

Spirited swan song for the factory squad goes unrewarded

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12/11/2022 The Porsche GT Team bids the FIA World Endurance Championship WEC farewell with third and fourth place in the GTE-Pro class. After a spirited fight at the season finale in Bahrain, the factory squad narrowly misses out on winning the manufacturer's and driver's world championship titles.

The race

In the GTE-Am class, the two Porsche 911 RSR fielded by Project 1 set the benchmark. The German customer team celebrated a one-two victory at the eight-hour race.

At the end of a decade of factory racing in the FIA World Endurance Championship WEC, the Porsche

GT Team showed an impressive fighting spirit. In the notoriously competitive eight-hour race on the Bahrain International Circuit, the two Porsche 911 RSR initially held the lead. However, two unfortunately-timed full-course yellow phases just after refuelling stops threw both factory vehicles well down the field after around two hours of racing. Despite commendable performances from the drivers and flawless teamwork, the efforts to catch up went unrewarded.

At the wheel of their No. 92 car, Frenchman Kévin Estre and Michael Christensen from Denmark concluded the final round of the season in Bahrain third in the GTE-Pro class. The sister car driven by the works driver teammates Gianmaria Bruni from Italy and Richard Lietz from Austria took the flag in fourth place. These results were not enough to earn sufficient points to claim the desired victory in the manufacturer's and driver's world championships. Shortly before the end of the final race of the 2022 season, the two 911 RSR swapped positions. The reason: If the deteriorating No. 51 Ferrari had retired, Estre/Christensen could have clinched the driver's world championship title at the last minute.

"It's a disappointing result for us. We really wanted to win the title as a fitting farewell to the works-911," concludes Thomas Thomas Laudenbach. The Vice President of Porsche Motorsport adds: "We did a flawless job and did our very best – but we weren't in a position to win on our own merits. We were really unlucky twice with the timing of the yellow flags, so it was a disappointing swan song performance from the GTE-Pro category. Still, let's not forget that we won our class at Le Mans last June with the 911 RSR."

"At the end of the day, we were too slow and the rivals had more luck with the yellow phases," states Alexander Stehlig, Director Factory Motorsport FIA WEC. "We need to find out whether our lack of pace was due to the tyres or the BoP classification. We're sad. We'd imagined a different outcome to wrap up this great factory programme."

The final round the GTE-Am category

The final round went significantly better for the Project 1 customer team contesting the GTE-Am category. After impressive performances from drivers Nicolas Leutwiler (Switzerland), Mikkel Pedersen (Denmark) and Matteo Cairoli (Italy), the No. 46 car won its class ahead of the sister car. Even more impressive was the fact that this was the debut in the FIA WEC for the two Americans Gunnar Jeannette and PJ Hyett in the No. 56 car. The duo was supported in their fight for second place by the British regular driver Ben Barnicoat. "Congratulations to our strong customers," comments Thomas Laudenbach. Alexander Stehlig adds: "Project 1 achieved a one-two result – that's precisely what every team wants at the end of a season. The squad will be feeling highly motivated as it turns its attention to the 2023 season, which marks the final year for the 911 RSR in the GTE-Am class of the FIA WEC." Dempsey-Proton Racing's two customer cars reached the flag in positions eight and twelve, with the nine-eleven fielded by GR Racing achieving sixth.

With the conclusion of the 2022 season, an era in endurance racing comes to an end: The popular and most fiercely competitive GTE-Pro class of the FIA WEC is phased out. However, the Porsche 911 RSR

will still be campaigned in 2023, with customer teams fielding the ca. 378 kW (515 PS) in the GTE-Am category. Next year, the new Porsche Penske Motorsport factory squad will fight for overall victory with 963 LMDh prototypes in the hypercar class of the World Endurance Championship.

Comments on the race

Michael Christensen (Porsche 911 RSR #92): "From a driving and strategic perspective, we did our absolute best. We lost a lot of ground early on due to bad luck with the caution phase. Basically, it was game over by then. It's such a shame but that's just how it goes some days."

Kévin Estre (Porsche 911 RSR #92): "This is not how we imagined it. We came here to win both titles – and now we stand here empty-handed. We just didn't have the speed in the final race, so we tried to do something strategic, but luck wasn't on our side. We tried our very best. Unfortunately, Ferrari was faster than us in the second half of the season."

Gianmaria Bruni (Porsche 911 RSR #91): "It was close in the end – but that doesn't change the overall outcome. Our car felt good in the race. We had to compensate for some absences in our pit crew due to illness. Even the rookies who stepped in at short notice did an impeccable job. We did everything we could, it just wasn't quite enough. Thank you to the FIA WEC works team for an extraordinary time. Now, we're looking forward to a new era with exciting prototypes."

Richard Lietz (Porsche 911 RSR #91): "Despite doing everything right we just didn't have a chance. I'm sure many people could recognise why that was. I didn't understand the handling of the Balance of Performance this year. I wish our colleagues who are going on to work on the 963 next year better luck with the BoP."

Matteo Cairoli (Porsche 911 RSR #46): "In the last race of the season, we finally clinched our first win. It really doesn't get better than that. The whole weekend ran like clockwork. It was so much fun to drive the 911 RSR on the track. My teammates did a fantastic job in the cockpit and our entire team did everything right. We deserved this success. A one-two result at the end of the year – you can't ask for more than that."

Race result

GTE-Pro class

1. Molina/Fuoco (E/I), Ferrari 488 GTE #52, 231 laps
2. Milner/Tandy (USA/UK), Corvette C8.R #64, 230 laps
3. Christensen/Estre (DK/F), Porsche 911 RSR #92, 230 laps
4. Bruni/Lietz (I/A), Porsche 911 RSR #91, 230 laps
5. Pier Guidi/Calado (I/UK), Ferrari 488 GTE #51, 227 laps

GTE-Am class:
1. Cairoli/Pedersen/Leutwiler (I/DK/CH), Porsche 911 RSR #46, 226 laps
2. Hyett/Jeannette/Barnicoat (USA/USA/UK), Porsche 911 RSR #56, 226 laps
3. Bovy/Frey/Gatting (B/CH/DK), Ferrari 488 GTE #85, 226 laps
6. Wainwright/Barker/Pera (UK/UK/I), Porsche 911 RSR #86, 226 laps
8. Ried/Priaulx/Tincknell (D/UK/UK), Porsche 911 RSR #77, 226 laps
12. Poordad/Lindsey/Heylen (USA/USA/B), Porsche 911 RSR #88, 224 laps

The qualifying

The Porsche GT Team has clinched pole position in the GTE-Pro class at the final round of the season in Bahrain. Works driver Gianmaria Bruni from Italy set the fastest qualifying lap on the Bahrain International Circuit at the wheel of the No. 91 Porsche 911 RSR. Michael Christensen from Denmark planted the No. 92 sister car on position three. Thanks to the extra point for pole position, Porsche now shares the lead with Ferrari in the manufacturer's classification of the FIA World Endurance Championship WEC.

For the fourth time this season, the Porsche 911 RSR tackles the fiercely contested GTE-Pro class from the best grid spot. As dusk fell and temperatures hovered around 30 degrees Celsius, the two nine-elevens fielded by the works team did not wait long at the start of the session. As soon as the 10-minute session got underway, Christensen went out on the track, with Bruni following about a minute later.

The Italian abandoned his first flying lap to optimally warm his tyres and brakes and prepare for his second attempt at clocking the top lap time. This tactic worked perfectly. Bruni lapped the 5.4-kilometre circuit in 1:56.143 minutes. No one managed to undercut his lap time. At his first attempt, Christensen set the third fastest time before pitting for a fresh set of Michelin tyres for his second shot. While the Dane improved his lap time to second place, this attempt was voided shortly after for exceeding the track limits. Consequently, the No. 92 car heads into the race from position three.

"That was a good qualifying effort for us," concludes Alexander Stehlig. The Director of Factory Motorsport FIA WEC states: "Gimmi likes this track and he feels very comfortable in Bahrain. As a result, he clinched pole position with a very strong lap. Michael experienced a bit of bad luck in the sister car: in the decisive final sector, a rival spun in front of him. That's a shame because he could have qualified at least second. It's important that we earned the extra championship point for pole position. Now we're at the top of the standings with the same points tally as Ferrari and we're heading into an exciting finale. We'll go all-out and see where we end up after the eight-hour race."

Ahead of the season finale, Porsche and Ferrari are neck and neck in the manufacturer's classification. In the drivers' classification, Estre/Christensen and their Porsche teammate Bruni still have chances to win the title. The eight-hour race in Bahrain gets underway on Saturday, 12 November, at 2 pm local time (midday CET).

The No. 77 Porsche 911 RSR fielded by Dempsey-Proton Racing tackles the final round of the 2022 FIA WEC season from third place in the GTE-Am category. The No. 88 sister car starts from P12. The two customer cars run by Project 1 qualified in positions four and eleven. GR Racing's entry heads into the final round from sixth place.

Drivers' comments on the qualifying

Gianmaria Bruni (Porsche 911 RSR #91): "The line of approach was very clear – get the most out of the qualifying. It worked. My fastest lap was very good. At the first attempt, my tyres and brakes weren't quite within the optimal working temperature. So I took it easy initially and then pulled out all stops. This strategy worked beautifully. We're starting from pole position – fantastic! Although, it also feels strange because this is the last race in the factory squad's Porsche 911 RSR."

Michael Christensen (Porsche 911 RSR #92): "My goal was the first grid spot but now we're third. In a nutshell, it was tough. My lap times just weren't fast enough. It's as simple as that. Under such conditions, it'll be a difficult and extremely demanding race for us."

Christian Ried (Porsche 911 RSR #77): "The car was super! I think we could've achieved even more. I reckon I could have driven two-tenths of a second faster but the tyres were no longer up to it on my second attempt. Third place is really good. Anything is possible for us in the race."

Qualifying results

GTE-Pro class:
1. Bruni/Lietz (I/A), Porsche 911 RSR #91, 1:56.143 minutes
2. Molina/Fuoco (E/I), Ferrari 488 GTE #52, 1:56.419 minutes
3. Christensen/Estre (DK/F), Porsche 911 RSR #92, 1:56.439 minutes
4. Pier Guidi/Calado (I/UK), Ferrari 488 GTE #51, 1:56.472 minutes
5. Milner/Tandy (USA/UK), Corvette C8.R #64, 1:57.539 minutes

GTE-Am class:
1. Bovy/Frey/Gatting (B/CH/DK), Ferrari 488 GTE #85, 1:59.186 minutes
2. Keating/Chaves/Sörensen (USA/P/DK), Aston Martin #33, 1:59.698 minutes
3. Ried/Priaulx/Tincknell (D/UK/UK), Porsche 911 RSR #77, 1:59.708 minutes
4. Cairoli/Pedersen/Leutwiler (I/DK/CH), Porsche 911 RSR #46, 2:00.030 minutes
6. Wainwright/Barker/Pera (UK/UK/I), Porsche 911 RSR #86, 2:00.597 minutes
11. Hyett/Jeannette/Barnicoat (USA/USA/UK), Porsche 911 RSR #56, 2:01.307 minutes
12. Poordad/Lindsey/Heylen (USA/USA/B), Porsche 911 RSR #88, 2:01.361 minutes

The preview

Porsche is determined to win both the manufacturer's and drivers' titles in the GTE-Pro class at the final round of the 2022 FIA World Endurance Championship. Due to the longer race duration of eight hours in Bahrain, victory will be rewarded with 38 points instead of the usual 25 points. This makes the world championship calculation easy: If one of the two factory-run Porsche 911 RSR wins the race and the second car crosses the finish line, Porsche will take home the manufacturer's crown. If the No. 92 car achieves pole position and finishes the final race in first place, Kévin Estre (France) and Michael Christensen (Denmark) will secure the drivers' title for the second time since 2018/2019.

Gianmaria Bruni still has a chance of winning the drivers' championship in the No. 91 Porsche 911 RSR: The Italian is just 14 points shy of the leaders in the overall standings. His teammate Richard Lietz from Austria is out of contention for the title after missing the Monza race due to ill health and losing the chance to earn points. The race in Bahrain is also the works team's final event with the RSR. The two factory nine-elevens will be decked out in a unique design, which highlights the great successes, the drivers, the venues and the special liveries of the past ten years. In the GTE-Am class, three customer squads field five of the 911 RSR.

"The teams, the drivers and everyone involved at Porsche Motorsport are highly motivated. The GTE-Pro class has been hotly contested for years, and now at the very last race, everything is at stake in this category," says Thomas Laudenbach, describing the suspense ahead of the season finale in Bahrain. The Vice President of Porsche Motorsport adds: "We still have a score to settle in Bahrain. Last year we were robbed of the title here in the final laps of the season through no fault of our own. We are determined to turn the tables this year and leave the stage with this works team as world champions. Winning the manufacturer's and drivers' titles would be the icing on the cake after ten years with the works team's 911 RSR."

"We're witnessing the end of an era in Porsche factory motorsport in Bahrain. We're very aware of this fact and that motivates the team to do their absolute best," explains Alexander Stehlig, Director Factory Motorsport FIA WEC. "We'd like to clinch another one-two result and take home the big trophies for winning the world championship titles. However, it'll be a tough race for us. We don't want a repeat of what happened to us last year when we missed out on the title in the last few metres. The previous two races in Monza and Fuji have made one thing clear: the competition has not been balanced. We hope that the FIA also recognises this and adjusts the balance of performance accordingly for the final round. If this is the case, then we're facing an exciting, very intense and tough eight-hour race on a demanding circuit."

The FIA WEC was first contested on the 5.412-kilometre Bahrain International Cir-cuit close to the capital Manama in its 2012 inaugural season. The only time the endurance race was not held in Sakhir was in the 2018/2019 season. High daytime temperatures, falling temperatures at dusk and fine sand at times covering the asphalt make the race a huge challenge for teams, engineers and drivers. Tyre wear is a major consideration on the Grand Prix circuit with its 15 turns. A consistent pace over a full

stint is regarded as the key to success. For the eight-hour race in Bahrain, points will be multiplied by a factor of 1.5 and rounded up (38-27-23-18-15-12-9-6-3-2). Moreover, achieving pole position with the fastest qualifying lap yields an extra point towards the world championship.

The Porsche GT Team drivers

The two Le Mans class winners Gianmaria Bruni from Italy and Richard Lietz from Austria join forces in the Porsche 911 RSR with the starting number 91. The Italian currently ranks third in the drivers' championship, with his Austrian teammate in fourth. Their brand colleagues Kévin Estre from France and Michael Christensen from Denmark rank second in the overall standings. The two drivers in the No. 92 cockpit won the 2022 season-opening round in Sebring (USA). Porsche sits just one point behind the leader in the manufacturer's classification.

The customer teams

Dempsey-Proton Racing runs two Porsche 911 RSR racers at the WEC round in Bahrain. Team owner Christian Ried (Germany) shares driving duties in the No. 77 car with the two British racing drivers Harry Tincknell and Sebastian Priaulx. The No. 88 sister car is shared by Americans Fred Poordad and Patrick Lindsey with support from Belgium's Jan Heylen.

The No. 46 entry of Project 1 is driven by Switzerland's Nicolas Leutwiler, Mikkel Pedersen from Denmark and Italy's Matteo Cairoli. Americans Gunnar Jeannette and PJ Hyett join forces in the No. 56 car fielded by the German customer team with Ben Barnicoat from the UK. GR Racing's No. 86 car is helmed by the British drivers Michael Wainwright and Ben Barker as well as Riccardo Pera from Italy.

The schedule (all times CET)

Thursday, 10. November
10:15 – 11:45: Free practice 1
15:30 – 17:00: Free practice 2

Friday, 11. November
09:00 – 10:00: Free practice 3
14:50 – 15:00: Qualifying GTE

Saturday, 12. November
12:00 – 20:00: Race

MEDIA ENQUIRIES



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Video

https://newstv.porsche.com/porschevideos/ 229156_en_3000000.mp4
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Title: Gianmaria Bruni, Richard Lietz (l-r), FIA WEC, Sakhir, Bahrain, 2022, Porsche AG
Subline: Gianmaria Bruni and Richard Lietz in Bahrain

Path: Spirited swan song for the factory squad goes unrewarded/Images/img_4.jpg
Title: Alexander Stehlig, FIA WEC, qualifying, Spa-Francorchamps, 2021, Porsche AG
Subline: Alexander Stehlig, Director Factory Motorsport FIA WEC

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