

Porsche customer team wins the qualifiers for the Nürburgring 24 Hours

14/04/2024 Falken Motorsports has won both qualifying races for the Nürburgring 24 Hours with the Porsche 911 GT3 R. The four-hour races are considered the most important preparation for the prestigious endurance classic on the storied racetrack. They are also part of the Nürburgring Langsstrecken Series (NLS) for the first time. On Saturday, Falken Motorsports' No. 44 Porsche won with drivers Tim Heinemann and Sven Müller. On Sunday, victory went to Nico Menzel and Martin Ragginger. Last weekend, Falken Motorsports and Manthey EMA also won the first two NLS races of the year with the 911 GT3 R.

The 24-hour event on the 25.378-kilometre combination of a shortened Grand Prix circuit and the Nürburgring Nordschleife is one of the largest endurance races in the world. This year, the popular event will be contested from 30 May to 2 June and counts towards the SRO Motorsports Group's Intercontinental GT Challenge (IGTC) for the first time. With a total of six 911 GT3 R, the five Porsche customer teams in the top SP9 class successfully used the two qualifying races on the second weekend

in April to prepare for the 24-hour classic. In addition to the demanding circuit featuring 87 turns, steep climbs, different asphalt conditions and changeable weather, the race is also known for its extraordinarily diverse grid line-up. With vehicles from different classes driving at different speeds, it guarantees extremely gripping multi-class racing with countless overtaking manoeuvres.

“Qualifying results play a major role at the Nürburgring 24 Hours: if you start the race from the back of the first grid group, you’ll be a minute behind the leaders right from the get-go. That’s why every team wants to be at the front of the grid at this major event,” explains Sebastian Golz, Project Manager 911 GT3 R. “To achieve this, the contestants have to give their all in the qualifying races – due to a rather complicated scoring system, it remains unclear for a long time who has qualified for the decisive top-30 individual time trials on the 24-hour weekend and who has not. The aim is for all manufacturers to showcase the full potential of their GT3 race cars for a fair categorisation in the so-called Balance of Performance, and thus have an equitable 24-hour race.”

Porsche customer team Falken Motorsports wins both qualifiers

The fiercely contested four-hour race on Saturday ended with a double victory for the 911 GT3 R. It commenced at 17:30 hours in summery temperatures and extended into the night. While the two Germans Tim Heinemann and Sven Müller ultimately triumphed with the No. 44 Porsche from Falken Motorsports, the No. 33 sister car fought a thrilling duel for second place with Manthey EMA’s “Grello”. Klaus Bachler from Austria utilised the slipstream on the long “Döttinger Höhe” and narrowly outpaced Ayhancan Güven (Turkey) on the final lap. A 32-second time penalty for a caution infraction subsequently dropped the second Falken car back to fifth place overall.

The next day, three of the up to 416 kW (565 PS) GT3 cars from Weissach finished in the first four in top qualifying. They took off from the first two grid rows at 1 pm in cooler temperatures. While Herberth Motorsport’s 911 GT3 R took the lead at the start, the No. 44 car fielded by Falken Motorsports prevailed once again at the finish line – this time with local hero Nico Menzel and Austrian Martin Ragginger at the wheel. The No. 33 Falken Porsche was on course for third place when it was involved in a collision a good quarter of an hour before the end of the race, forcing its retirement. Manthey EMA drivers Güven and Preining once again managed to capitalise on the situation, clinching the final podium position.

Four Porsche victories at the first four Nordschleife races of the year

For the first time, the two qualifying races were contested as part of the Nürburgring Endurance Series. The first two competitions were held last weekend and concluded on Saturday with victory for the Falken Motorsports’ 911 GT3 R shared by Nico Menzel and Joel Eriksson ahead of the Manthey EMA car helmed by Porsche works drivers Kévin Estre (France) and Laurens Vanthoor. On Sunday, Vanthoor swept into the lead in a heart-stopping photo-finish finale: the Belgian won with a 0.042-second advantage after four hours of racing. It was the closest finish in the 47-year history of the NLS.

Comments after the races

Thomas Preining (Porsche 911 GT3 R #911):"The qualifiers offer us the best possible opportunity to prepare for the Nürburgring 24 Hours under race conditions, to test the car, the tyres and the setup and also to practise overtaking in multi-class traffic – a lot is happening on the track. We overtake so many cars per lap, it's deceptively tricky and needs to be practised. Getting the hours in at night is also important. All in all, we had a great weekend with two podium finishes."

Dennis Olsen (Porsche 911 GT3 R #5):"Those were two very productive qualifying races at Herberth Motorsport's Nordschleife debut. We learnt a lot and improved a lot. On Sunday in particular, we showed that we've made significant progress. The balance of the Porsche is particularly pleasing. That was great preparation. The races on the Nordschleife are very special, especially when it comes to yellow flags, code 60 zones or lapping competitors: some are very slow, others are really fast on the straights but not in the corners. You can only learn how to deal with this when you drive here. Sometimes mistakes are part of it – we'd rather make them now in the qualifiers than later when it really counts in the 24-hour race."

Klaus Bachler (Porsche 911 GT3 R #33):"We currently have a very good baseline and have taken a step in the right direction compared to last year with the combination of tyres, car and setup. But there are definitely also points that we still need to analyse and where we can improve. Ultimately, this 24-hour race is about more than just speed, you have to learn different things – for example, how to choose the right tyres in changeable conditions. There's no place quite like the Nordschleife. Every test kilometre is valuable. Unfortunately, there are only a few races before the '24' this year. That's a real pity, as we all love driving here. The two qualifiers went okay for our team, but unfortunately, we were a bit unlucky ourselves."

Results

Qualifiers: Race 1
1. Heinemann/S. Müller (D/D), Porsche 911 GT3 R #44, 27 laps
2. Preining/Güven (A/TR), Porsche 911 GT3 R #911, -53.069 sec
3. Stippler/Mies/Feller (D/D/CH), Audi R8 LMS GT3 Evo II #16, -58.065 sec
5. Andlauer/Bachler/S. Müller/Picariello (F/A/D/B), Porsche 911 GT3 R #33, -1:24.86 min
12. Holzer/Seefried/Dienst (D/A/D), Porsche 911 GT3 R #54, -3:30.419 min
17. R. Renauer/V. Kolb/Olsen (D/D/N), Porsche 911 GT3 R #5, -6:07.813 min
19. Au/Niederhauser/P. Kolb (HK/A/D), Porsche 911 GT3 R #24, -1 lap

Qualifiers: Race 2
1. Menzel/Ragginger (D/A), Porsche 911 GT3 R #44, 27 laps
2. Marciello/Martin/Wittmann (CH/B/D), BMW M4 GT3 #98, -1.793 sec
3. Preining/Güven (A/TR), Porsche 911 GT3 R #911, -14.984 sec

13. R. Renauer/V. Kolb/Olsen (D/D/N), Porsche 911 GT3 R #5, -1:54.981 min
15. Holzer/Seefried/Buus/Dienst (D/A/DK/D), Porsche 911 GT3 R #54, -2:33.352 min
20. Au/Niederhauser/P. Kolb (HK/A/D), Porsche 911 GT3 R #24, -6:16.488 mi

MEDIA ENQUIRIES



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