

Two Porsche 911 RSR on the podium at the virtual 24 Hours of Le Mans

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16/01/2022 The Porsche Esports Team has secured second place in the GTE category at the virtual 24 Hours of Le Mans. Porsche Junior Laurin Heinrich, Martin Krönke (both Germany), Mitchell deJong from the US and Mack Bakkum (Netherlands) were just 34 seconds off winning the race.

The race

Third place went to the 911 RSR fielded by Proton Competition driven by the Australian Porsche works driver Matt Campbell, among others. This is the second time the virtual edition of the French endurance classic has been contested since 2020. The Porsche Esports Team tackled the race on the rFactor 2

simulation platform as the defending champions. Once again, experienced professional racing drivers from the real world of motorsport shared the cockpits of the virtual sports cars with the world's best sim racers.

"That was an incredible 24-hour race. It was gripping from the first to the last second," stated Marco Ujhasi, Manager Esports at Porsche Motorsport. "The drivers did a brilliant job. Unfortunately, we experienced some bad luck with our No. 92 car when it was hit – if that hadn't happened then this 911 RSR might have offered us an interesting strategic alternative. All in all, we're satisfied, even though it's a bit disappointing with such a close result. After our intense preparations with almost 10,000 practice laps, the team made a huge effort and demonstrated a tremendous fighting spirit. The encouragement and support were incredible. Congratulations to the M8 GTE of BMW-Team Redline. They drove a flawless race and won."

The No. 91 911 was one of the hot favourites for a class win right up until the end of the 367-lap race on the 13.626-kilometre Circuit des 24 Heures. The 911 RSR was able to offset the slight disadvantage of its shorter 14-lap stints between refuelling stops compared to the BMW-Team Redline's M8 GTE with faster lap times. After six and half hours, entering the pit lane too fast resulted in the stop-and-go penalty that cost the Porsche 47 seconds – a deficit that the vehicle was unable to make up over the remaining 18 hours, despite full attack and a flawless performance.

The virtual No. 92 Porsche experienced less luck. The 911 RSR driven by the current Porsche TAG Heuer Esports champion Joshua Rogers (Australia), Ayhancan Güven (Turkey) and Tommy Östgaard (Norway) – the winners of the 2020 race – as well as the American Indy Car driver Sage Karam had at times led the GTE-class during the night. However, just before dawn, the quartet's charge came to an early end when Östgaard was shunted by an LMP2 vehicle in the fast Porsche Curves. After hitting the barriers hard, the car was forced in retirement with extensive damages.

Third place went to Proton Competition's No. 77 virtual Porsche 911 RSR, which was entered by Coanda Esports. At the start of the race, the vehicle was handed a drive-through penalty after a jump start and consequently lost ground. Porsche works driver Matt Campbell (Australia), the Dutchmen Loek Hartog and Kevin van Dooren as well as Frenchman Jeremy Bouteloup put in a spirited charge through the field. After duelling lap after lap with the No. 51 Ferrari, with two hours left on the clock, they moved into third place and ultimately claimed the third podium step. Proton's No. 88 sister car lost four laps after a rule infringement on Saturday evening but still finished 12th in the GTE category. The No. 87 Porsche of GR Wolves Racing took the flag in P11, with both of Project 1 xBPM's cars finishing the 24-hour race in positions 14 and 15.

Comments on the race

Mitchell de Jong (Porsche Esports Team, 911 RSR #91): "To contest the virtual 24 Hours of Le Mans with these teammates was simply fantastic. Everyone did their very best, and I'm very happy with the preparation for this event. We really invested a lot of hours. Such a close result puts a bit of damper on

our spirits but I'm still pleased with second on the podium."

Mack Backum (Porsche Esports Team, 911 RSR #91): "The past two days were very eventful. I'm very pleased with how we've developed as a team – everyone got stuck in and ultimately drove an excellent race. Obviously, we'd have preferred to win so second place was a bit of a disappointment, but it's certainly nothing to be ashamed of. It's a great result. Two Porsche on the podium – that's fantastic."

Laurin Heinrich (Porsche Esports Team, 911 RSR #91): "It was a very exciting weekend for me – first the start of the Dubai 24-hour race on Friday, then the virtual 24-hour race here at the Coanda Esports HQ in Gronau. Unfortunately, things didn't go so well for me in Dubai, so second place at Le Mans is a huge success of which we can be proud. Thanks for the chance to compete!"

Tommy Östgaard (Porsche Esports Team, 911 RSR #92): "Unfortunately, an LMP2 car shunted us out of contention in the Porsche Curves. It tried to overtake me on the outside, but then switched suddenly to my line and hit my car. I veered straight into the barriers. The engine was damaged so much that it threw our No. 92 out of the race. I'm bitterly disappointed, but sometimes these things happen in racing."

Joshua Rogers (Porsche Esports Team, 911 RSR #92): "It's such a shame we had to retire early. At the end of the day, though, we can be proud of what we'd achieved up until that time – in the race itself, but above all, in our preparation for this event. Now we simply have to bite the bullet and we're already looking ahead to next year's event here."

Ayhancan Güven (Porsche Esports Team, 911 RSR #92): "Our goal was to repeat our victory from 2020. I drove the first stint and was running in third place. By the midway mark, we had even taken the lead – victory was within our grasp. But when the LMP2 hit us we had to park the car. As the Porsche Esports Team, we did a good job and gave our utmost. There are some things you simply can't control. We'll return next year even stronger."

Matt Campbell (Proton Competition, 911 RSR #92): "I'm very happy with third place in the GTE class. Our start wasn't easy and we were still in 14th place after the first stint. Still, we fought our way up through the field, despite being hampered by a lot of minor things. We worked our way through these. Two Porsche on the podium is a cool result. It was a great experience for me to contest this event with my teammates at the Coanda Esports Hub."

GTE class result

1. Van Buren/Colombo/Bonito/Siggy (NL/I/ISLO), BMW M8 GTE, 367 laps
2. Heinrich/DeJong/Backum/Krönke (D/USA/NL/D), Porsche 911 RSR, 367 laps
3. Campbell/Hartog/Van Dooren/Bouteloup (AUS/NL/NL/F), Porsche 911 RSR, 366 laps
11. Gamble/Malykihin/Puschke/Hakkinnen (GB/BY/D/SF), Porsche 911 RSR, 361 laps
12. Pereira/Furuseth/Collins/Warren (L/N/GB/AUS), Porsche 911 RSR, 361 laps

14. Broadbent/Buttler/Beelen/Neuendorf (GB/D/NL/D), Porsche 911 RSR, 359 laps
15. Pera/Hillebrand/Siara/Peev (I/D/PL/BG), Porsche 911 RSR, 358 laps

The preview

This year, experienced professional drivers from real-life motor racing will once again share driving duties in the ca. 510 PS cars with sim racing experts. Ten 911 RSR racers join the 50-strong field this year, which also includes LMP2 prototypes. In the GTE category, Porsche makes up almost half the grid. The endurance highlight on the virtual Circuit des 24 Heures takes off this Saturday at 14:00 local time.

Especially interesting for Porsche fans: the sports car manufacturer will report live from the virtual 24 Hours of Le Mans from 13:30 on race day. In a racing centre that has been set up specifically for this event in the German town of Gronau, six of the eight works contingent share driving duties in the simulators. Interviews with experts and competitors, analyses and background reports round off the programme, which is scheduled to be broadcast until 14:30 on Sunday. The show will be streamed on Porsche's Twitch channel as well as YouTube. As always, Porsche posts the latest motor racing information on its Twitter account @PorscheRaces. Live timing is available on the Porsche Motorsport Website.

“Parallel to real motorsport, sim racing is becoming increasingly important for Porsche. Via this platform, we can ignite a passion for our brand among a totally new target group. That's why we founded the Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup in 2019, in which the world's best sim racers pit themselves against each other. The Cup heads into its fourth season at the beginning of February," explains Marco Ujhasi, Manager Esports at Porsche Motorsport.

“The mix of pro and sim racers proved its worth at the 2020 debut of the virtual Le Mans 24-hour race – which was underlined by our GTE class victory. We now want to repeat this success. We again feel very well prepared to take on this challenge with our team partner Coanda Esports. Like in real-life racing on the track, the virtual racing scene also relies on flawless teamwork and meticulous attention to detail. Given the fierce competition, these factors can be the key to success."

Porsche tackles the endurance event with a top-notch driver line-up in its two digital sports cars. The No. 91 911 RSR is shared by the newly appointed Porsche Junior Laurin Heinrich (Germany) and Mitchell deJong from the US with the sim racing pros Martin Krönke (Germany) and Mack Bakkum (Netherlands). Later in the year, Heinrich will drive the ca. 515 PS 911 GT3 Cup in the real Porsche Mobil 1 Supercup run as part of the Formula One support programme, and in the Carrera Cup Deutschland. The Würzburg driver will arrive at the Coanda Esports HQ in Gronau, Westphalia, with a slight delay due to his racing commitment at the real 24-hour race in Dubai.

The GTE winners of the inaugural event will attempt to defend their title at the virtual 24 Hours of Le Mans in the No. 92 car: Ayhancan Güven (Turkey), Tommy Östgaard (Norway) and Joshua Rogers (Australia) receive backing from the American Sage Karam this coming weekend. Rogers won the

Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup in 2019 and 2021. In the last two years, the Turkish racing pro Güven was the predecessor of Laurin Heinrich as a Porsche Junior in the Porsche Mobil 1 Supercup.

Other 911 RSR cars will be campaigned by teams that are active on real racetracks around the globe as customers of Porsche. Proton Competition fields two cars with the starting numbers from FIA World Endurance Championship WEC. The No. 77 car is manned by Porsche works driver Matt Campbell (Australia) with Dutch drivers Loek Hartog and Kevin van Dooren as well as Jeremy Bouteloup from France. Dylan Pereira (Luxembourg), Sindre Furuseth (Norway), Charlie Collins (Great Britain) and Dayne Warren (Australia) share driving duties in the No. 88 car run by Coanda Esports.

The Project 1 x BPM squad also fields two of the virtual 911 RSR racers, driven by Jimmy Broadbent (GB), Bram Beelen (Netherlands), René Buttler and Tim Neuendorf (both Germany) as well as their compatriot Nicolas Hillebrand, Zbigniew Siara from Poland, Peyo Peev (Bulgaria) and the Italian endurance specialist Riccardo Pera. GR Wolves Racing also deploys two delegations.

All participating Porsche teams

No 25: Absolute Inspeed Racing (VRC)
Johnathan Hoggard (GB) / Daniel Cao / Xiayufei Li / Yanzhe Li (alle VRC)

No. 56: Team Project 1 xBPM (D)
Jimmy Broadbent (GB) / Bram Beelen (NL) / Tim Neuendorf (D) / René Buttler (D)

No. 57: Team Project 1 xBPM (D)
Riccardo Pera (I) / Nicolas Hillebrand (D) / Zbigniew Siara (PL) / Peyo Peev (BG)

No. 61: SEM9 Axle (MAL)
Alister Yoong (MAL) / Avila Bahar (RI) / Nabil Azlan (MAL) / Davide Arduini (I)

No 77: Proton Competition (D)
Matt Campbell (AUS) / Loek Hartog (NL) / Kevin van Dooren (NL) / Jeremy Bouteloop (F)

No. 86: GR Wolves Racing (GB)
Ben Barker (GB) / Bart Horsten (AUS) / Adam Maguire (IRL) / Liam de Waal (NL)

No. 87: GR Wolves Racing (GB)
Tom Gamble (GB) / Alex Malykhin (BY) / Philipp Puschke (D) / Turkka Hakkinnen (SF)

No. 88: Proton Competition (D)
Dylan Pereira (LUX) / Sindre Furuseth (N) / Charlie Collins (GB) / Dayne Warren (AUS)

No. 91: Porsche Esports Team (D)

Laurin Heinrich (D) / Mitchell deJong (USA) / Mack Bakkum (NL) / Martin Krönke (D)

No. 92: Porsche Esports Team (D)
Ayhancan Güven (TR) / Sage Karam (USA) / Joshua Rogers (AUS) / Tommy Östgaard (N)

Comments before the race

Laurin Heinrich (Porsche Esports Team #91):"It's incredible to get the chance to contest the virtual 24 Hours of Le Mans for the Porsche Esports Team. The fact that I'm also racing at the real 24-hour race in Dubai on the same weekend poses a special challenge: I have to fly out of the Emirates before the end of the race and make my way to Coanda Esports in Gronau. Obviously, I'm aiming to defend Porsche's 2020 victory with my strong teammates Mitchell deJong, Martin Krönke and Mack Bakkum. Thanks to our intensive preparation work and teamwork, we've put ourselves in a promising position for this endurance race."

Joshua Rogers (Porsche Esports Team #92):"I'm really looking forward to the virtual Le Mans event – it's an honour for me to be able to represent a brand like Porsche again on such a big stage. It's been a while since my last time, but as a team, we're as prepared as we can be. Of course, I'll do my absolute best to defend our title. Ayhancan, Tommy, Sage and I push each other a lot and we work hard to get the most out of the car under all sorts of scenarios."

The schedule (all times CET)

The virtual 24 Hours of Le Mans gets underway on Saturday (15 January, 2022) at 14:00 local time. Official practice sessions and test races were run on Thursday and Friday, but were not streamed live. The 20-minute qualifying session for the GTE class starts today (Friday) at 19:10, followed by a two-hour warm-up on Saturday morning from 10:00. The race kicks off at 14:00, with the finish scheduled for 14:00 on Sunday.

Where to watch the virtual 24 Hours of Le Mans

Several social media channels offer a live stream of the virtual Le Mans endurance race on the rFactor2 simulation platform, including YouTube and Twitch. The event organiser will also post the latest news on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter at @lemansvirtual.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES



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