



Porsche with two hybrid prototypes on the winner's podium at Imola

21/04/2024 Porsche Penske Motorsport wrapped up round two of the FIA World Endurance Championship WEC with both Porsche 963 racers again on the podium. At the Autodromo di Imola, Laurens Vanthoor, André Lotterer and Kévin Estre crossed the finish line in second place in difficult weather conditions towards the end of the six-hour race.

The race

Their teammates Frédéric Makowiecki, Michael Christensen and Matt Campbell claimed the third podium step after an inspired pursuit effort. The best customer Porsche 963 took the flag in eleventh position. In the LMGT3 category, Manthey PureRxcing followed up their class win at the season opener with another podium result.

The six-hour race got underway at 1 pm local time in summery but cool conditions. On the very first lap, several hypercars collided while braking for the Tamburello corner, necessitating the deployment of the

safety car. The two factory Porsche 963 cars proved to be the toughest rivals for the local favourite Ferrari early on in the race. Laurens Vanthoor from Belgium promptly catapulted the No. 6 hybrid prototype from fourth on the grid to second place. In the sister car, Frenchman Frédéric Makowiecki was holding his own in the top five. Midway through the second race of the season, both Porsche Penske Motorsport vehicles were among the frontrunners and successfully maintained contact with the leaders. At this point, Germany's André Lotterer sat at the helm of the No. 6 cockpit with Michael Christensen from Denmark in the No. 5 Porsche.

At around 5 pm, after four hours of racing, things changed. Soon after Kévin Estre from France and Matt Campbell took their seat in the two 963 at first light, the rain became heavier. Estre was the first to switch to wet tyres with the Australian following suit shortly after. The two leading Ferraris waited longer to change to wets and consequently lost valuable time on the slippery track. They fell far down the field to positions six and seven behind Campbell, who then focussed on closing the gap to the No. 20 BMW and the No. 8 Toyota. Meanwhile, Estre had moved into second place again, now behind the No. 7 Toyota.

With an hour left on the clock, the last pit stop became critically important. Although the track remained wet in parts, almost all hypercar teams switched back to slicks for dry conditions – resulting in more off-track excursions. During this critical phase, the two works Porsche enjoyed a relatively smooth run. Campbell delayed his refuelling stop longer and moved up to third place, which he defended until the finish. Estre, still in second, went in pursuit of the leading Toyota. Despite having to conserve fuel, the Frenchman caught up with Kamui Kobayashi's car with 16 minutes to go. Because a five-second penalty for overtaking behind the safety car was added to his driving time anyway, the final attack ultimately failed to materialise. After their victory at the season opener in Qatar, Estre, Vanthoor and Lotterer have further extended their lead in the drivers' standings with second place.

"Despite not winning the second round of the WEC season in Imola, it was close and a mega race!" declares Thomas Laudenbach, Vice President Porsche Motorsport. "We lacked a bit of pace in the dry. Then the rain came and we responded perfectly. Our drivers did a flawless job, while many others skidded off the track. In the end, we can be pleased with a sizeable haul of points. Thanks to everyone involved for the quick pit stops and the brilliant strategy. Congratulations also to our customer team Manthey PureRxcing: after their class win in Qatar, they brought home third place in the LMGT3 class."

"A double podium in very difficult conditions is fantastic. Congratulations to the whole team here, in Weissach and also in Mannheim," says Urs Kuratle. The Director Factory Motorsport LMDh adds: "We already knew yesterday that mixed weather conditions would await us in the race. Today we proved once again that we're always particularly strong in such conditions. In addition to the good result in the IMSA series, we can be delighted with the great weekend for Porsche Penske Motorsport. Our upward trajectory proves that we're working excellently together and that the pieces of the puzzle are coming together better and better."

The best customer Porsche 963 reached the finish line in eleventh place. Hertz Team Jota's No. 38 entry driven by the ex-Formula 1 world champion Jenson Button from Great Britain, his compatriot Phil

Hanson and the Dane Oliver Rasmussen tackled the race from P11 on the grid. The sister car shared by Frenchman Norman Nato and the two Brits Callum Hogg and Will Stevens finished in 14th. Proton Racing retired its No. 99 hybrid racing car early one hour before the end of the race.

LMGT3 class: Porsche 911 GT3 R from Manthey

The Porsche 911 GT3 R fielded by the Manthey PureRxcing customer team experienced a perfect start to the race in Imola: Starting from pole position, Alex Malykhin retained his lead spot and easily defended it at the wheel of his racing car. When rain set in four hours later, the UK driver and his teammates Joel Sturm from Germany and Klaus Bachler from Austria held a clear lead. The team's decision to temporarily stay on rain tyres turned out to be unfortunate in retrospect. The time lost for the additional pit stop pushed the No. 92 winner of the season opener in Qatar back to third place.

Manthey EMA's sister car had to take a 30-minute break for repairs after a collision during the early phase. The Australian Yasser Shahin, Morris Schuring from the Netherlands and the Austrian Porsche works driver Richard Lietz reached the finish in 16th place.

The Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps in Belgium hosts round three of this year's World Endurance Championship on 11 May. Saturday's race on the so-called Ardennes rollercoaster runs over six hours and is considered an important test before the highlight of the season, the 24 Hours of Le Mans in mid-June.

Drivers' comments on the race

Kévin Estre (Porsche 963 #6): "Second and third place – what a great weekend for the team. We didn't expect this result coming into the race. We almost even won. The race itself was crazy: with wet tyres on a drying track, and the first lap back on slicks, that was awful. I had a bit more fuel than the Toyota and was therefore able to close the gap, but overtaking wasn't possible at that stage. The team worked hard to put a competitive car on the track for us and to maximise everything. In the dry, we lacked the pace compared to Ferrari and Toyota. But with the right strategy and a clever tyre choice, we did a better job than most of the others. In any case, we are in a much better position than last year!"

Matt Campbell (Porsche 963 #5): "Given the mixed weather conditions, my stint in this race was really difficult. At times I struggled to keep the car on the track. Finding the right moment to change tyres was just as difficult. But the start of the season continues with good podium results for the team."

Jenson Button (Porsche 963 #38): "It was a difficult day right from the start. When the rain began, the windscreen wiper didn't work, despite trying everything. I could hardly see anything in the rain and with the dirty windscreen. It improved after my refuelling stop, but by then we were already a long way behind. Nevertheless, I enjoyed my time in the car and tried to find the limit of the Porsche."

Joel Sturm (Porsche 911 GT3 R #92): "My stint in the rain on slicks was pretty tricky. Still, my pace was strong and I managed to bring the car safely into the pits for the next stop. Klaus Bachler then returned to the track on wet tyres. A short time later, however, the track dried out again, so we had to switch back to slicks – which proved less than optimal. With all that said, third place is a very good result and we're taking home critical points."

Race result

Hypercar class:

1. Conway/Kobayashi/de Vries (UK/JPN/NL), Toyota GR010-Hybrid, 205 laps
2. Estre/Lotterer/Vanthoor (F/D/B), Porsche 963 #6, 205 laps
3. Campbell/Christensen/Makowiecki (AUS/DK/F), Porsche 963 #5, 205 laps
11. Button/Hanson/Rasmussen (UK/UK/DK), Porsche 963 #38, 203 laps
14. Stevens/Ilott/Nato (UK/UK/F), Porsche 963 #12, 200 laps
- DNC Andlauer/Jani/Tincknell (F/CH/UK), Porsche 963 #99, 167 laps

LMGT3 class:

1. Leung/Gelael/Farfus (UK/IDN/BR), BMW M4 LMGT3 #31, 187 laps
2. Rossi/Al Harthy/Martin (I/OMN/B), BMW M4 LMGT3 #46, 187 laps
3. Malykhin/Sturm/Bachler (UK/D/A), Porsche 911 GT3 R #92, 186 laps
16. Shahin/Schuring/Lietz (AUS/NL/A), Porsche 911 GT3 R #91, 171 laps

Standings

FIA World Endurance Championship, manufacturers

1. Porsche, 57 points
2. Toyota, 48 points
3. Ferrari, 31 points

FIA World Endurance Championship, Drivers

1. Lotterer/Estre/Vanthoor, 56 points
2. Kobayashi/ Conway/ De Vries, 40 points
3. Makowiecki /Campbell/Christensen, 39 points

FIA World Endurance Trophy, Teams

1. Manthey PureRxcing, 54 points
2. Team WRT, 37 points
3. Heart of Racing Team, 37 points

FIA World Endurance Trophy, Drivers

1. Malykhin/Sturm/Bachler, 54 points

2. Farfus/Leung/Gelael, 37 points
3. Ribieras/Mancinelli/James, 37 points

Qualifying

Porsche Penske Motorsport tackles round two of the FIA World Endurance Championship WEC at the Autodromo di Imola from the second and third grid row. Kévin Estre from France planted his works-run Porsche 963 just one place ahead of the sister car driven by Australian Matt Campbell. Two Porsche customer teams, Hertz Team Jota and Proton Competition, also made it into the so-called Hyperpole of the top ten.

Two Porsche customer teams, Hertz Team Jota and Proton Competition, also made it into the so-called Hyperpole of the top ten. The pair will start the six-hour race on Sunday at 1 pm from positions nine and ten. In the LMGT3 category, Alex Malykhin from the UK set pole position at the wheel of the 911 GT3 R fielded by the Manthey PureRxcing squad. His Manthey EMA teammate Yasser Shahin from Australia achieved the seventh fastest time.

This weekend, the Porsche Penske Motorsport works team competes on both sides of the Atlantic. The qualifying session for round three of the North American IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship was held on the Long Beach street circuit during the European night. There, the two works-Porsche 963 race cars qualified in positions four and five.

The qualifying and Hyperpole hunt for top times for the WEC race in Italy's Imola took place on a dry track in sunny weather and mild 18-degree Celsius air temperatures and 24-degree asphalt temperatures. Like at the season opener in Qatar, the starting order in the two Hypercar and LMGT3 categories was determined in a two-tier system. First, all participants in their classes had twelve minutes to turn their flying laps. The top ten drivers then advanced to the so-called Hyperpole session to fight for pole position on a significantly freer racetrack.

The qualifying session for the Hypercar class was initially red-flagged after ten of twelve minutes when a competitor spun on the 4.909-kilometre circuit. When the track was given the all-clear, none of the 19 drivers managed to improve their times in the remaining 120 seconds. As a result, four of the five Porsche 963 cars made it into the Hyperpole. Only the No. 38 entry of Hertz Team Jota missed out.

In the ten-minute bid for pole position, Kévin Estre achieved the fourth fastest time with Porsche Penske Motorsport's No. 6 hybrid prototype with a time of 1:30.101 minutes. The Frenchman starts Sunday's race from the second grid row with his works driver teammates André Lotterer (Germany) and Laurens Vanthoor (Belgium). Australian Matt Campbell planted his Porsche 963 on P5 despite a short trip through a gravel trap. He shares the 508 kW (691 PS) racing car with Michael Christensen from Denmark and Frenchman Frédéric Makowiecki.

The best-placed customer team: Hertz Team Jota

As the best-placed customer team, Callum Hogg secured position nine with Hertz Team Jota's No. 12 Porsche. The British racer joins forces with his fellow countryman Will Stevens and Norman Nato from France. The tenth fastest time was set by former Porsche Junior Julien Andlauer for Proton Competition and his teammates Neel Jani from Switzerland and Harry Tincknell from Great Britain

"The qualifying result is okay for us with fourth and fifth on the grid – we would've gladly accepted this result a week ago. Testing here in Imola was worth it. We managed to systematically improve in the first two free practice sessions. The guys did a good job," explains Urs Kuratle, Director Porsche Factory Motorsport LMDh. "Four of our Porsche 963 cars in the Hyperpole – that says a lot. Tomorrow it looks like there's a chance for changeable weather conditions. That might suit us because we have the best driver line-up and we're also very strong operationally. I think things look promising for tomorrow."

"All four of our works-Porsche 963 cars performed strongly in the IMSA and WEC qualifying sessions today. I'm proud of the performance that our team has shown since the start of 2024," states Jonathan Diuguid, Managing Director Porsche Penske Motorsport. "Qualifying has also underlined that the competition is tight in both championships. It'll take perfect execution in Imola and Long Beach to have our Porsche Penske Motorsport 963 on the top step of the podium."

LMGT3 class: Manthey's Porsche 911 GT3 R

Following up from Qatar, Porsche's customer team Manthey also put in an impressive drive in the 18-strong LMGT3 category in Imola. In the twelve-minute qualifying session, the UK racer Alex Malykhin set the fastest time with the 416 kW (565 PS) 911 GT3 R in 1:42.734 minutes. His teammate Yasser Shahin wrapped up the qualifying in third with a time of 1:43.361 minutes. This earned them both a spot in the Hyperpole session, where Malykhin progressed further. With a lap time of 1:42.365 minutes, he secured pole position for the first time this season and relegated the No. 27 Aston Martin from the Heart of Racing outfit to the second grid spot with a convincing gap of 0.693 seconds. Shahin qualified seventh.

Round two of the FIA WEC season starts tomorrow, Sunday, on the Imola Grand Prix circuit at 1 pm CEST. It race runs over six hours.

Drivers' post-qualifying quotes

Kévin Estre (Porsche 963 #6): "Because of the red flag, we qualified for the Hyperpole session with tenth place, which was very tight. Then when the yellow flag came out, I only had one flying lap in this very short session, but I think I did quite well. In my opinion, we couldn't have done much more than fourth place behind the 'reds' today. Still, we're optimistic about the race and looking forward to a good

fight – let's see if we can beat the Ferraris with a better strategy.”

Matt Campbell (Porsche 963 #5): “My qualifying was really good and I was very pleased with the performance of our Porsche 963. Unfortunately, on my first flying Hyperpole lap, the tyres locked up while braking for Turn 1, which caused some serious flat-spotting. But we can be satisfied with our fifth place and P4 for the sister car. We got the best out of it – the top three were just a touch faster than us today.”

Callum Ilott (Porsche 963 #12): “Making it into the Hyperpole was our main goal from the outset. We did that, and I managed a solid lap. The Porsche 963 felt good and I was able to make further progress. In the Hyperpole, the yellow phases made it more difficult. Ninth place on the grid is okay, but of course, we would've preferred a better result. We still have some work to do for the race. We want to get the best for ourselves.”

Julien Andlauer (Porsche 963 #99): “I'm very pleased with the tenth grid spot. After the first free practice session we struggled with power steering issues, which cost us a lot of track time. That's why we started the qualifying with a baseline setup and hoped that it would be generally okay. With no experience with the tyres and little fuel on board, it was a bit difficult. Still, we managed to hold our own quite well against the other Porsche. We've definitely taken a step in the right direction. Now let's see what we can do in the race.”

Alex Malykhin (Porsche 911 GT3 R #92): “To be honest, pole position came as a bit of a surprise – we had to carry extra weight after our victory in Qatar. However, that motivated us to work even harder in preparation. Both sessions went well for me. My first attempt was very clean, on the second lap I went harder. My engineer also helped me a lot. He kept me well informed via radio about how to manage overtaking traffic on the track. At least half of this result is thanks to him!”

Yasser Shahin (Porsche 911 GT3 R #91): “I'm satisfied with the progress we've made since the first free practice. The car is getting better and better and I'm improving too. This is my first time driving here in Imola. In the first qualifying section, I pushed a little too hard to make it into the Hyperpole session. It's part of a learning curve – but I'm happy with where I'm currently at.”

Qualifying result

Hypercar class:

1. Fuoco/Molina/Nielsen (I/E/DK), Ferrari #50, 1:29.466 min.
2. Kubica/Shwartzman/Ye (PL/IL/CHN), Ferrari #83, 1:29.855 min.
3. Guidi/Calado/Giovinazzi (I/UK/I), Ferrari #51, 1:29.953 min.
4. Estre/Lotterer/Vanthoor (F/D/B), Porsche 963 #6, 1:30.101 min.
5. Campbell/Christensen/Makowiecki (AUS/DK/F), Porsche 963 #5, 1:30.385 min.
9. Stevens/Ilott/Nato (UK/UK/F), Porsche 963 #12, 1:30.656 min.
10. Andlauer/Jani/Tincknell (F/CH/UK), Porsche 963 #99, 1:30.692 min.

11. Button/Hanson/Rasmussen (UK/UK/DK), Porsche 963 #38, 1:31.322 min.

LMGT3 class:

1. Malykhin/Sturm/Bachler (UK/D/A), Porsche 911 GT3 R #92, 1:42.365 min.
2. James/Mancinelli/Riberas (USA/I/E), Aston Martin Vantage AMR LMGT3 #27, 1:43.058 min.
3. Rossi/AI Harthy/Martin (I/OMN/B), BMW M4 LMGT3 #46, 1:43.099 min.
7. Shahin/Schuring/Lietz (AUS/NL/A), Porsche 911 GT3 R #91, 1:43.399 min.

Full results at fiawec.alkamelsystems.com

Preview

The Italian region of Emilia-Romagna hosts the FIA WEC for the first time on the Formula 1 circuit. On the same weekend, the Porsche Penske Motorsport crew will race in Long Beach on the west coast of the USA. There, they aim to repeat last year's success in the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship. The Porsche Penske Motorsport works team spent two days of testing in preparation for the debut of the FIA WEC in Imola. In the second week of March, the Porsche factory drivers covered well over 1,000 kilometres in different conditions and collected extensive data for optimising the vehicle setup. The Hertz Team Jota customer team also took this opportunity to get their first impressions of the new racetrack on the 2024 WEC calendar.

"Our clear objective is to immediately follow up with another top result after our good start to the season in Qatar and consolidate our position at the top of the championship," explains Thomas Laudenbach, Vice President Porsche Motorsport. "The track characteristics in Imola are completely different to those in Doha. Still, we're determined to be a serious contender for another victory in Italy. It'll be an intense and exciting weekend for Porsche and our Porsche Penske Motorsport works team. While the WEC team is fighting for championship points in Imola, our IMSA crew in Long Beach is aiming to repeat last year's success. We want to be successful on both sides of the Atlantic next weekend."

"Our team went testing last month on the Imola racetrack and gained enormously valuable insights. We're heading to the second round of the season well prepared," says Urs Kuratle. "Our Hertz Team Jota customer team also tapped the full potential of the Porsche 963 at the season opener in Qatar," the Director of Factory Motorsport LMDh adds. "Our goal is to once again make the most of the potential in Imola and defend our world championship lead. At the same time, we'll be looking across the pond, where our global team Porsche Penske Motorsport contests the IMSA race in Long Beach at the same time. So far, our 2024 record looks very good. We want to continue this."

The race

The six-hour event in Imola is considered the home race of Porsche's rival Ferrari – as underlined by the

name of the permanent racetrack: Autodromo Enzo e Dino Ferrari. Opened in 1953, the 4.909-kilometre circuit with its 17 corners has hosted 30 Formula 1 Grands Prix. Imola is famous for its passages "Tamburello", "Tosa" and "Rivazza", among other things.

Due to the nature of the asphalt, the teams expect significantly higher tyre wear during the race in Italy compared to the season opener in Qatar. The storied circuit also features an interesting mix of fast corners and narrow chicanes, some of which are edged by high curbs. The Autodromo in northern Italy leaves little room for error. On the traditional racing circuit, there are only small run-off areas and many deep gravel beds.

Drivers' comments ahead of the race

Matt Campbell (Porsche 963 #5): "We started the season really well in both the FIA WEC and the IMSA series. Our global team has achieved some big successes and now leads both championships. Obviously, we want to continue our good form in Imola. The tests we did a few weeks back were extremely informative. The last time I raced at Imola was in 2020 and I really like the track. Now we're heading there for the first WEC event. I'm positive that we'll treat the fans to some action-packed racing."

Laurens Vanthoor (Porsche 963 #6): "We won the opening round in Qatar and now travel to Imola as the championship leaders. We want to follow up with another win in Italy – but it won't be easy because the competition is strong. The circuit is basically the opposite of the one in Qatar: Old-school layout, real curbs, and hardly any run-off zones. I really like it and I'm looking forward to seeing what the competition brings in Imola. It will be a big, beautiful challenge for all teams and drivers."

Will Stevens (Porsche 963 #12): "I'm very much looking forward to Imola. I've never raced on the track before but we tested there a few weeks ago so we already have a basic idea of what we're up against. The track is mercilessly unforgiving of mistakes. For me as a driver, something like this is a big challenge. We were strong and successful at the start of the season. It can now continue like this."

Jenson Button (Porsche 963 #38): "I have mixed emotions going back to Imola. It's the place where I scored my first pole position in Formula One with the legendary Michael Schumacher in a Ferrari starting in P2. It's the 20th anniversary of that first pole in Imola but this year also marks the 30th anniversary of the loss of two greats, Roland Ratzenberger and Ayrton Senna. With this in mind, I'm sure there will be very mixed emotions for lots of the motorsport community returning to Imola this year. The track overall is a great one to drive – very fast, very flowing and it will be really challenging in a hypercar but I can't wait. I'm really looking forward to getting out there with the team and seeing what both cars can do."

Neel Jani (Porsche 963 #99): "The last time I competed in Imola was almost 20 years ago, back then as a Friday tester in Formula 1 and as a driver in what was then known as GP2. I'm super excited to see how we'll adapt to the track as a team. Unlike some other competitors, we didn't go testing there. In the

free practice sessions, we need to work as efficiently as possible to get up to speed quickly. We had a lot of trouble with the tyres in Qatar but we also learned a lot. I'm sure things will go better now. I'm looking forward to Imola and the Italian fans, who will definitely create a great vibe."

Morris Schuring (Porsche 911 GT3 R #91): "I've driven in Imola several times with the Porsche Cups, among others. I love that the track is old-school. When our GT3 cars and the hypercars meet there, things can get exciting. The circuit is narrow with gravel beds right next to it. We have to ensure there are no mistakes while lapping traffic. Our test in Imola went well. I hope that we can make the most of our potential and score maximum points."

Joel Sturm (Porsche 911 GT3 R #92): "After our victory in Qatar, we're eager to do it again in Imola. We have high expectations, even though we know we'll have to fight hard next weekend. The 60 kilograms of success ballast that we have to take on after our class victory in Doha will certainly slow us down. Still, we're doing everything we can to defend our top spot in the world championship."

An overview of the vehicles and drivers

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 Irott (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 (all times CEST)

Friday, 19 April

12:00 hrs – 13:30 hrs: Free practice 1

17:15 hrs – 18:45 hrs: Free practice 2

Saturday, 20 April

11:10 hrs – 12:10 hrs: Free practice 3

14:45 hrs – 14:57 hrs: Qualifying LMGT3

15:05 hrs – 15:15 hrs: Hyperpole LMGT3

15:25 hrs – 15:37 hrs: Qualifying Hypercar

15:45 hrs – 15:55 hrs: Hyperpole Hypercar

Sunday, 21 April

13:00 hrs – 19:00 hrs: Race

MEDIA ENQUIRIES



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Video

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