KCMG's two Porsche 911 GT3 R finish in the top 12 at Spa

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01/08/2021 The Porsche customer team KCMG has concluded the Spa 24 Hours in positions five and twelve.

The 911 GT3 R driven by the two Belgians Maxime Martin and Laurens Vanthoor as well as last year's winner from Britain Nick Tandy crossed the finish line after 554 laps in front of the sister car shared by Josh Burdon (Australia), Alexandre Imperatori (Switzerland) and Edoardo Liberati (Italy). The endurance classic in the Ardennes is regarded as one of the largest GT3 races in the world. This year, 58 vehicles from nine different manufacturers tackled the 7.004-kilometre rollercoaster circuit in four classes.

In the Pro-Am class, the team founder of EBM Giga Racing Will Bamber, his New Zealand compatriot Reid Harker, Carlos Rivas from Luxembourg and Wolfgang Triller finished in 20th place. The German had jumped in as a substitute driver shortly before the start. As a quartet, they came out on top in their class against Herberth Motorsport's No. 911 Porsche crewed by Antares Au (Great Britain), Daniel Allemann (Switzerland) and the German brothers Alfred and Robert Renauer. The Am category was won by Pieder Decourtins from Switzerland with Marc Basseng, Dennis Busch and Manuel Lauck (all Germany) in the 911 GT3 R fielded by Haegeli by T2 Racing. In the Silver Cup, Allied Racing's 500+PS customer racing car from Weissach achieved ninth with drivers Julien Apotheloz (Switzerland), Bastian Buus (Denmark), Lars Kern (Germany) and Arno Santamato (France).

Ten Porsche customer teams tackled the 24-hour marathon at the Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps with a total of twelve 911 GT3 R. The initial phase of the race was marked by a serious accident in the Raidillon corner. This signalled an early end for Rutronik Racing's 911 shared by works drivers Kévin Estre (France) and Richard Lietz (Austria) as well as Sven Müller (Germany), and resulted in a caution phase that lasted a good 50 minutes. When the race went green again, a heavy rain shower caused chaos on the track. Multiple pit lane drive-through penalties for disregarding the track markings and another full course yellow at an unfortunate time saw the Porsche, which had been running in a promising position, drop out of the leading lap at around midnight.

Subsequently, the car campaigned by GPX Racing with drivers Earl Bamber (New Zealand) and works drivers Matt Campbell (Australia) and Mathieu Jaminet (France) had to retire with steering problems. Dinamic Motorsport withdrew both 911 GT3 R, after penalties and repairs threw them out of contention for promising positions. For the until then best-placed Porsche from Schnabl Engineering, the race was over just before dawn: at around 4 am, contact with another rival led to an accident, which threw Michael Christensen (Denmark), Dennis Olsen (Norway) and the French works driver Frédéric

Makowiecki out of the competition.

Only the two KCMG Porsche managed to make it through the endurance classic relatively unscathed. As a result, they were among the frontrunners. In the final hour, a last heavy downpour allowed the No. 47 car to make up two places and move into fifth. However, even this crew suffered setbacks: Nick Tandy and Maxime Martin had to contest the last third of the race alone. Their teammate Laurens Vanthoor had to watch the race action from the sideline after an unfortunate collision in the paddock.

Comments on the race

Sebastian Golz (Project Manager Porsche 911 GT3 R): "That was a typical 24-hour race for Spa-Francorchamps. First a major accident, we had dry and wet track conditions and long caution phases. Ultimately, some of our Porsche 911 GT3 reached the finish line. Some had problems, others didn't. Fifth place is a good result, congratulations to KCMG. Team Haegeli by T2 Racing won its Am class, congratulations to them, as well. Thank you to our customer teams. They demonstrated huge commitment this weekend. We're now looking ahead and we'll return to Spa next year stronger than ever – because we want to reclaim the 24-hour trophy."

Maxime Martin (KCMG, Porsche 911 GT3 R #47): "All in all, a difficult race for us. I'm really pleased with fifth place. Our team had the two best-ranked Porsche. In view of the changeable conditions, the length of the race and the many competitors on the track, we had to remain completely focussed the whole time. In my last stint, I was driving on a partly wet track with slicks. Nick took the wheel and he was also taken by surprise by heavy rain on dry tyres. It was definitely a lot of fun, that's for sure. But it's not always easy getting the right feeling for the grip and keeping the car on the track. We were determined to finish. After Laurens Vanthoor's bad luck, Nick and I had to drive alone. We wish him a speedy recovery and we're pleased that nothing more serious happened to him in the collision. Now I'm happy that the race is over and our job is done."

Alexandre Imperatori (KCMG, Porsche 911 GT3 R #18): "First and foremost, we can be happy that we reached the finish line – the race was without a doubt very difficult. Our team covered the full distance with both Porsche however, many other cars didn't make it that far. On our side of the garage, we struggled a bit with the performance on the dry track. The balance wasn't really right from the start. We don't yet know why. In any case, we had to get past the problem and we opted for a conservative approach. Now we're focussing on the positives. Congratulations to our racing squad on this great result."

Will Bamber (EBM Giga Racing, Porsche 911 GT3 R #61): "We were determined to see the finish here and we succeeded. What's more: although we started from the back of the grid, we ended up claiming 20th overall and are the best-placed Porsche in the Pro-Am Cup. The right strategy proved to be the decisive factor here. We narrowly missed out on the podium in our class, but this result is still a great success for us – especially given that we struggled with problems at the pre-test. Everyone in the team did a flawless job and the drivers delivered as well."

Results

1. Ledogar/Nielsen/Pier Guidi (I/DK/I), Iron Lynx, Ferrari 488 GT3 #51, 556 laps
2. Van der Linde/L. Vanthoor/Weert (RSA/B/B), WRT, Audi R8 GT3 #32, 556 laps
3. Gunn/Soerensen/Thiim (GB/DK/DK), Garage 59, Aston Martin Vantage GT3 #95, 556 laps
5. L. Vanthoor/Martin/Tandy (B/B/GB), KCMG, Porsche 911 GT3 R #47, 554 laps
12. Burdon/Imperatori/Liberati (AUS/CH/I), KCMG, Porsche 911 GT3 R #18, 550 laps
20. W. Bamber/Harker/Rivas/Triller (NZ/NZ/L/D), EBM Motorsport, Porsche 911 GT3 R #61, 547 laps
26. Allemann/Au/A. Renauer/R. Renauer (CH/GB/D/D), Herberth Motorsport Porsche 911 GT3 R #911, 542 laps
27. Apotheloz/Buus/Kern/Santamato (CH/DK/D/F), Allied Racing, Porsche 911 GT3 R #222, 542 laps
33. Basseng/Busch/Decurtins/Lauck (D/D/CH/D), Haegeli by T2 Racing, Porsche 911 GT3 R #166, 518 laps

Interim report 2

After an eventful night, Porsche is within striking distance of the leading pack with the 911 GT3 R fielded by the customer team KCMG at the 24-hour race at Spa-Francorchamps. The No. 47 car driven by Maxime Martin, his Belgian compatriot Laurens Vanthoor and Britain's Nick Tandy is currently running in fifth place after 18 hours. After 370 laps on the 7.004-kilometre Grand Prix circuit, the vehicle is just one lap behind the leader. The second best nine-eleven with KCMG drivers Josh Burdon (Australia), Alexandere Imperatori (Switzerland) and Edoardo Liberati (Italy) ranks eleventh.

An unfortunate caution phase around midnight cost the armada of 911 GT3 R the direct contact to the leading vehicles. This was followed by a streak of bad luck, which knocked many of the sports cars from Weissach out of contention. At around 3am, the No. 22 entry from GPX Racing had to pit for repairs due to a steering problem. At about 5.30am, the car shared by Earl Bamber (New Zealand) and the works driver Matt Campbell (Australia) and Mathieu Jaminet (France) pulled out.

Over long stretches during the night, Schnabl Engineering's 911 GT3 R took over the role as the leading Porsche and maintained a steady pace among the top ten. Shortly before 4am, however, the car came into contact with another vehicle at the entrance to Eau Rouge, heralding an early end for Michael Christensen (Denmark), Dennis Olsen (Norway) and the French works driver Frédéric Makowiecki.

From that point on, the two KCMG racing cars and Dinamic Motorsport's No. 54 entry held the flag high for Porsche. After a tactically clever technical pit stop under yellow, which is usually used to change the brakes at the front axle, Tandy, Vanthoor and Martin even seemed to be within reach of the leading lap. When the competition got the chance to take a service stop of at least four minutes during a full course yellow shortly before 8am, this hope was dashed.

Race goes on without Dinamic Motorsport

Dinamic Motorsport withdrew both Porsches from the race before the 16-hour mark. The No. 56 car crewed by Mikkel O. Pedersen (Denmark), Andrea Rizzoli (Italy) and works driver Romain Dumas (France) disappeared from the results list, in part due to several penalties. The sister vehicle shared by Klaus Bachler (Austria), Christian Engelhart (Germany) and Matteo Cairoli (Italy) lost time first due to brake repairs and then with the replacement of the alternator. With no chance for success, this car also retired early.

The final eight hours on the Ardennes rollercoaster presents the best-placed Porsche with an additional challenge: Nick Tandy and Maxime Martin have to complete the remaining laps without the help of the third driver Laurens Vanthoor, who was involved in an accident in the paddock and, as a precaution, was taken to hospital for a closer examination.

Comments on the race so far

Sebastian Golz (Project Manager Porsche 911 GT3 R):"Unfortunately, we lost a lot of cars because of accidents and technical problems, and we also kept getting thrown down the field with penalties. That's why we aren't among the leading pack at the moment. Still, on the flip side, our KCMG customer team is doing a fantastic job. Unfortunately, in the caution phase, they weren't able to rejoin the frontrunners as they'd hoped. But we're not giving up at this point – we still have eight hours of racing ahead of us."

Nick Tandy (KCMG, Porsche 911 GT3 R #47):"I drove a triple stint in the night and was able to enjoy the honour of driving from dark to dawn for the first time here at Spa – that was really cool. The other great news: Our Porsche is running like a dream. The track conditions suited us and the boys from KCMG did a really great job in setting up the 911 GT3 R for the race."

Josh Burdon (KCMG, Porsche 911 GT3 R #18): "It's really okay. We started on P37 and knew that we had a tough job ahead of us. We managed to make our way up the order to 15th relatively quickly. Everything's going very well. Our car is more competitive in the race than it was in the practice sessions. We're currently in tenth or eleventh and there's still a long way to go to the flag. We plan to pull out all stops again in the last few hours."

Interim report 1

Porsche customer teams aim to use the night to their advantage: e 24 Hours of Spa got off to a wild start. After the first four hours of racing with 84 laps completed, the best Porsche customer teams are looking promising in positions seven, nine, twelve and 15. Schnabl Engineering's 911 GT3 R with the French works driver Fred Makowiecki as well as Michael Christensen (Denmark) and Dennis Olsen (Norway) have ploughed through the field from P25 to seventh place. Josh Burdon (Australia),

Alexandre Imperatori (Switzerland) and Edoardo Liberati (Italy) even managed to charge from 37th on the grid to ninth place with their 500+PS Porsche fielded by the KCMG squad.

The initial phase of the endurance classic was interrupted by a serious accident in the Eau Rouge/Raidillon corner combination, in which Rutronik Racing's entry became entangled. While the Porsche driver Kévin Estre was unharmed, this marked the end of the race for the Frenchman and his teammates Richard Lietz (Austria) and Sven Müller (Germany). Shortly after the 50-minute full course yellow, heavy rain resulted in hectic activity in the pit lane. Later, the 7.004-kilometre Grand Prix circuit dried up, making it necessary to switch back to slicks. Various drive-through penalties for disregarding the track markings threw the best-placed Porsche customer teams down the field time and again.

Live streaming of the event

Spectators can watch the Spa 24-hour race via a free live stream on the website www.intercontinentalgtchallenge.com. Live timing is also available here.

Comments about the start of the race

Sebastian Golz (Project Manager Porsche 911 GT3 R): "The first four hours here in Spa-Francorchamps were exciting. We've experienced it all here today: from a dry to wet track through to a major accident, from which Kévin Estre came out unscathed. It's been a clean race so far for our teams, but we're fighting on the edge and the drivers sometimes overshoot the track limits in some places. That handed us the odd drive-through penalty and cost valuable points. We're currently working on resolving this issue and we're trying to get our cars back up the front. Let's wait and see what the night brings."

Frédéric Makowiecki (Schnabl Engineering, Porsche 911 GT3 R #3): "The start was a challenge – it's a bit outlandish when you start in the middle of more than 50 cars. Luckily the start went without incident. Our nine-eleven responds well and we're able to fight the way it should be. We're strong on slicks in the rain. There's still some setup work ahead of us with the wet tyres. I'm proud of how some of our teams managed to prepare the cars for this race in the shortest possible time."

Josh Burdon (KCMG, Porsche 911 GT3 R #18): "Despite the changeable conditions, the race got off to a good start for us. During the preparations, we struggled with the balance of our car and we knew that it would be tough for us to progress from 37th on the grid. After my double stint, I handed the Porsche over in P15, so we're on schedule. We'll try to avoid making any mistakes and get through the night safely."

Mathieu Jaminet (GPX Racing, Porsche 911 GT3 R #22): "It was a little crazy. Two laps after I took the wheel from Earl Bamber, rain set in. We stayed out a little longer on the slicks, but there was so much water on the track that I almost flew off. That cost us some time. I managed to overtake a lot of cars on wet tyres. After the track dried off, we switched back to slicks. Unfortunately, I was held up by a car

from the silver class. The driver tried desperately to defend his position as if it were the final sprint across the finish line after 24 hours."

Laurens Vanthoor (KCMG, Porsche 911 GT3 R #47): "Everything went well for us at the start. When rain set in, we made the right decision and switched to the appropriate tyres at the right time. This has brought us up to second position. Unfortunately, we were then handed a pit lane drive-through penalty because Nick and I exceeded the track limits – that cancelled out the progress we'd made. That shouldn't actually happen, but we still have time to get ahead again."

Klaus Bachler (Dinamic Motorsport, Porsche 911 GT3 R #54): "Our start was pretty good. Unfortunately, after a few laps, there was a minor nudge with another car which damaged our front splitter. After the serious crash in Raidillon, we encountered debris then rain set in after the full course yellow – so the initial phase of the race was somewhat chaotic. All in all, our Porsche is running well."

The Super Pole

The two best-placed Porsche customer teams take up the 24-hour race at Spa-Francorchamps tomorrow from positions nine and 20. In the Super Pole session on Friday evening, Porsche works driver Mathieu Jaminet turned the ninth fastest lap with GPX Racing's 911 GT3 R. In the 20-minute shootout, the top 20 vehicles from Thursday's qualifying competed against each other in individual time trials. The fastest time of two laps was counted. The 26-year-old Frenchman achieved a lap time of 2:18.729 minutes. For the race, Jaminet shares the cockpit with Earl Bamber from New Zealand and the Australian Matt Campbell.

Laurens Vanthoor planted his KCMG 911 GT3 R on P20 with a time of 2:19.742 minutes. The 30-year-old Belgian's first attempt was voided after he briefly exceeded the track limits with his Porsche. He tackles the marathon classic on home turf with his compatriot Maxime Martin and Britain's Nick Tandy.

The 24 Hours of Spa is considered one of the world's most important events for GT3 vehicles. At this year's race, Porsche is represented by the largest line-up ever with a total of twelve 911 GT3 R, ten customer teams and 40 vehicles. The sports car manufacturer aims to score its third straight outright victory at the endurance classic in Belgium's Ardennes region. In 2020, Laurens Vanthoor, Earl Bamber and Nick Tandy joined the list of winners with the 911 GT3 R fielded by Rowe Racing. A year earlier, Kévin Estre (France), Michael Christensen (Denmark) and Richard Lietz (Austria) climbed to the top of the podium for the GPX Racing squad. So far, Porsche has notched up eight overall victories at this endurance classic.

In the four qualifying heats on Thursday evening, Estre and his Rutronik Racing teammates Richard Lietz and Sven Müller (Germany) narrowly missed out on taking part in the Super Pole by six-hundredths of a second. The trio driving for Dinamic Motorsport, Klaus Bachler (Austria), Matteo Cairoli (Italy) and Christian Engelhart (Germany), as well as Schnabl Engineering's drivers Michael Christensen, Fred Makowiecki (France) and Dennis Olsen (Norway) qualified just outside the top 20 in 23rd and 25th

respectively.

Live streaming of the event

Spectators can watch the Spa 24-hour race via a free live stream on the website www.intercontinentalgtchallenge.com. The 24-hour race takes off on Saturday at 4:30 pm.

Comments on the Super Pole

Sebastian Golz (Project Manager Porsche 911 GT3 R): "We used the time between yesterday and today to analyse the qualifying data. We took a very close look at GPX Racing's 911 GT3 R and KCMG's No. 47 car and combined the best setups in each. The GPX car was good in the Super Pole – although the gap to the top is still too large. We did what we could and that topic is now closed. We now face a 24-hour race. We know that our performance is competitive over long distances. We'll play to our strengths in the race."

Mathieu Jaminet (GPX Racing, Porsche 911 GT3 R #22): "I'm satisfied with my lap. I managed to make the best use of the width of the track. Our car felt good but unfortunately it wasn't enough for pole position. The guys at the top are in a different league. Ninth on the grid is a bit disappointing but the race is long. Our speed over longer distances in the practice sessions was better – I hope we can use that to our advantage in the race."

Laurens Vanthoor (KCMG, Porsche 911 GT3 R #47): "I don't know what to say. The car feels a bit strange. We thought we'd made an improvement for the warmup, but it felt like it did yesterday. We then tweaked it again for the Super Pole and it was completely different. However, there's only one lap where the tyres reach their optimal grip in this session – and I didn't manage that. I'm very disappointed."

Super Pole result

1. Marciello/Juncadella/Gounon (I/E/F), Akka ASP, Mercedes-AMG GT3 #88, 2:17.949 minutes
2. Bortolotti/Mapelli/Caldarelli (I/I/I), FFF Racing, Lamborghini Huracan GT3 Evo #63, 2:18.252 minutes
3. Engel/Stolz/Abril (D/D/F), HRT, Mercedes-AMG GT3 #4, 2:18.545 minutes

9. Jaminet/E. Bamber/Campbell (F/NZ/AUS), GPX Racing, Porsche 911 GT3 R #22, + 0.780 seconds
20. L. Vanthoor/Martin/Tandy (B/B/GB), KCMG, Porsche 911 GT3 R #47, + 1.793 seconds

Grid positions for the other Porsche 911 GT3 R customer teams

22. Estre/Lietz/Müller (F/A/D), Rutronik Racing, Porsche 911 GT3 R #21
23. Bachler/Cairoli/Engelhart (A/I/D), Dinamic Motorsport, Porsche 911 GT3 R #54
25. Christensen/Makowiecki/Olsen (DK/F/N), Schnabl Engineering, Porsche 911 GT3 R #3
33. Dumas/Pedersen/Rizzoli (F/DK/I), Dinamic Motorsport, Porsche 911 GT3 R #56
37. Burdon/Imperatori/Liberati (AUS/CH/I), KCMG, Porsche 911 GT3 R #18
47. Apotheloz/Buus/Kern/Santamato (CH/DK/D/F), Allied Racing, Porsche 911 GT3 R #222
52. Basseng/Busch/Decurtins/Lauck (D/D/CH/D), Haegeli by T2 Racing, Porsche 911 GT3 R #166
53. Jacoma/Leutwiler/Menzel/Schell (CH/CH/D/D), Huber Motorsport, Porsche 911 GT3 R #23
54. Allemann/Au/A. Renauer/R. Renauer (CH/GB/D/D), Herberth Motorsport Porsche 911 GT3 R #911
56. W. Bamber/Harker/D'Silva/Rivas (NZ/NZ/MY/L), EBM Motorsport, Porsche 911 GT3 R #61

The qualifying

In qualifying for the Spa 24 Hours, two 911 GT3 R racers fielded by Porsche's customer teams have made it into the Super Pole. The final hunt for the 20 best grid spots will be held on Friday between 7.50 am and 8.20 am (CEST). After multiple qualifying sessions, GPX Racing's entry emerged as the fastest nine-eleven. Earl Bamber (New Zealand) as well as works drivers Matt Campbell (Australia) and Mathieu Jaminet (France) set an average time of 2:19.259 minutes in their individual 15-minute segments, which put them in eighth place. Bamber turned the fastest lap of all 911 GT3 R in 2:18.878 minutes. The 24-hour classic on the 7.004-kilometre Grand Prix circuit in Belgium's Ardennes region takes off on Saturday at 4.30 pm.

Like the two practice sessions, the evening qualifying was held on a dry track and ran into the night. The constant lapping of slower traffic among the 58-strong field as well as the good 20-minute interruption after an accident midway through the second session did little to help the twelve 911 GT3 fielded by Porsche customer teams. In addition to GPX Racing, KCMG with drivers Maxime Martin (Belgium), Nick Tandy (Great Britain) and works driver Laurens Vanthoor (Belgium) achieved the spot in the top 20 as the 18th fastest vehicle. In the Pro-Am class, in which professionals share driving duties with gentlemen drivers, Herberth Motorsport's 911 GT3 R achieved the best 911 GT3 R result with the driver quartet Alfred and Robert Renauer (both Germany), Antares Au (Great Britain) and Daniel Allemann (Switzerland). In the Silver Cup for semi-professionals, the Porsche customer squad Allied Racing ranked 15th. In the Am class reserved exclusively for privateers, Haegeli by T2 Racing came out on top against Huber Motorsport.

This year's Spa 24 Hours is regarded as the largest event for GT3 vehicles and counts towards the GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup and the Intercontinental GT Challenge (IGTC). Drivers and vehicles can earn points towards the GT World Challenge after six, twelve and 24 hours.

Qualifying quotes

Sebastian Golz (Project Manager Porsche 911 GT3 R): "The qualifying result is somewhat sobering for Porsche. Two vehicles in the top 20 is not the result we'd expected. We're not getting to the crux of the matter in terms of performance. We're now facing a lot of work to find out what's going on. Our speed over one lap doesn't reflect our competitiveness for the race, but we also have to manage this discipline."

Mathieu Jaminet (Porsche 911 GT3 R #22): "Matt Campbell experienced a difficult qualifying segment and he didn't have a lot of luck overtaking. Still, he managed to post a decent lap time. So did Earl Bamber. That made my job for the final qualifying segment straightforward: drive a clean lap without risking a penalty for exceeding the track limits. We simply wanted to make sure we got into the Super Pole session. We achieved this with P8 and our mission for today was completed. Now let's see what we can do tomorrow. We aim to start the race from as far up the grid as possible."

Kévin Estre (Porsche 911 GT3 R #21): "We expected a tough qualifying with a lot overtaking and red flags, and that's exactly what happened. Our first quali segment cost us everything because Sven Müller didn't get a clear run and was two second off the leader. That said, probably half the field had the same experience. I managed a clear lap in the end but it wasn't enough. Ultimately, we were just six-hundredths of a second off making it into the Super Pole. Still, the grid position at a 24-hour race isn't so important for the end result. We just have to make sure we can gain positions without any incidents – then anything is possible."

Laurens Vanthoor (Porsche 911 GT3 R #47): "I'm somewhat dissatisfied. Right from the start, we had a few problems with the car, which didn't show up during the test. The car's handling is difficult and we haven't yet found the cause. Still, we're in the Super Pole."

Lars Kern (Porsche 911 GT3 R #222 – Silver Cup): "Things didn't go smoothly for us. My first lap was voided because I drove over the track limits, then the yellow flag came out and I had to slow down. It was quite chaotic out there. At the end of the day, our starting position is okay. Maybe the luck that was missing from the qualifying will be on our side in the race."

Alfred Renauer (Porsche 911 GT3 R #911 – Pro-Am Cup): "Not an easy day for us. Our car suffered serious tyre damage during the pre-qualifying, which badly damaged the car. Our boys managed to repair the Porsche as best they could. We made the most out of the qualifying. The race is over 24 hours. We'll try to get through without making mistakes – but many penalties have been issued for exceeding the track limits. We also had some of our lap times erased because of this."

Pieder Decurtins (Porsche 911 GT3 R #166 – Am Cup): "Things didn't go so well for me, but Manuel Lauck, Marc Basseng and Dennis Busch were great. They had planned to be the fastest in their class. We're on the right path."

Qualifying result

1. Marciello/Juncadella/Gounon (I/E/F), Mercedes-AMG GT3 #88, 2:18.433 minutes
2. Thiim/Gunn/Sorensen (DK/GB/DK), Aston Martin Vantage AMR GT3 #95, 2:18.867 minutes
3. Drudi/Marschall/Mies (I/D/D), Audi R8 LMS GT3 #66, 2:19.090 minutes

8. E. Bamber/Campbell/Mathieu Jaminet (NZ/AUS/F), Porsche 911 GT3 R #22, + 0.825 seconds
18. Martin/Tandy/L. Vanthoor (B/GB/B), Porsche 911 GT3 R #47, + 1.562 seconds
22. Estre/Lietz/Müller (F/A/D), Porsche 911 GT3 R #21, + 1.689 seconds
23. Bachler/Cairoli/Engelhart (A/I/D), Porsche 911 GT3 R #54, + 1.709 seconds
25. Christensen/Makowiecki/Olsen (DK/F/N), Porsche 911 GT3 R #3, + 1.911 seconds
33. Dumas/Pedersen/Rizzoli (F/DK/I), Porsche 911 GT3 R #56, + 2.368 seconds
37. Burdon/Imperatori/Liberati (AUS/CH/I), Porsche 911 GT3 R #18, + 2.566 seconds
47. Apotheloz/Buus/Kern/Santamato (CH/DK/D/F), Porsche 911 GT3 R #222, + 3.564 seconds
52. Basseng/Busch/Decurtins/Lauck (D/D/CH/D), Porsche 911 GT3 R #166, + 4.220 seconds
53. Jacoma/Leutwiler/Menzel/Schell (CH/CH/D/D), Porsche 911 GT3 R #23, + 4.841 seconds
54. Allemann/Au/A. Renauer/R. Renauer (CH/GB/D/D), Porsche 911 GT3 R #911, + 5.697 seconds
56. W. Bamber/Harker/D'Silva/Rivas (NZ/NZ/MY/L), Porsche 911 GT3 R #61, + 7.279 seconds

The preview

Hardly any other manufacturer will have more racing cars on the grid of the endurance classic this coming weekend. The legendary event on the 7.004-kilometre 'Ardennes rollercoaster' is considered one of the most important GT3 events in the world and counts towards two of this season's championships: the GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup and the Intercontinental GT Challenge (IGTC). Porsche is aiming for a hat trick on the Belgian Grand Prix circuit. In 2019, works drivers Michael Christensen (Denmark), Kévin Estre (France) and Richard Lietz (Austria) claimed outright victory in the 911 GT3 R fielded by GPX Racing. Last year, another factory driver trio, Nick Tandy (Great Britain), Earl Bamber (New Zealand) and Laurens Vanthoor (Belgium), won the highlight of the GT3 season, that time with the Rowe Racing squad.

It is a century-old motor racing tradition. The Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps has been one of the greatest challenges for drivers from all around the world since 1921. As early as 1924 – just three years after the opening – the first 24-hour race was held in the eastern-most corner of Belgium not far from the German border. At that time, the racetrack measured 14.863 km and ran between the towns of Malmedy, Francorchamps and Stavelot. In 1979, a shorter version was introduced. At 7.004 km and with 21 corners, the storied Grand Prix circuit is still the longest on the Formula One calendar. Thanks to the spectacularly steep section Raidillon/Eau Rouge and the downhill passage with the infamous Blanchimont left-hander, the circuit continues to live up to its reputation as the 'Ardennes rollercoaster'. The tight La Source hairpin at the end of the start-finish straight is one of the slowest corners of the GT3 season.

In the long and illustrious history of this endurance classic, Porsche has so far notched up eight overall victories – the last two in succession. For the Spa-Francorchamps event, drivers and vehicles can earn points towards the IGTC and the GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup after six, 12 and 24 hours. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, only a limited number of spectators are allowed to attend the 24-hour race.

An overview of the Porsche teams and drivers

The 12 911 GT3 R cars fielded by Porsche's customer teams will tackle the Spa-Francorchamps 24-hour race in four different classes. Seven 911 racing cars each helmed by three drivers will fight for overall victory in the 25-strong Pro division. Dinamic Motorsport and KCMG each campaign two of the Weissach-developed rear-wheel drive vehicles. The 2019 Spa winner GPX Racing fields one car. For the first time, Rutronik Racing runs a 911 GT3 R with another Porsche entered by Schnabl Engineering. The team known from the Nürburgring-Nordschleife decided at short notice to contest its debut race at the endurance classic. The vehicles fielded by GPX and Schnabl Engineering, the No. 47 car from KCMG and Dinamic No. 54 entry as well as the Porsche of Huber Motorsport and Herberth Motorsport from the Am and Pro-Am classes can also earn points for the manufacturer's classification of the IGTC.

In the Silver Cup, Allied Racing flies the flag for the sports car manufacturer. In this class, four drivers are permitted per racing car and their FIA status must be no more than 'silver'. Simply put, this class is reserved for semi-professionals. With 17 entries expected, this class is the second largest in the starting field.

Fourteen vehicles contest the Pro-Am class. Aside from Herberth Motorsport, another newcomer campaigns a 911 GT3 R in the long-distance classic: the EBM Giga Racing belongs to Will Bamber and his brother Earl, who claimed overall victory twice at Le Mans in the 919 Hybrid as a Porsche works driver. To be eligible to contest the Pro-Am category, at least two drivers must have 'bronze' status, share the wheel for at least eight hours and spend at least 60 minutes in the cockpit per race quarter.

In the Am Cup reserved exclusively for privateers, Porsche is represented by Huber Motorsport and Hägeli by T2 Racing. In this category, too, four drivers share each cockpit, of which at least three must hold 'bronze' status and the fourth must have no higher than 'silver' status.

Porsche supports its customer teams with engineers and advisors as well as seven works drivers: Kévin Estre and Richard Lietz race for Rutronik, Matt Campbell (Australia) and Mathieu Jaminet (France) fly the colours for GPX Racing. Belgium's Laurens Vanthoor helms KCMG's No. 47 car, with Frenchman Romain Dumas driving for Dinamic Motorsport and his compatriot Frédéric Makowiecki for Schnabl Engineering. Moreover, Porsche's test driver Lars Kern from Germany provides reinforcement for the Allied Racing squad.

Pro class

Schnabl Engineering (Porsche 911 GT3 R #3)
Michael Christensen (Denmark), Frédéric Makowiecki (France), Dennis Olsen (Norway)

KCMG (Porsche 911 GT3 R #18)
Josh Burdon (Australia), Alexandre Imperatori (Switzerland), Edoardo Liberati (Italy)

Rutronik Racing (Porsche 911 GT3 R #21)
Kévin Estre (France), Richard Lietz (Austria), Sven Müller (Germany)

GPX Racing (Porsche 911 GT3 R #22)
Earl Bamber (New Zealand), Matt Campbell (Australia), Mathieu Jaminet (France)

KCMG (Porsche 911 GT3 R #47)
Maxime Martin (Belgium), Nick Tandy (Great Britain), Laurens Vanthoor (Belgium)

Dinamic Motorsport (Porsche 911 GT3 R #54)
Klaus Bachler (Austria), Matteo Cairoli (Italy), Christian Engelhart (Germany)

Dinamic Motorsport (Porsche 911 GT3 R #56)
Romain Dumas (France), Mikkel O. Pedersen (Denmark), Andrea Rizzoli (Italy)

Silver Cup class

Team Allied Racing (Porsche 911 GT3 R #222)
Julien Apotheloz (Switzerland), Bastian Buus (Denmark), Lars Kern (Germany)

Pro-Am Cup class

EBM Giga Racing (Porsche 911 GT3 R #61)
Will Bamber, Reid Harker (both New Zealand), Adrian Henry D'Silva (Malaysia), Carlos Rivas (Luxembourg)

Herberth Motorsport (Porsche 911 GT3 R #911)
Daniel Allemann (Switzerland), Antares Au (Great Britain), Alfred Renauer, Robert Renauer (both Germany)

Am-Cup class

Huber Racing (Porsche 911 GT3 R #23)
Ivan Jacoma, Nicolas Leutwiler (both Switzerland), Nico Menzel, Jacob Schell (both Germany)

Hägeli by T2 Racing (Porsche 911 GT3 R #166)
Marc Basseng, Dennis Busch (both Germany), Pieder Decurtins (Switzerland), Manuel Lauck (Germany)

Spa-Francorchamps 24-hour race – all outright victories with Porsche

2020: Tandy / Bamber / Vanthoor (Porsche 911 GT3 R)
2019: Lietz / Christensen / Estre (Porsche 911 GT3 R)
2010: Dumas / J. Bergmeister / Ragginger / Henzler (Porsche 911 GT3 RSR)
2003: Ortelli / Lieb / Dumas (Porsche 911 GT3 RSR)
1993:C. Fittipaldi / Jarier / Alzen (Porsche 911 RSR)
1969: Chasseuil / Ballot-Léna (Porsche 911)
1968: Kremer / H. Kelleners / Kauhsen (Porsche 911)
1967: Gaban / Van Assche (Porsche 911)

Comments before the race

Sebastian Golz (Project Manager Porsche 911 GT3 R):"After we won the Spa 24 Hours in 2019 and 2020 with the Porsche 911 GT3 R, expectations are obviously very high. In the past few years, teamwork has been the secret to success. This is precisely what we want to continue perfecting. We have 10 teams with 12 cars tackling the Pro, Pro-Am, Silver, and Am categories. Everything is possible on Belgium's tradition-steeped racetrack. Like at the Nürburgring, the weather conditions can change completely within a very short time. So that's why we put a lot of emphasis on supporting our customer teams with helpful information at the track. We'll do our very best to make a hat trick at Spa possible."

Frédéric Makowiecki (Schnabl Engineering, Porsche 911 GT3 R #3):"

Even the lead-up to the Spa race was a bit of a rollercoaster for us. I was supposed to compete for Frikadelli Racing but it was cancelled at the last minute because of the disastrous flooding in the Eifel – a devastating situation in Germany where many lives, livelihoods and homes were lost. Michael Christensen, Dennis Olsen and I now get the chance to contest this 24-hour race with Schnabl Engineering. We're highly motivated and, we'll do our absolute utmost – I can promise that. Spa is one of the biggest events of the entire GT3 season. I've climbed the podium at this endurance classic in second place, but I've not yet won it ..."

Matt Campbell (GPX Racing, Porsche 911 GT3 R #22): "There's no doubt that we're well-positioned with our GPX Racing team – we underlined this with our strong performance at the last GT World Challenge Europe race in Le Castellet. We're leading the championship so we're heading to the Spa 24 Hours feeling very confident. The team won there in 2019, so they know how to do it. There's definitely only one goal for us in Belgium – victory!"

Mathieu Jaminet (GPX Racing, Porsche 911 GT3 R #22): "The 24 Hours of Spa is my personal favourite on this year's racing calendar. The endurance race is the largest GT3 event in the world and an important one in the GT World Challenge Europe. We currently rank first in this championship with our GPX Racing team. A good result in Belgium is critical to increase our chance of claiming the title. Our plan is to be cautious in the first few hours then go all-out for the last four or five hours. Let's see if that works. In the past two years, a Porsche 911 GT3 R has won Spa. That's a good omen for us."

Kévin Estre (Rutronik Racing, Porsche 911 GT3 R #21):"I'm delighted to compete at Spa this year. I have shared a cockpit there with Richard Lietz for the last three years and now Sven Müller is joining us. He's another very fast guy with a lot of experience. Rutronik is new to the series and to Porsche, but they have very accomplished people, such as the team's sporting director Manuel Reuter. They underlined just how competitive they are at the Nürburgring 24-hour race. The field includes a lot of cars capable of winning and that'll be super cool. Spa is always a highlight for me – with spectators this year."

Richard Lietz (Rutronik Racing, Porsche 911 GT3 R #21):"The 24-hour race at Spa-Francorchamps is one of the world's toughest GT3 races. I know my teammates Kévin Estre and Sven Müller really well, and although Rutronik Racing is new to me, we got to know them at the Spa pre-test. The car should be good. I'm feeling positive about the race. The grid will be packed, so we need to survive the start unscathed. Then let's see where we stand …"

Laurens Vanthoor (KCMG, Porsche 911 GT3 R #47):"The 24-hour race at Spa-Francorchamps is my home race, so I'm really looking forward to this event. It's one of the world's largest GT3 endurance races with strong manufacturers, teams and drivers. The competition this year is extremely exciting and intense. I won here last year, and I'd very much like to repeat that with the KCMG squad and my teammates Nick Tandy and Maxime Martin. Like me, Maxime comes from Belgium – he's from Wallonia, I'm from Flanders. To date, we've always been rivals, but now we're teaming up. That'll be great fun."

Romain Dumas (Dinamic Motorsport, Porsche 911 GT3 R #56): "With almost 60 GT3 vehicles on the track, the Spa 24-hour race will be one of the toughest challenges of the year. I won this race in 2003 and 2010 and I always enjoy competing there. But you never know what you're going to get in the Ardennes. Bad weather could be advantageous for us. In fact, I'd be happy if it rained. Hopefully, we'll achieve a good result there."

The schedule (all times CEST)

Thursday, 29 July
10:50 – 12:20: Free practice
15:45 – 16:45: Pre-Qualifying
20:50 – 21:05: Qualifying 1
21:12 – 21:27: Qualifying 2
21:34 – 21:49: Qualifying 3
21:56 – 22:11: Qualifying 4
22:30 – 0:00: Night practice

Friday, 30 July
19:10 – 19:40: Warm Up
19:50 – 20:20: Super Pole

Saturday, 31 July
16:30: Start Spa-Francorchamps 24-hour race

Sunday, 25 July
16:30: Finish Spa-Francorchamps 24-hour race

Live streaming of the event

The Spa-Francorchamps 24 Hours takes off on 31 July at 4:30 pm. A free live stream of the classic is available on the website http://www.intercontinentalgtchallenge.com.

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Video

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