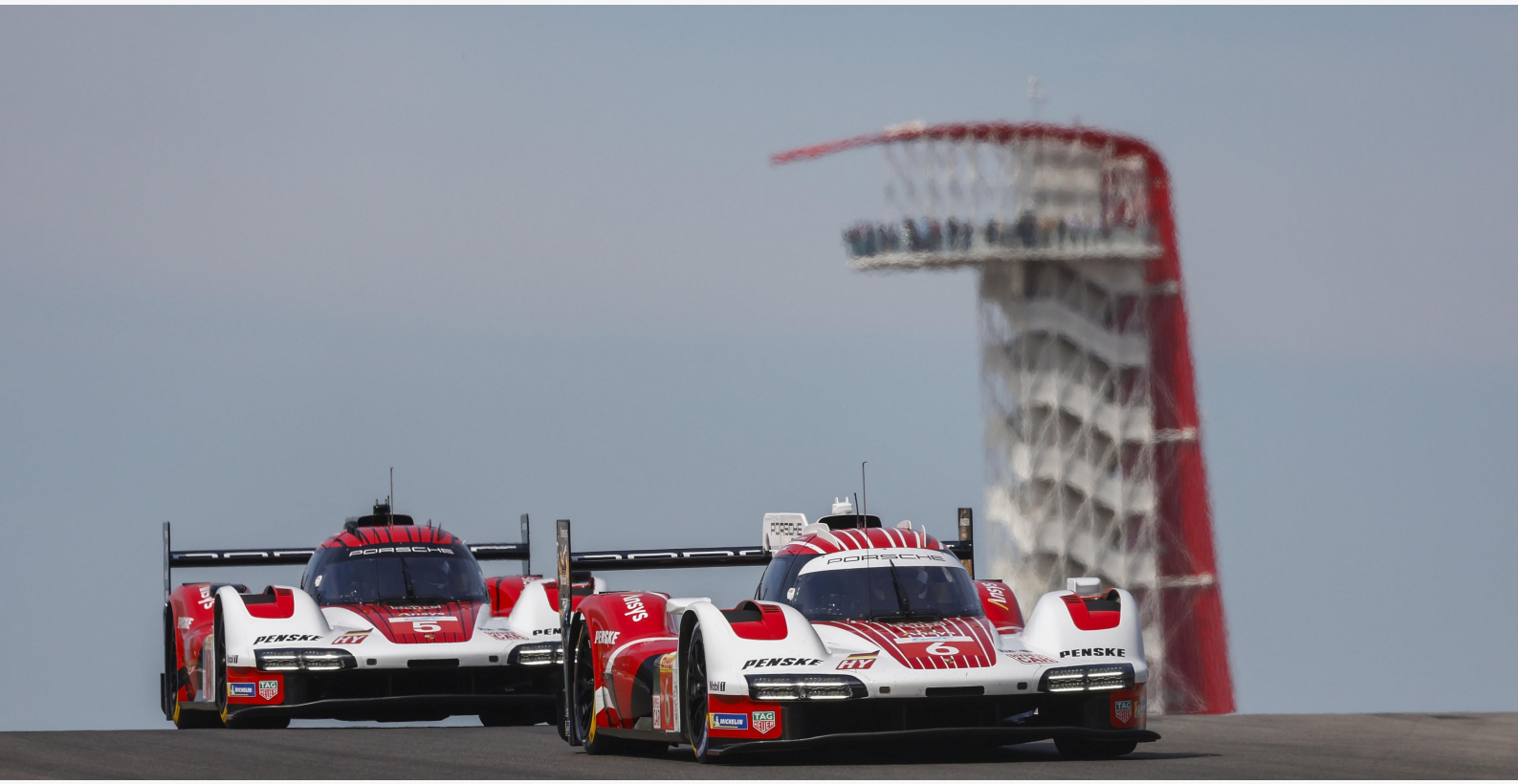

Row two start for best Porsche 963 at ☒Lone Star Le Mans" race in Austin

07/09/2025 The leading Porsche 963 fielded by Porsche Penske Motorsport will tackle round six of the FIA World Endurance Championship from fourth on the grid. In a rainy qualifying session, France's Kévin Estre planted the factory team's No. 6 car on the second row. The sister car heads into the six-hour ☒Lone Star Le Mans" race in Austin, Texas, from P11. Securing sixth place, Proton Competition impressed with a strong Hyperpole performance at the Circuit of The Americas. In the LMGT3 class, however, the Manthey-run Porsche 911 GT3 R entries experienced a disappointing session.

The Qualifying

After sweltering heat and bright sunshine during Friday's practice sessions, the Formula 1 circuit on the outskirts of Austin offered a stark contrast for qualifying under grey skies and patchy rain. On the drying asphalt, lap times tumbled during the first segment of qualifying. At the wheel of the No. 6 Porsche

963, France's Kévin Estre advanced into the Hyperpole, while his compatriot Julien Andlauer narrowly missed out on a place in the final shootout in eleventh.

The decisive battle among the top ten for the best grid positions ahead of Sunday's six-hour race kept fans on edge. The lead changed hands repeatedly as lap times dropped with every run. A last-ditch attempt from reigning World Endurance Champion Estre handed Porsche Penske Motorsport a spot on the second row.

"Fourth on the grid is a decent result and we're satisfied," said Urs Kuratle, Director Factory Motorsport LMDh. "Conditions were extremely tricky. On the damp track, cars on slicks were able to match the pace of those on wets. Not all drivers managed to keep their prototypes on the track – ours did. Eleventh place for our No. 5 car is no cause for concern. Our strength lies more in race pace over the distance, and we feel well prepared. Congratulations to our customer team Proton Competition on sixth place."

"Light rain fell throughout qualifying, and conditions changed lap by lap," added Jonathan Diuguid, Managing Director Porsche Penske Motorsport. "Kévin Estre put in a very strong performance. Unfortunately, he made a minor mistake at the end of the back straight on his final lap – otherwise, pole position might even have been possible. Julien Andlauer encountered some traffic and just missed out on Hyperpole, which was a pity. Let's see what happens in the race. I think we can expect more rain."

Nico Varrone gave a standout performance at the wheel of the No. 99 Porsche 963 from Proton Competition. The Argentine topped the timesheets during the opening phase of qualifying, securing a safe passage into Hyperpole. In the final shootout, the German customer team's hybrid prototype clocked the sixth-fastest time – its best result of the current WEC season. In the race, Varrone shares driving duties with Switzerland's Neel Jani and Nico Pino from Chile.

LMGT3 class: Best Porsche 911 GT3 R to start from P14

In the LMGT3 class, both Manthey-run Porsche 911 GT3 R cars were eliminated in the opening phase of qualifying. In tricky conditions on the damp track, Ryan Hardwick set the 13th-fastest time. In the race, the American shares the No. 92 car entered by Manthey 1st Phorm with Austria's factory driver Richard Lietz and Italian racer Riccardo Pera. The identical 911 campaigned by the Iron Dames squad qualified on P17. The No. 85 car will be shared by Denmark's Michelle Gatting, Rahel Frey from Switzerland and France's Célia Martin.

Round six of the FIA World Endurance Championship, the "Lone Star Le Mans", gets underway on Sunday, 7 September at 1 pm local time (8 pm CEST) and runs over a distance of six hours.

Driver comments post-qualifying

Julien Andlauer (Porsche 963 #5): "I'm disappointed. In the wet conditions, the key at first was to get the tyres into the right operating window. Some parts of the track were dry, others very slippery. My first quick laps were okay, but on the final, decisive run I got held up by slower cars, which unfortunately hampered further improvement."

Kévin Estre (Porsche 963 #6): "Conditions were already tricky in qualifying, but they became even tougher in the Hyperpole session. Towards the end of the shootout, the rain intensified, so there wasn't much more we could do on the final lap. Fourth place and a second-row start is not bad and a clear step forward compared to some of our recent races. Hopefully, our strength lies in a consistent race pace over the full distance. I'm curious to see what we can do on Sunday."

Nico Varrone (Porsche 963 #99): "That was fantastic! In the first part, I set the fastest time – it was the first time this season we made it into Hyperpole. Conditions then became increasingly difficult as the rain got heavier, especially in the final sector. Unfortunately, I then made a small mistake on my flying lap. Pole position was out of reach, but a top-three slot might have been possible. Still, we can't complain – sixth place gives us a great starting position for the race."

Ryan Hardwick (Porsche 911 GT3 R #92): "I'm disappointed. The Porsche felt good. While some drivers took big risks in the tricky conditions, I chose to be a bit more cautious in view of our championship fight. The success ballast in our car certainly didn't help either. I'm also not completely satisfied with my own performance. Now we'll focus on making steady progress in the race."

Qualifying results

Hypercar class:

1. Kubica/Ye/Hanson (POL/CHN/GBR), Ferrari #83, 1:57.655 minutes
2. Pier Guidi/Calado/Giovinazzi (ITA/GBR/ITA), Ferrari #51, 1:57.751 minutes
3. Di Resta/Jensen/Vergne (GBR/DNK/FRA), Peugeot #93, 1:58.506 minutes
4. Campbell/Estre/Vanthoor (AUS/FRA/BEL), Porsche 963 #6, 1:58.619 minutes
6. Jani/Pino/Varrone (CHE/CHL/ARG), Porsche 963 #99, 1:58.839 minutes
11. Andlauer/Christensen/Jaminet (FRA/DNK/FRA), Porsche 963 #5, 2:00.731 minutes

LMGT3 class:

1. Gattuso/Levorato/Olsen (ITA/ITA/NOR), Ford #88, 2:07.645 minutes
2. Sousa/Ruck/Barker (PRO/GBR/GBR), Ford #77, 2:07.663 minutes
3. Leung/Galael/Sato (GBR/INA/JPN), McLaren #95, 2:08.262 minutes
13. Hardwick/Lietz/Pera (USA/AUT/ITA), Porsche 911 GT3 R #92, 2:17.545 minutes
17. Frey/Gatting/Martin (CHE/DNK/FRA), Porsche 911 GT3 R #85, 2:22.433 minutes

Full results and championship standings: fiawec.alkamelsystems.com.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES



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