Pascal Wehrlein achieves first Formula E podium of the season for Porsche

12/04/2021 The first podium of the season for the TAG Heuer Porsche Formula E Team: In the No. 99 Porsche 99X Electric, Pascal Wehrlein claimed third place at the Rome E-Prix on Sunday after a gripping race against tough opposition.

Race 4

In the fight for the Super Pole, Pascal Wehrlein left a strong impression with the third quickest time. In the early stages of the race, he moved into second place with the Porsche 99X Electric and, with a thrilling overtaking manoeuvre, took the lead shortly afterwards. This was the first lap at the front of the field for the TAG Heuer Porsche Formula E Team. On the 3.385-kilometre street circuit in the district of Esposizione Universale di Roma, however, he was unable to maintain this position for long. First, he had to allow his strongest pursuer, who was in Attack Mode, to pass. He lost another position at the restart after a full course yellow. Although he ultimately saw the flag in fourth place, the TAG Heuer Porsche Formula E Team had every reason to celebrate: Since the third-placed driver was retrospectively disqualified for using too much energy, Pascal Wehrlein inherited third place – at just his fourth race for Porsche.

His teammate André Lotterer, who has previously climbed the podium twice in Rome, had to start the race from the second to last grid row. After using too much energy during the qualifying session, his fastest lap in the Super Pole was voided. The TAG Heuer Porsche Formula E Team then decided to replace the powertrain of the No. 36 Porsche 99X Electric and accepted a 10-second stop-and-go penalty in the race.

Comments on the Rome E-Prix, Race 4

Amiel Lindesay, Head of Operations Formula E: "We're thrilled about our first podium of the season. That was a positive surprise at the finish. The conditions weren't easy, but we were strong. We've made good progress since the start of the season in Diriyah. We were at the front in qualifying, but ultimately we now have to implement that in the race. Today we were close. Pascal's third place is a result on which we can build for the next doubleheader in Valencia."

Pascal Wehrlein, Porsche works driver (#99): "That was a good day for Porsche and me. To climb the podium at the fourth race of the season is a great result. I'd like to thank my team for their hard work and tremendous support. Still, when you take the lead, you obviously want to win. Unfortunately, that

wasn't possible today because – like in Diriyah – we lacked a bit of speed in the race. Still, we're on the right track. I hope that by Valencia we can take another step forward."

André Lotterer, Porsche works driver (#36): "Like in Diriyah, that was a tough weekend for me with no points. Nevertheless, I think we've once again underlined our potential. Pascal's podium result motivates the whole team. There are still some minor details that we need to work on to be able to achieve our first win in Valencia."

Race 3

A turbulent European opener for the ABB FIA Formula E World Championship: The gripping and eventful third round of the season on the street circuit in Rome, in which Pascal Wehrlein scored seventh in the Porsche 99X Electric and earned valuable points for the TAG Heuer Porsche Formula E Team, was marked by numerous changes at the lead and collisions in the fight for a front spot. An eventful race afternoon saw the race in the Eternal City take off and finish behind the safety car.

With a strong qualifying effort and the second-fastest time in the battle for Super Pole, André Lotterer secured a spot on the front grid row – just as his teammate had done at the season-opening round in Diriyah, Saudi Arabia. On the 3.385-kilometre racetrack in the district of Esposizione Universale di Roma, he was unable to turn this promising starting position into a top result. In the first free lap after the start, where competitors were led by the safety car due to a partly damp track, an unfortunate overtaking manoeuvre resulted in a collision with the leader. For this, the race director issued a five-second time penalty. Ultimately, Lotterer was classified 14th. Taking up the race from the eighth grid spot, his teammate Pascal Wehrlein managed to move up to fourth place at times in the No. 99 Porsche 99X Electric. In the end, he crossed the finish line in seventh place.

As a guest of the Porsche partner TAG Heuer, Patrick Dempsey paid a visit to the TAG Heuer Porsche Formula E Team in Rome before the race. The Hollywood star and co-owner of the Dempsey Proton Racing squad, who is currently filming the second season of the thriller series "Devils" in Italy's capital, was obviously impressed by how Formula E has grown. He thinks Porsche's involvement in the world's first electric racing series is the right step. "We have to be responsible for the environment, which is why it's really important for Porsche to be involved in Formula E. Many of the developments in electric mobility that have been tried and tested on the racetrack will be seen in street cars. It goes hand in hand," said the former racing driver, who made a dream come true when he finished second in the GTE-Am class at the wheel of a Porsche 911 RSR at the 2015 Le Mans 24-hour race. With the Taycan, Porsche's first fully electric sports car, he got the chance to turn a few laps on the street circuit on race day and was very impressed, especially with the acceleration and handling. His conclusion: "This car is beautiful to drive."

Comments on the Rome E-Prix, Race 3

Amiel Lindesay, Head of Operations Formula E: "The qualifying was a good effort, particularly with P2 for André. Mega job. In the first lap, he saw an opportunity to pass the pole sitter on the inside and he went for it. The leader then closed the gap, they had nowhere to go and a collision occurred. Unfortunately, he paid the penalty and the race was over for André. Pascal had a pretty solid first half of the race, but then we weren't as efficient as we'd like to be and we lost ground. We need to see where we're losing. It's a shame, Pascal could've been right up there. Now we'll regroup and come back tomorrow."

Pascal Wehrlein, Porsche works driver (#99): "I finished in the points again, that's a positive. Still, the result doesn't feel that good. We could've finished on the podium, but a few things happened in the race to prevent that. That's why I'm a bit frustrated at the moment. We'll now put our heads together as a team and see what we can improve for tomorrow. It's great that we're finally driving on a typical Formula E street circuit. I hope our result tomorrow is more positive."

André Lotterer, Porsche works driver (#36): "I had an okay qualifying and was very optimistic for the race. Then the race started behind the safety car and I was behind the leader when he braked early for turn 7. I wanted to get past him on the inside but then he saw me go and we made contact. That's sad, obviously, the car was quick and we had the stuff to win. Unfortunately, we had a great chance today and we didn't use it."

Preview: Q&A on the Rome E-Prix

After the season kicked off with two spectacular night races in Diriyah, the ABB FIA Formula E World Championship heads to Rome on 10/11 April. Given the limited travel options due to the pandemic, the FIA and Formula E have decided to hold another doubleheader event in the Eternal City – and again at the next round in Valencia on 24/25 April.

For Amiel Lindesay, Head of Formula E Operations, this is the right decision: "In view of the current situation and the unpredictability of the pandemic in the second half of the season, every contested race is important for us and the series."

This will be the first outing in Rome for the TAG Heuer Porsche Formula E Team, which scored valuable championship points in Saudi Arabia. In the No. 99 Porsche 99X Electric, Pascal Wehrlein is determined to build on his strong performance from Diriyah, where he tackled his debut race for Porsche from the front grid row. His teammate André Lotterer faces tough competition in the second Porsche 99X Electric with the starting number 36. In the world's first fully-electric racing series, twelve teams and 24 drivers fight for world championship titles, which are awarded for the first time this season.

The TAG Heuer Porsche Formula E Team heads to the third and fourth race of the season feeling

confident. “In Diriyah, the basic speed of our Porsche 99X Electric was there. We can build on this for Rome,” says Amiel Lindesay. “Still, we can’t forget that, although this is our second season, we’ve only contested six events so far. The competition in this hotly contested world championship is super tight.”

Amiel Lindesay (Head of Operations Formula E)

What insights will you take to Rome from the season opener in Diriyah?
“We kicked off the season well in Diriyah. Still, there were a few things that we needed to sort out. The energy management was definitely not ideal. In certain areas both cars used a little too much battery energy. We need to learn from this and do better in Rome. I’m confident we’ll be stronger there. We didn’t get a chance to race in Rome last year. However, the track has been changed in many areas, which might suit us. Still, the level of competition is so high in Formula E that all teams will have sorted out these changes and the playing field will be pretty much balanced.”

In which areas do you see room for improvement for the Rome E-Prix?
“We opt for a global approach. Hence we are working intensively on optimizing the software. As usual, the simulator work will be intense to try and prepare the team in the best possible way for Rome so that we come out of the pits fighting. The team spirit is positive and everyone’s highly motivated in the search for perfection. We aim to improve from race to race this season and be flawless in everything we do. The last time André raced in Rome, he finished on the podium. The team has the drive and motivation to achieve this again.”

Two races will also be contested in Rome. What does this mean for the team in terms of preparation?
“A Formula E race day is extremely long. A doubleheader event puts the team under more stress, but there’s not a lot of difference in the preparation back home. The only thing that’s a bit more complicated is the simulation of grip levels because you have more track time. Much of the preparation for the second day depends on what we’ve discovered on day one. Of course, what can happen is that if there’s an incident during the first race, we’ll have fewer tyres available for the rest of the weekend – because we only have a limited number of tyres.”

André Lotterer (Porsche works driver, #36)

You have fond memories of Rome, it’s always been good turf for you. How motivating is that?
“It’s of course a great feeling to return to a racetrack where you’ve been successful. I’ve climbed the podium twice in Rome and I’ve set pole position once. Let’s see whether these experiences turn out to be in my favour. This is the first race for our team in Rome, and we’ll be driving a new track variation. This is advantageous for us, because with the variation, the track is new for us all.”

Your start to the season in Diriyah wasn’t optimal. Do the two races in Rome come at an opportune time?
“Absolutely. Every racing kilometre brings us forward. Two races also mean two chances for a

successful performance. Not everything went smoothly in Diriyah, but there were still many positives. We were among the top group in the practices, which is always a good sign. We have a solid basis to build on. We've done the preparation work for Rome and I hope we'll be rewarded as a team for our hard work."

Pascal Wehrlein (Porsche works driver, #99)

You tackled your first race for Porsche from the first grid row. How much has this inspired you?
"As a newcomer to the team, having a good start was particularly important. We've shown our potential. We were very strong over one lap, but we lacked a bit of speed in the race. We've made some improvements for Rome, and if we manage to implement them in the race, I reckon anything is possible."

How do you feel about contesting two races in Rome and what are your thoughts on the new track layout?
"The more races we contest, the better it is for our team. In any case, I'm looking forward to spending more time in the car. It's possible that the first day might not run smoothly. If this happens, the weekend isn't over – we have a second chance to achieve a better result. The new track is fast and a real challenge with its bumpy surface. When we prepared for Rome, the main thing for us was to familiarise ourselves with the current track variant and to find the ideal setup for our Porsche 99X Electric for the first race. In Formula E, you have very little time to tweak the setup on the actual race day, and that makes it all the more important to get the baseline right."

The racetrack

The Rome E-Prix is contested on a 3.385-kilometre circuit in the Esposizione Universale di Roma district. After Beijing in 2014, it is the second longest racetrack in Formula E history. Compared the track layout in 2019, when Formula E last raced in Rome, four 90-degree turns and a chicane have been added. The circuit, which runs past the Palazzo dei Congressi and the Piazzale Marconi, features 19 corners. The straight along the Via Cristoforo Colombo was slightly shortened. "The new track doesn't really look at all like the old one," says André Lotterer. "So, it's not a major disadvantage that our team has never driven in Rome." For Pascal Wehrlein, one thing is certain: "It'll definitely be exciting."

Live TV and Internet coverage

The worldwide broadcasting schedule of the Formula E event in Rome is available on:
https://www.fiaformulae.com/watch/ways-to-watch

The media service

The first photos from Rome will be available on the Porsche press database on 9 April. Comments from the Head of Formula E Operations and drivers will be included in the race report on 10 April (race 3) and 11 April (race 4). Further information about the TAG Heuer Porsche Formula E Team will be posted live on the Twitter channel @PorscheFormulaE. All relevant information about the team, the drivers and the racing series can be found in the Porsche Formula E Media Guide. The content will be regularly updated over the course of the season and expanded with additional interactive material.

The Porsche 99X Electric

Campaigning the Porsche 99X Electric, Porsche returned to open-wheel single-seater racing after more then 30 years and celebrated a successful debut scoring second place at the season-opener in Saudi Arabia's Diriyah. The fully-electric racing car sporting the Weissach-developed Porsche E Performance Powertrain also serves as a development platform for the sports car manufacturer's fully-electric production models. Hence, the 800-Volt technology which Porsche utilises in Formula E is also found in the Taycan as the first fully-electric production sports car from Porsche. Energy management and efficiency are important factors of success in Formula E and in the development of production cars. The 99X Electric has a maximum output of 250 kW (340 hp) in qualification mode and 200 kW (270 hp) in normal race mode. Attack Mode boosts the output to 235 kW (320 hp), with Fanboost increasing the performance to 250 kW (340 hp). Maximum recuperation is 250 kW; the usable battery capacity is 52 Kilowatt hours.

Formula E

Formula E is the world's first fully-electric road racing series bringing thrilling motorsport to people living in major cities. As an accelerator for innovative and sustainable technologies of mobility, it promotes the worldwide acceptance of electric vehicles with the aim to counteract climate change. The format is compact: practice, qualifying and race all take place on one day. Each race is contested over 45 minutes plus one lap. Formula E, which features a team and driver world championship for the first time this year, has attracted more automobile manufacturers than any other racing series. This makes for interesting and hotly contested races. The TAG Heuer Porsche Formula E Team tackles its second season running the Porsche 99X Electric in 2021.

Coming up

The next event for the TAG Heuer Porsche Formula E Team is the Valencia E-Prix on 24/25 April with races 5 and 6 of the ABB FIA Formula E World Championship.

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