Tennis meets motorsport: inspiring encounter between Porsche supported sportswomen

02/05/2025 It was an unusual meet-up: the Porsche Talent Team's Nastasja Schunk and Mariella Thamm and the race driver Michelle Gatting from the Iron Dames team met up on the fringe of the Porsche Tennis Grand Prix for not only an inspiring exchange of thoughts and ideas. They also tried ventured onto what was for them unfamiliar terrain. The sports car manufacturer has now been involved in women's sport for 48 years through the Porsche Tennis Grand Prix.

The Porsche Tennis Grand Prix, the world class tournament featuring numerous top players, formed the ideal setting for a get-together for sportswomen with a quite special relationship with Porsche. Nastasja Schunk and Mariella Thamm are supported in the Porsche Talent Team. The backing given them to boost their sporting development should help the young players to also get a foothold on the high-class WTA Tour with the world's best women players.

Michelle Gatting drives a pink Porsche 911 GT3 R for the highly professional all-female Iron Dames

team in the four most important worldwide endurance race series: the World Endurance Championship (WEC), IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship, European Le Mans Series and Asian Le Mans Series. The Dane has been an official Porsche contracted driver since the start of the season.

First up on the schedule was an intensive session of tennis on the official practice court in the Porsche Tennis Grand Prix's Public Village. The tennis players were astounded by the good figure Michelle Gatting cut on what was for her an unaccustomed surface with a tennis racket in her hand. "She plays really well, something I didn't expect," said Nastasja Schunk, the Wimbledon girls' singles runner-up in 2021. Mariella Thamm, a Porsche Talent Team member since the start of the season, was not quite so astonished saying, "She's an athlete. You can see it right away."

From the Porsche Arena, they popped over to the main plant in Zuffenhausen where the production of Porsche vehicles began 75 years ago. Once there, the trio visited the sports car manufacturer's two finishing departments – the Exclusive Manufaktur and the Sonderwunsch programme.

Desiring to turn something special into something unique, Porsche customers can either individualise their sports cars by choosing from more than 1,000 options across all model series or have personalised individual pieces co-created and implemented via the Sonderwunsch programme. When touring the facility, the athletes encountered a Porsche that made history. Driving the 919 Hybrid numbered 17, Mark Webber, Brendon Hartley and Timo Bernhard won the 2015 World Endurance Drivers' Championship. No wonder then that Michelle Gatting particularly soaked up the whiff of Le Mans. "Driving such a car," she enthused with a glint in her eyes, "is something we all dream about."

Awaiting the athletes on the parking deck behind the Porsche Arena was the day's final test of their talents – the traditional Porsche Driving Challenge. The fastest time around the demanding driving skills course in a Porsche Macan Turbo, the winners' car at this year's Porsche Tennis Grand Prix, was set as expected by Michelle Gatting. Together with her Iron Dames teammates she after all claimed the class win in the 2023 8 Hours of Bahrain – the first all-female team to achieve the feat in WEC history. Equipped with the race driver's valuable tips, Nastasja Schunk and Mariella Thamm showed lots of talent on the accelerator and behind the steering wheel on what was for them strange terrain. Their performances brought them praise at the end of an eventful day from a smiling Michelle Gatting: "Their foot on the accelerator is definitely stronger than my hand on the racket."

The day full of experiences can to an end in the Porsche Arena where they watched the top stars live on Centre Court. In doing so, they recognised that tennis and motorsport have numerous things in common. Their encounter was an interesting exchange of thoughts and ideas between young women that have big goals in their sports and are on a good path to achieving them with determination and hard work. In the process, they can benefit from each other's experiences. Summing up the day's events, Nastasja Schunk said, "That was a brilliant day."

Porsche in Tennis

The Porsche Tennis Grand Prix is the flagship of Porsche's worldwide involvement in women's tennis. First played in Filderstadt in 1978, the long-standing Stuttgart tournament has been held in the city's Porsche Arena since 2006. It stands for tradition and innovation, as does the Porsche brand. As the most loyal sponsor of women's international tennis, Porsche has accompanied the WTA's oldest indoor event right from the start. Porsche has also been supporting women's tennis internationally for years. Iga Swiatek, Eva Lys and Maria Sakkari are “Friends of the Brand” in their home countries. Porsche has been a premium partner of the “Deutsche Tennis Bund” (DTB – German Tennis Association) since 2012 and is committed to fostering up-and-coming players in the Porsche Talent Team and the Porsche Junior Team.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

Markus Rothermel

Spokesperson Sports Communications
+49 (0) 170 / 911 0779
markus.rothermel@porsche.de

Holger Eckhardt

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

Consumption data

Macan Turbo (WLTP)*: Electrical consumption combined: 20.6 – 18.3 kWh/100 km; CO_2 emissions combined: 0 g/km; CO_2 class: A

*Further information on the official fuel consumption and the official specific CO_2 emissions of new passenger cars can be found in the "Leitfaden über den Kraftstoffverbrauch, die CO_2-Emissionen und den Stromverbrauch neuer Personenkraftwagen" (Fuel Consumption, CO_2Emissions and Electricity Consumption Guide for New Passenger Cars), which is available free of charge at all sales outlets and from DAT (Deutsche Automobil Treuhand GmbH, Helmuth-Hirth-Str. 1, 73760 Ostfildern-Scharnhausen, www.dat.de).

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