of the Porsche sports car brand.

The event on the 13.626-kilometre Circuit des 24 Heures in Le Mans marks the annual highlight on the FIA World Endurance Championship WEC calendar. The first running of the race was in 1923 to showcase automotive innovation, durability and performance. The only time the classic was not contested in the city in north-western France was in 1936 (general strike in France) and between 1940 and 1948 (WWII and reconstruction). This year marks the 91st running and the 100th anniversary of the long-distance race.

On the occasion of the anniversary, the event organiser ACO (Automobile Club de l'Ouest) has added a few extra highlights to the special schedule. On Friday before the start of the race, there will be another presentation of all drivers at the racetrack in addition to the traditional drivers' parade in the city centre. As part of a show-run of 40 legendary Le Mans vehicles, four Porsche racing cars will also lap the circuit on Saturday shortly before the 24-hour classic gets underway: Mark Webber drives a 936 Spyder, Timo Bernhard a Porsche 956, Marc Lieb a 962C and Stephane Ortelli climbs behind the wheel of his victorious vehicle from 1998, the Porsche 911 GT1.

Drivers' comments before the race

Dane Cameron (Porsche 963 #5): "I have high expectations for the Le Mans weekend. After more than a year and a half of preparation with the Porsche 963, it's definitely the moment we've all been waiting for. It's a very special feeling to finally be at the start of this race week. We have the chance to bring home the triumph at Le Mans - for Porsche and Mr Penske. At the same time, it's a dream come true for me: I've always dreamed of racing for overall victory at Le Mans. I can't wait and I'm sure I'm about to experience some very special days."

André Lotterer (Porsche 963 #6): "I'm really looking forward to my comeback at Le Mans. This race is a highlight for me. Since I was only able to drive for one year in the former Porsche LMP team, I'm feeling super motivated to go racing with the new factory team. I'm hugely grateful to have this chance to experience the 100th anniversary of this classic – it's a piece of history. I'm happy with my three victories but I want more. To achieve another win together with Porsche and Penske would be a dream."

Mathieu Jaminet (Porsche 963 #75): "It's been a few years since I've had the opportunity to contest the Le Mans 24 Hours. I can't wait to compete there again. Since it'll probably be my only race in France this year, I can talk about a home race. We're travelling there in high spirits with our US team and the third car, which currently leads the IMSA championship. We're going into the weekend with optimism, hoping for a good race and that we get to take a champagne shower on the podium."

António Félix da Costa (Porsche 963 #38):"For our team and me personally, Le Mans is a very big deal. There are a lot of emotions tied up in the fact that we'll be able to compete for overall victory in the top class this year with the Porsche 963. Even though our team has already won the LMP2 class there, everyone is well aware of how big the task will be with the new car. Our experience with the Porsche is still quite limited. We learned a lot during a joint test with the factory team at Le Castellet. We're coming into the race with deep humility but equally high hopes. Step by step we want to inch closer to maximum performance."

Jan Heylen (Porsche 911 RSR #16): "In 2022, I had a great experience at Le Mans with Fred Poordad and Max Root, finishing fifth in our class. This year I'm racing with my long-standing teammates Ryan Hardwick and Zach Robichon. We've competed in and won many races together. We're hoping to uphold that tradition at the Le Mans anniversary. It's a special event for several reasons: the final year of the 911 RSR, the final year for the GTE-Am class and the inaugural year of the Hypercar category. I couldn't be more excited to experience it all with Ryan, Zach and our Proton Competition team."

Alessio Picariello (Porsche 911 RSR #60):"This is the third time in a row that I'm contesting the 24-hour race. But this year is a very special one because the endurance classic is celebrating its 100th anniversary, and Porsche its 75 years of sports cars. I'm thrilled to be part of it. At the same time, it's also the last season of the GTE era and therefore also for the 911 RSR – a racing car I'm very fond of. So I want to enjoy the event as much as possible and can hardly wait for it to finally get underway."

Julien Andlauer (Porsche 911 RSR #77): "Le Mans is the most legendary race of all and it's clearly one of the highlights of the year. At the same time, it's the most important FIA WEC event because you can score more points for the championship here. I'm looking forward to my sixth race, all of them have been with Dempsey-Proton. The team first gave me a chance in 2018 and has trusted me every year since – I'm very thankful for that. After 2019, I'm back sharing the cockpit with Christian Ried. As a Frenchman, it means a lot to me to compete at the 100th anniversary of Le Mans. We'll do our very best to win this special event."

Michelle Gatting (Porsche 911 RSR #85): "I'm very much looking forward to contesting my fifth 24 Hours of Le Mans with the Iron Dames squad. Competing at the 100th anniversary is something very special. We're all extremely motivated and we know we have a powerful car and a strong team behind us. We're heading into the race with a lot of respect – anything can happen. Still, we're hungry to get to the top."

Riccardo Pera (Porsche 911 RSR #86): "Within just three weeks, I'm tackling two of the most important races in the world. It's like a dream. I raced in the Porsche Mobil 1 Supercup for the first time at the Monaco Grand Prix and now it's straight to Le Mans. This is my fourth time competing in the 24-hour race - so far always in a 911 RSR. This year I'm back driving for GR Racing. We want to improve on our fourth-place finish last year."

Harry Tincknell (Porsche 911 RSR #88): "At the WEC round at Spa, we achieved the best result for a GTE Porsche with fourth place, which is a pretty good indicator for the race at Le Mans. But we still have to work on a few things. Proton fields several cars again this year. I'm looking forward to swapping all the data and information among ourselves, as well as working with the engineers to find the best setup for the race week. Obviously, there'll be masses of fans at the Le Mans anniversary race at Le Mans. That's absolutely fantastic. There's certainly an incredible atmosphere - it could be the best Le Mans event ever. I hope we can put on a good show and wrap up the era of the 911 RSR with a bang."

Richard Lietz (Porsche 911 RSR #911):"The project with Michael Fassbender is now in its fifth year. I'm convinced that he'll tackle the race well-prepared. With Proton Competition, we have a very experienced team supporting us. All the ingredients are there to do well at Le Mans. We want to finish the race and drive as flawlessly as possible. If we succeed in this, then something good is sure to come of it."

Porsche's unparalleled track record at Le Mans

On 8 June 1948, the Porsche 356 No.1 Roadster was granted its road permit in Germany. This event 75 years ago marked the birth of the Stuttgart sports car brand. Just three years later, the manufacturer sent a delegation to the 24-hour race in Le Mans for the first time. With success: the two Frenchmen Auguste Veuillet and Edmond Mouche promptly clinched class victory at the wheel of the Porsche 356/4 SL Coupé. Since then, the Porsche brand has been represented on the grid of the world's greatest endurance race every year. Thanks to 19 overall victories and 110 class wins to date, the

sports car manufacturer from Stuttgart is by far the number one on the list of achievements of the organizer Automobile Club de l'Ouest (ACO).

24 Hours of Le Mans – Porsche's outright victories

1970 – Herrmann (D) / Attwood (GB) – Porsche 917 KH
1971 – Marko (A) / Van Lennep (NL) – Porsche 917 KH
1976 – Ickx (B) / Van Lennep (NL) – Porsche 936
1977 – Ickx (B) / Haywood (USA) / Barth (D) – Porsche 936/77
1979 – Ludwig (D) / D. Whittington (USA) / B. Whittington (USA) – Porsche 935 K3
1981 – Ickx (B) / Bell (GB) – Porsche 936
1982 – Ickx (B) / Bell (GB) – Porsche 956
1983 – Schuppan (AUS) / Haywood (USA) / Holbert (USA) – Porsche 956
1984 – Pescarolo (F) / Ludwig (D) – Porsche 956
1985 – Barilla (I) / Ludwig (D) / Krages (D) – Porsche 956
1986 – Bell (GB) / Stuck (D) / Holbert (USA) – Porsche 962C
1987 – Bell (GB) / Stuck (D) / Holbert (USA) – Porsche 962C
1994 – Dalmas (F) / Haywood (USA) / Baldi (I) – Dauer Porsche 962 LM
1996 – Wurz (A) / Reuter (D) / Jones (USA) – TWR Porsche WSC-95
1997 – Kristensen (DK) / Alboreto (I) / Johansson (S) – TWR Porsche WSC-95
1998 – Aiello (F) / McNish (GB) / Ortelli (F) – Porsche 911 GT1
2015 – Bamber (NZ) / Tandy (GB) / Hülkenberg (D) – Porsche 919 Hybrid
2016 – Jani (CH) / Lieb (D) / Dumas (F) – Porsche 919 Hybrid
2017 – Bernhard (D) / Hartley (NZ) / Bamber (NZ) – Porsche 919 Hybrid

The schedule (all times CEST)

Wednesday, 7 June
2:00 pm – 5:00 pm: Free practice 1
7:00 pm – 8:00 pm: Qualifying
10:00 pm – midnight: Free practice 2

Thursday, 8 June
3:00 pm – 6:00 pm: Free practice 3
8:00 pm – 8:30 pm: Hyperpole
10:00 pm – 11:00 pm: Free practice 4

Friday, 9 June
2:00 pm – 4:30 pm: Drivers' parade (city centre)
3:00 pm – 8:00 pm: Pit walk
6:30 pm – 7:30 pm: Drivers' parade (racetrack)

Saturday, 10 June
Midday – 12:15 pm: Warm-up
12:30 pm – 1:10 pm: Parade of 40 legendary Le Mans vehicles
4:00 pm: Start 24 Hours of Le Mans

Sunday, 11 June
4:00 pm: Finish 24 Hours of Le Mans

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