

Porsche Penske Motorsport experiences challenging Qualifying in Qatar

27/02/2025 Porsche Penske Motorsport starts the season opener of the FIA World Endurance Championship WEC from the sixth and seventh row. In Qualifying, Julien Andlauer drove the eleventh-fastest lap on the Lusail International Circuit in Qatar. The Frenchman shares the Porsche 963 with Michael Christensen from Denmark and his compatriot Mathieu Jaminet.

In the factory team's second hybrid prototype, Kévin Estre set the 13th fastest time. The Frenchman will take on the upcoming 10-hour race with Belgian Laurens Vanthoor and Matt Campbell from Australia. In LMGT3 Qualifying the 911 GT3 R of Manthey 1st Phorm and Iron Dames finished eleventh and 15th respectively. The ▪Qatar 1812km" will start on Friday at 2.00 pm local time (12.00 pm CET).

The overcast Formula 1 circuit in Qatar was surprisingly cold on Thursday: the air temperature barely reached 16 degrees Celsius during Qualifying, while the 5.419-kilometre strip of asphalt north of the country's capital Doha only heated up to 17.5 degrees. The time chase took place in two rounds in both

classes. All vehicles in the Hypercar and LMGT3 categories took to the track in the first section. In these two sessions, the drivers had twelve minutes to complete a fast lap. The ten best-placed cars from both categories then battled for pole position in the so-called Hyperpole sessions.

Two Frenchmen took the wheel of the Porsche 963 for the Porsche Penske Motorsport factory team: Julien Andlauer in the 508 kW (691 PS) hybrid prototype with starting number 5, while the reigning drivers' world champion Kévin Estre drove the sister car. Both were denied a place in the next round. Andlauer completed his fastest lap in 1:39.426 minutes. He missed out on tenth place by two tenths of a second. Estre finished the qualifying session in 13th position. His time: 1:40.363 minutes. The Porsche 963 of customer team Proton Competition with Neel Jani at the wheel finished 16th, the Swiss sharing the cockpit with Nico Pinto from Chile and Nico Varrone from Argentina.

"We are not surprised by the Qualifying outcome. It reflects the results we showed here in the Prologue and in the Free Practice sessions," explains Urs Kuratle, Head of Factory Motorsport LMDh. "We have a very close race ahead of us. We look better over the distance, so we can still achieve a lot. The balance of our Porsche 963 is still right, but the competition has made significant gains over the winter."

"Grid positions eleven and 13 here in Qatar are obviously disappointing, coming off our result here last year, when we took the pole and had an extremely competitive car," said Jonathan Diuguid, Managing Director Porsche Penske Motorsport. "Julien Andlauer and Kévin Estre confirmed after Qualifying that our Porsche 963 is very good to drive. Now the focus lies on tomorrow's race. We had good long-run pace during the Prologue and in today's practice session and will try to maximise the result."

LMGT3 class: Porsche 911 GT3 R in midfield

In the FIA WEC, the Qualifying segment of the GT3 racing cars is reserved exclusively for the bronze drivers of each team – as is the case with the 911 GT3 R with up to 416 kW (565 PS) entered by Manthey. Célia Martin took the wheel for the Iron Dames. Ryan Hardwick went out on track for Manthey 1st Phorm. While the Frenchwoman set the 15th fastest time with a lap time of 1:57.156 minutes, the American narrowly missed out on a place in the Hyperpole session: with a time of 1:56.434 minutes, he was just 66 thousandths off tenth place.

The season opener, entitled "Qatar 1812km", will take place tomorrow, Friday, from 14:00 local time (12:00 CET). The race is scheduled to cover 1,812 kilometres over a maximum of ten hours. Due to the above-average length of the season's first race, the normal championship points allocation will be multiplied by a factor of 1.5 and rounded up. The winner will therefore receive 38 points instead of the usual 25.

Drivers' comments after Qualifying

Julien Andlauer (Porsche 963 #5): Our Porsche 963 actually felt pretty good. One or two tenths of a second may be down to me, one or two to the car – but that is it, really. Apart from that, we did well and only just missed the Hyperpole session, which is the maximum to reach at the moment. We should be more competitive in the race and score as many points as possible."

Kévin Estre (Porsche 963 #6): 13th place is a disappointment – we have not been this far back on the grid for ages. Our Porsche 963 actually ran quite well. My lap was perhaps not perfect, but without any major mistakes. We have been lacking a bit of performance here all week, especially on the single lap, so the result is no great surprise. However, the gap to the competition is slightly bigger than expected. We now have the whole night to look at the data and improve the race car. Over the distance, we look much better."

Neel Jani (Porsche 963 #99): Qatar was already our most difficult race last year. That continued over the last days right into Qualifying. We have completely changed the set-up of the car once again and focussed more on the race. In doing so, we were able to improve the performance somewhat. The motto for us now is: Eyes closed and go for it. We want to take as much from here as possible learn for the upcoming WEC races."

Célia Martin (Porsche 911 GT3 R #85): To qualify for Hyperpole was a little unrealistic for us today. But I was able to improve further and achieve my goal: a new personal best lap on this track. We will be aiming for a better result next time."

Ryan Hardwick (Porsche 911 GT3 R #92): I am a little disappointed. We wanted to make it into the top 10 and thus into the Hyperpole session. But we just missed out with eleventh place. Although we were able to almost realise the car's current potential, we have been lacking top speed on the straights all week compared to the competition. Nevertheless, I am proud because my lap went well – even if there is always room for improvement, of course. The race is long and we are now starting in the middle of the pack. I have great confidence in my teammates and our engineers. A top 10 finish at the end of the 10-hour distance is out of the question for me."

Results Qualifying

Hypercar class:

1. Giovinazzi/Calado/Pier Guidi (ITA/GBR/ITA), Ferrari #51, 1:38.359 minutes
2. Vanthoor/Marciello/Magnussen (BEL/SUI/DNK), BMW #15, 1:38.495 minutes
3. Fuoco/Molina/Nielsen (ITA/ESP/DNK), Ferrari #50, 1:38.692 minutes

11. Andlauer/Christensen/Jaminet (FRA/DNK/FRA), Porsche 963 #5, 1:39.946 minutes
13. Estre/Vanthoor/Campbell (FRA/BEL/AUS), Porsche 963 #6, 1:40.363 minutes
15. Jani/Pino/Varrone (SUI/CHI/ARG), Porsche 963 #99, 1:41.421 minutes

LMGT3 class:

1. Leung/Gelael/Sato (GBR/INA/JPN), McLaren #95, 1:54.239 minutes
2. Cottingham/Baud/Saucy (GBR/FRA/SUI), McLaren #59, 1:54.478 minutes
3. Robin/Gehrsitz/Barnicoat (FRA/GER/GBR), Lexus #78, 1:54.484 minutes
11. Hardwick/Pera/Lietz (USA/ITA/AUT), Porsche 911 GT3 R #92, 1:56.434 minutes
15. Martin/Frey/Gatting (FRA/SUI/DNK), Porsche 911 GT3 R #85, 1:57.156 minutes

All results: fiawec.alkamelsystems.com.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES



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Title: Urs Kuratle, Director Factory Motorsport LMDh, Qatar 1812km, FIA WEC, 2025, Porsche AG
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Title: Jonathan Diuguid, Managing Director Porsche Penske Motorsport, Qatar 1812km, FIA WEC, 2025, Porsche AG
Subline: Jonathan Diuguid, Managing Director Porsche Penske Motorsport

Path: Porsche Penske Motorsport experiences challenging Qualifying in Qatar/Images/img_8.jpg
Title: Kévin Estre (FRA), Porsche Penske Motorsport (#5), Qatar 1812km, FIA WEC, 2025, Porsche AG
Subline: Kévin Estre

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Title: Neel Jani (SUI), Proton Competition (#99), Qatar 1812km, FIA WEC, 2025, Porsche AG
Subline: Neel Jani

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Title: Célia Martin (FRA), Iron Dames (#85), Qatar 1812km, FIA WEC, 2025, Porsche AG
Subline: Célia Martin

Path: Porsche Penske Motorsport experiences challenging Qualifying in Qatar/Images/img_11.jpg
Title: Ryan Hardwick (USA), Manthey 1st Phorm (#92), Qatar 1812km, FIA WEC, 2025, Porsche AG
Subline: Ryan Hardwick

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