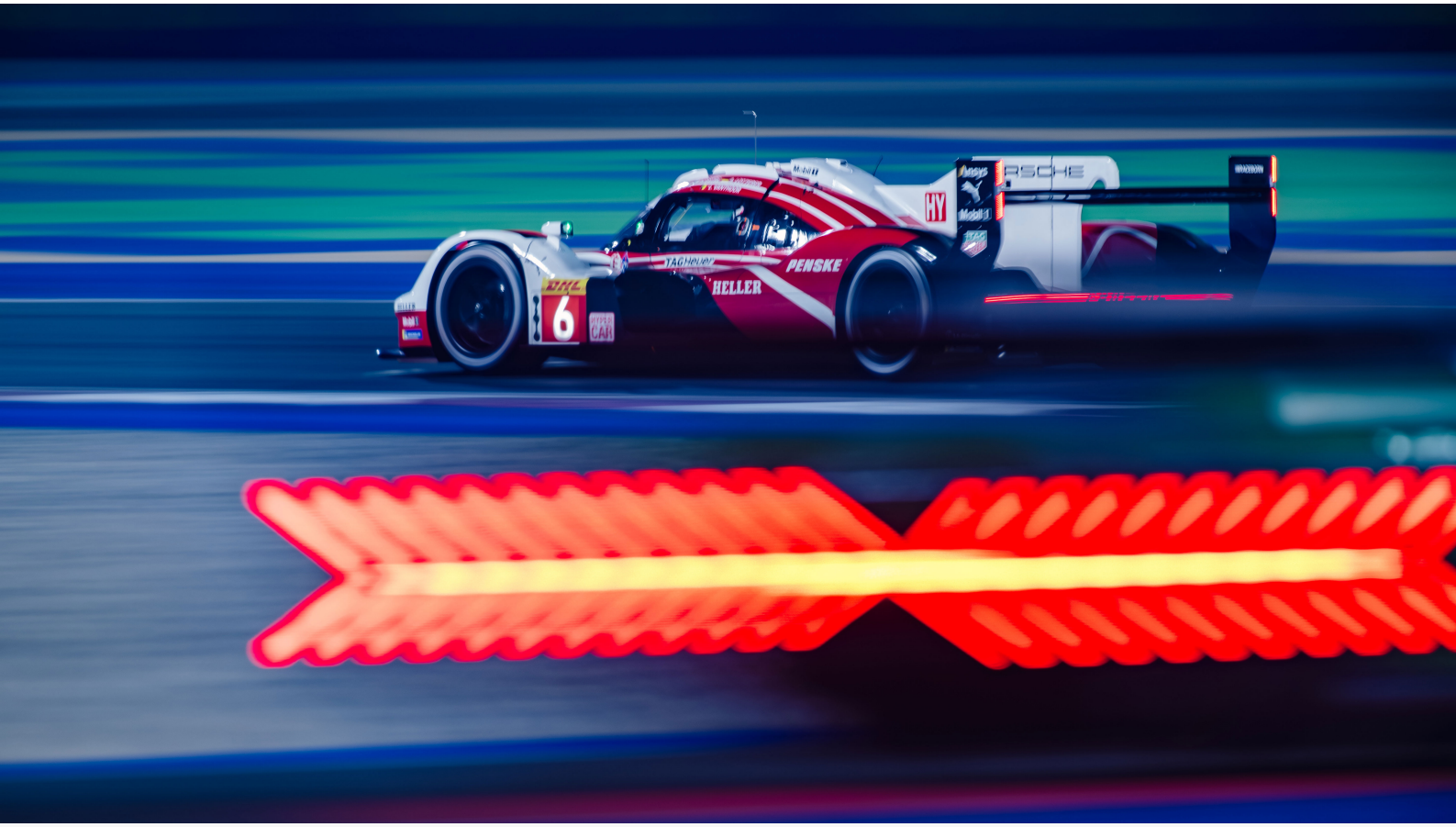


Successful tests for Porsche and its customer teams in Qatar

27/02/2024 Porsche Penske Motorsport heads into the first round of the FIA World Endurance Championship well prepared. During the two-day test drives at Lusail International Circuit in Qatar, the two factory Porsche 963 covered a total of 449 laps. Next Saturday, the same venue will host the season opening race of the 2024 season. The three identical hybrid prototypes of Hertz Team Jota and Proton Competition were equally convincing during the FIA WEC's so-called Prologue. In the new LMGT3 class, Manthey gained some first experience with their two Porsche 911 GT3 R on the Formula 1 track near the Qatari capital Doha.

The prologue

The FIA WEC prologue, originally planned for Saturday and Sunday, was postponed and shortened due to delays in the transport of equipment. The management of the World Endurance Championship scheduled four sessions on Monday and Tuesday at short notice. While the customer team Hertz Team Jota decided to take part in the first training session on Monday afternoon, the Porsche 963 from

Porsche Penske Motorsport and Proton Competition as well as the Porsche 911 GT3 R from Manthey EMA and Manthey PureRxcing only went out on the track from the second session.

The results after the two-day prologue were extremely positive: A Porsche 963 topped the time list in each of the four sessions. In total, the seven racing cars from Weissach covered 8,820 kilometres and set a strong pace even over long distances. The fastest lap time of the entire test was set by works driver Frédéric Makowiecki (France) at the wheel of the No. 5 Porsche 963 in 1:40.404 minutes on Tuesday afternoon. The No. 12 car fielded by Hertz Team Jota was only around a tenth of a second slower.

“The results of our factory team looked significantly better on the second day as on Monday. However, you can't read too much into the timesheets,” explains Urs Kuratle, Director of Factory Motorsport LMDh. “We did our homework and worked meticulously through the extensive to-do plan. We were only concerned with minimal issues – no drama at all. It was a successful test that once again boosted our confidence as we head into the new season. We are definitely better sorted than we were at the start of our debut year in 2023.”

“The prologue went very smoothly for us on both days,” states Jonathan Diuguid. The Managing Director Porsche Penske Motorsport added: “It was incomparable to what we experienced at the prologue in Sebring last year – a significant leap forward in all respects. We started the year well in the FIA WEC and are now looking forward to the start of the first race weekend.”

Hertz Team Jota was the first to shine in the prologue. The British customer team completed several long runs in the first two training sessions and took the lead in the overall ranking with the Porsche 963. The team of ex-Formula 1 world champion Jenson Button from Great Britain turned a total of 491 laps on both days and was systematically preparing for the first FIA WEC race of the season in Qatar. The 505 kW (687 PS) hybrid car from Proton Competition picked up speed as the prologue progressed. The two Porsche 911 GT3 R campaigned by Manthey EMA and Manthey PureRxcing impressed with consistent lap times and covered 2,779 kilometres. The two up to 415 kW (565 PS) 911 entries will tackle the new LMGT3 class.

The “Qatar 1812 km” season opener will kick off next Saturday at 11:00 a.m. local time (9:00 a.m. CET). The race over a planned 1,812 kilometres will run over a maximum of ten hours. Due to the length of the first race of the season, the normal World Championship points will be multiplied by a factor of 1.5.

Drivers' comments after the prologue

Michael Christensen (Porsche 963 #5): “We tested numerous settings and gained many insights. We've made noticeable progress in terms of setup and vehicle balance. The car already felt good, but we'll continue to work on a few things in the free practice sessions.”

André Lotterer (Porsche 963 #6): "We had a lot of track time and gained plenty of impressions and data. The focus was on understanding the vehicle behaviour and the tyres – all in the interest of the best possible race preparation. The results of the prologue were positive. Now, we have to optimise everything even further for the season opener."

Norman Nato (Porsche 963 #12): "The prologue went really well for us. We had no issues with the car. Our last test was several weeks ago, so our work schedule coming into the season opener was intense. It was just nice to drive the Porsche 963 again to get to know everything better. We tried out several potential settings for the systems. Of course, it was also about finding a setup for a steady pace over long distances. The first race of the season spans ten hours. It's not all about the fastest lap time, but about drivability and consistency. We're feeling well prepared."

Oliver Rasmussen (Porsche 963 #38): "I was extremely excited to see how the prologue would go. For me personally, the step from the LMP2 class to the Porsche 963 is a big one. But everything went perfectly. Both cars drove a lot of clean laps. It was important that we put in plenty of kilometres on the track in Qatar. Compared to an LMP2 car, the hypercar is much better in slow and medium-fast corners. This is what racing a car should feel like! I'm already looking forward to hopping back into the cockpit. I still have a lot to learn, but I'm getting there. I'm expecting an entertaining race on Saturday. I can't wait."

Neel Jani (Porsche 963 #99): "We weren't able to make the most of the test time because we were in the pits more than the others. That wasn't ideal. Especially if we want to compete with the works teams that have already tested on this track. Everything is new for us. We're trying to learn the most we can in the shortest time possible. We have no other option. The prologue was a very important event for us, as it gave us the chance to prepare quite well for the race weekend. I'm expecting an exciting race that will be spearheaded by strategy."

Yasser Shahin (Porsche 911 GT3 R #91): "It was an excellent two days of testing for us in Qatar. Looking at the timesheets, you might get the impression that we lacked pace. But that's not as important as one might think. The important thing is that the handling of the 911 GT3 R is very predictable. That's paramount for the race. The team gels very well, the chemistry is definitely there. I feel comfortable and enjoy this environment."

Joel Sturm (Porsche 911 GT3 R #92): "We've pinpointed a few small things that we need to work on. We'll have sorted that out before the race. It looks like our competitors are a little faster. However, we'll make a few adjustments to the setup so we can maintain a good pace over the distance. I expect the competition to be exciting and very close. We've been dealt good cards."

The schedule for the WEC opening round in Qatar (local time, CET +2)

Thursday, 29 February
12:20 pm – 1:50 pm: Free practice 1
5:30 pm – 7:00 pm: Free practice 2

Friday, 1 March
11:00 am – noon: Free practice 3
4:00 pm – 4:12 pm: Qualifying LMGT3
4:20 pm – 4:32 pm: Qualifying Hypercar
4:40 pm – 4:50 pm: Hyperpole LMGT3
4:58 pm – 5:08 pm: Hyperpole Hypercar

Saturday, 2 March
11:00 am – 9:00 pm: Race

Preview

Porsche Penske Motorsport heads into the 2024 season of the FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC) with big ambitions. The season kicks off on 2 March with a 10-hour race in Qatar. Like last year, the works team will field two Porsche 963 race cars in the top Hypercar class. After winning the 24 Hours of Daytona at the end of January, Porsche Penske Motorsport aims to again grab the limelight on the world championship stage. The Hertz Team Jota and Proton Competition customer teams campaign three more Porsche 963 at the Losail International Circuit. In the new LMGT3 category, two Porsche 911 GT3 R will go up against a total of 18 race cars from nine different manufacturers.

New competition in the battle for overall victories, a new class structure with just two categories and a new format for qualifying: the FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC) has been revamped for 2024. Porsche will be represented by a total of seven race cars this year. The Porsche Penske Motorsport works team will once again join the fight for the world championship crown with its two Porsche 963 race cars. The team from Mannheim (Germany) has been preparing for the upcoming World Endurance Championship debut in the Arabian Peninsula over two days of testing at the Losail International Circuit and the Circuit de Catalunya in Barcelona (Spain). At the so-called prologue, the two-day official pre-season tests, the hybrid prototypes will be optimally set up for the track conditions in Doha.

“Our victory at the season opener of the IMSA series in Daytona has given our entire team on both sides of the Atlantic a huge boost,” says Thomas Laudenbach, Vice President Porsche Motorsport. “We’re trying to take this momentum into the new year of the FIA WEC. A lot is new in 2024: we have additional cars in the Hypercar class, we’ll be up against new rivals in the battle for overall victories and

we'll see Manthey's WEC comeback with the 911 GT3 R in the new LMGT3 class. There are plenty of reasons to be excited for the first event in Qatar."

"The triumph in Daytona underlined some very important things for us: The team worked perfectly from an operational standpoint, and the Porsche 963 was fast and reliable over the 24 hours. Our work during the past season and over the winter is obviously yielding the results we had hoped for," summarises Urs Kuratle, Director Factory Motorsport LMDh. "The team and car will be put to the test again in the first WEC race of the season in Qatar. It'll take place at a new venue and run over ten hours. We have to be just as focused and determined as we were in Daytona. Our test drives on the track in Doha went well. Nevertheless, we haven't yet seen what we're up against in 2024. I'm curious to see what that'll look like."

"The FIA WEC has a deep field of manufacturers and we look forward to intense competition on track, as well as seeing how our pair of Porsche 963 stacks up against the strong LMH and LMDh prototypes at the season-opener in Qatar," comments Jonathan Diuguid, Managing Director Porsche Penske Motorsport. "We have had a successful pre-season test in Barcelona and are feeling well-prepared to start our second WEC season as a team."

Porsche Penske Motorsport has adapted the structure of the FIA WEC team for the 2024 season. Jan Lange (Germany) will operate in the role of Team Principal / General Manager of the Mannheim-based team. He will be supported by Team Manager Francis Schammo (Luxembourg) and Tobias Dürheimer (Germany) as Business & Operations Manager. Porsche Penske Motorsport Global Operations will continue to be overseen by Managing Director, Jonathan Diuguid, and Competition Director, Travis Law, who will both continue with active roles in the WEC and IMSA championships. From Porsche Motorsport, Urs Kuratle (Switzerland) will retain overall responsibility as Director Factory Motorsport LMDh, supported by German Stefan Moser as Technical Director Porsche 963.

Modified class structur

As of the 2024 season, the FIA WEC will only include two vehicle divisions. The LMP2 prototype category has been removed and will only return for the season highlight at Le Mans. The GTE-Am class has also been withdrawn. Historically, the Porsche 911 RSR achieved great success in this class, which will now be replaced by the new LMGT3 category. Nine different manufacturers will be represented by two GT3 racing cars each. Porsche's experienced customer team Manthey will fly the brand's flag with the 911 GT3 R. "The new class in the FIA WEC is a huge step for the entire GT3 sport: we can finally showcase our successful GT3 car on the world championship stage," says a delighted Sebastian Golz, Project Manager Porsche 911 GT3 R. "We're ideally positioned with Manthey EMA and Manthey PureRxcing. Our customer teams will set up the cars perfectly and take on the competition with strong driver trios. I'm looking forward to a great spectacle and can't wait for the season opener in Qatar."

The race

The Losail International Circuit, opened in 2004, will be hosting an FIA WEC race for the first time. The season opener, contested over a maximum of ten hours, will be held under the title "Qatar 1812 km". The number refers to the Qatar National Day on 18 December. The 5.419-kilometre circuit is located north of the capital city of Doha. The 16-corner circuit also hosts the Formula 1 and the MotoGP motorbike world championship, among other series.

The start-finish straight, which is over a kilometre long, requires low drag to reach top speed. Downforce and good traction are paramount in the twisty second sector. The focus is on the optimal use of the racing tyres. Porsche is expecting high air and track temperatures for the start of the first round of the FIA WEC season, which goes green at 11:00 am local time (9:00 am CET). These temperatures are expected to drop significantly in the final third of the race, after nightfall. The chequered flag falls at 9:00 pm (7:00 pm CET).

The works cars

Each of Porsche Penske Motorsport's two Porsche 963 race cars will again be driven by three works drivers in the 2024 season. Frenchman Frédéric Makowiecki and Dane Michael Christensen will share the wheel of the No. 5 car with Matt Campbell. The Australian, who won the 24 Hours of Daytona in January, has swapped his regular IMSA seat with the American Dane Cameron. The No. 6 car will be helmed by the same driver trio as the previous season: Kévin Estre from France and Laurens Vanthoor from Belgium will share the cockpit with André Lotterer from Germany.

The customer teams

In the top Hypercar class, the customer team Hertz Team Jota competes with two Porsche 963 for the first time. British drivers Will Stevens and Callum Ilott will share the cockpit of the No. 12 car with Frenchman Norman Nato. The sister car is helmed by an even more star-studded line-up: Ex-Formula 1 world champion Jenson Button (United Kingdom) will alternate behind the wheel of the No. 38 with Oliver Rasmussen (Denmark) and Phil Hanson (United Kingdom). The identical hybrid prototype from Proton Competition with the starting number 99 will be driven by Swiss driver Neel Jani and Briton Harry Tincknell together with former Porsche Junior Julien Andlauer (France).

Manthey is celebrating its comeback to the world championship stage in the new LMGT3 class. The seasoned squad from Germany's Eifel region, which was responsible for the works entries with the Porsche 911 RSR until the end of 2022, will field two 911 GT3 R in the upcoming season. Works driver Richard Lietz from Austria will line up on the grid with Dutchman Morris Schuring and Australian Yasser Shahin in the No. 91 car decked out in the Manthey EMA livery. Klaus Bachler from Austria, Alex Malykhin (United Kingdom) and the German Joel Sturm will race the No. 92 car representing Manthey

PureRxcing.

The new qualifying format in the FIA WEC

In 2024, the World Endurance Championship is adapting the “Hyperpole” familiar from Le Mans. From the season opener in Qatar, the time trials in both classifications (19 Hypercars, 18 GT3 vehicles) will be divided into two sessions. In the first twelve-minute session, all cars in a category head out onto the track at the same time. The ten fastest cars in each of these short qualifying sessions will then compete for the best grid positions for the race in a ten-minute “Hyperpole” session.

Drivers' comments before the race

Matt Campbell (Porsche 963 #5):“After our victory at the 24 Hours of Daytona, the anticipation for the start of the FIA WEC season is even greater. We completed a successful test on the track there at the end of last year. I'm sure that we're prepared for the race. The car is fast and reliable, our team is highly motivated and well-positioned. It'd be great if we could have a similarly successful start in the world championship as we did recently in the IMSA series."

Kévin Estre (Porsche 963 #6):“Heading into our second year with the Porsche 963, expectations are high. The entire team has worked tirelessly over the winter to further optimise the vehicle and our processes. It's too early to say whether that'll be enough to bring home victories. Our crew at the helm of the number 6 car is the same. We're stable in that regard. We will, however, have two new engineers in the pits for the 2024 season. We already have great synergy within the team. The track in Qatar has its quirks. The optimal use of our tyres will be particularly tricky. We're shooting for a podium finish to start the new season and then aim to take that momentum into the next races."

Will Stevens (Porsche 963 #12):“I'm very eager for the new season to finally get underway in Qatar. We learnt a lot about the Porsche 963 in 2023 and we now know much more about how to set up and drive the car better. That makes me confident for the new FIA WEC season. I'm driving with two new teammates; we've already worked very well together and adjusted to one another in a joint test session. I'm confident we can achieve strong results in 2024."

Jenson Button (Porsche 963 #38): “Heading into the prologue in Qatar, our focus is on fine-tuning the set-up ahead of the season opener. The three of us in the #38 car work really well together, we're in sync and I feel very comfortable with the dynamic. The prologue will be the first time we're testing with both cars so it's an important opportunity for all six drivers to work as one and make sure we're fully prepared for the first race in Qatar. Hertz Team Jota has an impressive track record and I'm looking forward to working hard and seeing what we can achieve together this season."

Julien Andlauer (Porsche 963 #99):“I've been racing for Proton Competition since 2018. The crew is like family to me. This season, the team is giving me the opportunity to step into the Hypercar class

with the Porsche 963 – it's just phenomenal! The fact that soon I'll be able to compete for overall victories in the FIA WEC and at Le Mans means a great deal to me. I already got a taste of the car during my stint in the WEC rookie test in Bahrain at the end of last season. I'll certainly learn a lot from my teammates Neel Jani and Harry Tincknell. I'm super excited and can hardly wait for my first laps in Qatar."

Richard Lietz (Porsche 911 GT3 R #91): "I'm about to start my first full season of GT3 racing – let's see how it goes. I'm sharing the Porsche 911 GT3 R with a line-up of strong colleagues. We need to become a slick unit as quickly as possible. It's all about what each individual prefers in terms of the car setup. It's new for everyone. We'll learn a lot on the first weekend and we'll have to build complete trust. The aim is to achieve a strong result right from the opening race."

Klaus Bachler (Porsche 911 GT3 R #92):"I'm delighted to be driving on the big world championship stage for the first time. It'll be my first race in an official FIA World Championship. I don't know the Qatar circuit yet but I'm not at all concerned about that. We work really well as a team. I'm proud to be able to compete for Manthey PureRxcing. The Porsche 911 GT3 R is a top car. We're also very well positioned in terms of drivers: We contested the Asian Le Mans Series together over the winter, so we're already well rehearsed."

The race cars and drivers at a glance

Hypercar class (Porsche 963):
Porsche Penske Motorsport #5: Matt Campbell (AUS) / Michael Christensen (DK) / Frédéric Makowiecki (F)
Porsche Penske Motorsport #6: Kévin Estre (F) / André Lotterer (D) / Laurens Vanthoor (B)
Hertz Team Jota #12: Callum Ilott (UK) / Norman Nato (F) / Will Stevens (UK)
Hertz Team Jota #38: Jenson Button (UK) / Phil Hanson (UK) / Oliver Rasmussen (DK)
Proton Competition #99: Julien Andlauer (F) / Neel Jani (CH) / Harry Tincknell (UK)

LMGT3 class (Porsche 911 GT3 R):
Manthey EMA #91: Richard Lietz (A) / Morris Schuring (NL) / Yasser Shahin (AUS)
Manthey PureRxcing #92: Klaus Bachler (A) / Alex Malykhin (UK) / Joel Sturm (D)

The schedule (local time, CET +2)

Saturday, 24 February
Noon – 3:00 pm: Prologue session 1
5:00 pm – 9:00 pm: Prologue session 2

Sunday, 25 February
11:00 am – 2:00 pm: Prologue session 3

4:00 pm – 8:00 pm: Prologue session 4

Thursday, 29 February
12:20 pm – 1:50 pm: Free practice 1
5:30 pm – 7:00 pm: Free practice 2

Friday, 1 March
11:00 am – noon: Free practice 3
4:00 pm – 4:12 pm: Qualifying LMGT3
4:20 pm – 4:32 pm: Qualifying Hypercar
4:40 pm – 4:50 pm: Hyperpole LMGT3
4:58 pm – 5:08 pm: Hyperpole Hypercar

Saturday, 2 March
11:00 am – 9:00 pm: Race

MEDIA ENQUIRIES



Holger Eckhardt

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

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Title: Thomas Laudenbach, Vice President Porsche Motorsport, WEC, Race 1, Qatar, 2024, Porsche AG
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Title: Urs Kuratle, Director Factory Motorsport LMDh, WEC, Race 1, Qatar, 2024, Porsche AG
Subline: Urs Kuratle, Director Factory Motorsport LMDh

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