

The success story of the Porsche 963

07/11/2024 Porsche Penske Motorsport wins a total of seven titles with the Porsche 963.

The 2024 season will go down as one of the most successful in Porsche's long-distance history: in just the second year with the Porsche 963, the sports car manufacturer from Stuttgart won seven of eight possible titles together with the works team Porsche Penske Motorsport. The basis for this result was the consistent improvement of the team structure as well as the work on the reliability and performance of the around 515 kW (700 PS) hybrid prototype.

The overall result of the 2024 season in the FIA World Endurance Championship WEC and the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship: six out of six possible titles in North America as well as the world championship crown for the works drivers Kévin Estre from France, André Lotterer from Germany and Laurens Vanthoor from Belgium in the FIA WEC. Porsche only missed out on the manufacturer's title in the world championship with the 963 this year by just two points.

'Nobody's perfect' - we already used this slogan in 1983, when only one third-party manufacturer

appeared in the top 10 of the 24 Hours of Le Mans," smiles Thomas Laudenbach, Vice President Porsche Motorsport. 41 years ago, Porsche immortalized the Le Mans result under that title on a legendary poster: racing cars from Stuttgart in the first eight places in the overall classification and in tenth place, with a Sauber BMW in between. In 2024, the longed-for 20th overall victory in Le Mans failed to materialize, but the results of the season are still impressive.

It was an incredibly successful year," explains Laudenbach. With the Porsche 963 and our global team Porsche Penske Motorsport, we won seven out of eight possible titles in a very strong competitive environment. That fills me with great pride. This result is a well-deserved reward for the hard work of everyone involved at the racetracks, at our team locations in Mannheim and Mooresville and in the development department in Weissach. We brought the Porsche 963 and the entire program to the top within a short period of time."

Porsche 963 project: The consistent development is bearing fruit

Review: On December 16, 2020, Porsche publicly announced for the first time that it would return to the top classes of the world's two largest endurance series: the FIA World Endurance Championship WEC and the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship. The basis for this was the decision by the motorsport authorities FIA and IMSA to introduce a common set of rules for the top vehicles for the 2023 season: hybrid prototypes in the LMDh (Le Mans Daytona hybrid) category.

The next steps on the way to Porsche's return to the top class of IMSA and the World Championship, including the 24 Hours of Le Mans, followed in May 2021: collaboration with Team Penske to form a new global motorsports team in Porsche Penske Motorsport. Multimatic was then selected as the chassis partner from the four approved LMDh chassis manufacturers. A little later, the decision was made to use a 4.6 liter V8 engine, which was also recently used in a hybrid configuration in the 918 Spyder road super sports car. The roots of the high-revving engine go back even further, namely to the very successful Porsche RS Sypder racing prototype from the 2000s. Porsche Penske Motorsport set up its operations centers for the FIA WEC and IMSA at Mannheim in Germany and Mooresville in the USA. On January 13, 2022, the new Porsche 963 came to life for the first time during a highly acclaimed roll-out in Weissach. Test drives over more than 30,000 kilometers formed the basis for the global racing premiere that the approximately 515 kW (700 PS) hybrid prototype celebrated at the 24 Hours of Daytona in January 2023.

Debut season 2023: First race victories and a book full of homework

The US endurance classic at the start of the new Porsche Penske Motorsport team's first season filled the list of tasks. The Porsche 963 had demonstrated enormous performance potential right from the start, but further progress had to be made in the areas of reliability and operations. Although the prototype with number 7 started the race from the first row and was able to complete numerous lead laps, seventh and eighth places for the works cars ultimately caused disillusionment. At the start of the

FIA WEC in Sebring (USA), Porsche also missed out on the desired success with positions five and six. Consistent improvements subsequently caused the performance curve to rise steeply.

In the IMSA championship, the first podium result was achieved in the second race and even the first victory in the following race in Long Beach. Further triumphs followed, including at Road America and a double success in Indianapolis. Porsche only had to narrowly admit defeat in the fight for the championship in the finale at Road Atlanta. The first podium places were also achieved in the FIA WEC. However, the big breakthrough in form of a race victory failed to materialize.

"The results, especially at Le Mans, fell short of our expectations at the time. When Porsche competes in the top class, there can only ever be one goal: victory," says Thomas Laudenbach. As the season progressed, the specifications continued to fill up. The points were then worked through with all the rigor. "The experiences from 2023 gave us a large list of homework for the short winter break. We managed to optimise the reliability and performance of the car as well as the team structure," explains Urs Kuratle, Director Factory Motorsport LMDh. "After incredibly hard work, we came to Daytona in January 2024 and won. That was the key. It showed: We can do it!"

Victory at the 24 Hours of Daytona 2024: Strong sign at the start of the new year

Extensive adjustments finally put Porsche on the road to victory. At the start of the IMSA season, the 24 Hours of Daytona in January, the number 7 racing car with factory drivers Matt Campbell from Australia, Felipe Nasr from Brazil and the American Dane Cameron together with his compatriot Josef Newgarden won. "That's when the ball really started rolling," says Campbell, looking back with delight. Jonathan Diuguid, Managing Director Porsche Penske Motorsport, explains: "The victory at Daytona was the key to all further successes this season. Right at the start of the year, we proved to the world and ourselves that we can achieve anything. I have been in motorsport for 20 years. I know that there are beautiful and difficult phases. Of course, sometimes we experience days when we wonder why we invest maximum energy and countless hours in this sport. The answer is Daytona: moments like these are incomparable!"

The initial spark in IMSA also lit the fire for the FIA WEC. At the start of the world championship in Qatar, the two Porsche 963s took first and third place - the first WEC victory for the prototype. "The great weekend in Qatar confirmed to us: as in IMSA, we can compete with other LMDh cars in the WEC and also beat the LMH Hypercars. That was very important," says Kuratle. In both racing series, Porsche and the works drivers took the overall lead at the start of the season. 2024 started strong and brought further bright highlights, ultimately winning seven titles.

There were four wins in nine races in the IMSA series. With the exception of Indianapolis, at least one Porsche 963 from the works team reached the winner's podium in every race. The well-deserved reward: Porsche won the manufacturers' championship, Porsche Penske Motorsport won the team

championship and the works drivers Felipe Nasr and Dane Cameron won the drivers' crown. Three more titles in the IMSA Michelin Endurance Cup rounded off the impeccable record in the USA. It includes the five longest races of the year at Daytona, Sebring, Watkins Glen, Indianapolis and Road Atlanta. In the FIA WEC, Porsche Penske Motorsport triumphed in Qatar and Fuji, Japan. At the races in Imola (Italy), Spa-Francorchamps (Belgium), São Paulo (Brazil) and Sakhir (Bahrain), podium successes brought many world championship points. In the end, Kévin Estre, André Lotterer and Laurens Vanthoor celebrated winning the Drivers' World Championship. Porsche missed out on the manufacturers' title in second place by just two points. ⊠We can look back on an extremely successful season," says Laudenbach happily. ⊠But we would have liked to have won the Manufacturers' World Championship and the 20th overall victory in Le Mans. These are now our biggest goals for the 2025 season."

The Porsche 963 and the 24 Hours of Le Mans: Love at third sight?

After the disappointing debut of the 963 at Le Mans 2023, Porsche showed considerable improvement at the Sarthe this year. However, the hoped-for overall victory failed to materialize again. The pole position by Kévin Estre, numerous laps leading in the race and fourth and sixth places underlined the progress. What's more: the long-distance classic in France demonstrated the important improvements in the area of reliability. A newly designed 90-degree crankshaft could go back into the planning drawer. In its analysis of the 2023 season, Porsche identified engine vibrations as the probable cause of failures in the standard hybrid system. After the victory at Daytona and the stable performance at Le Mans over 24 hours, it was clear: the experienced Porsche engineers in Weissach had found a functional, fast, cost-effective and sustainable solution that would enable the Porsche 963 to achieve further great successes in the years to come.

⊠Victory or podium finishes at Daytona, Qatar and Spa do not necessarily mean success at Le Mans. We always knew that, but unfortunately we had to experience it firsthand this year," reports Jonathan Diuguid. ⊠The goal for 2025 is therefore clearly defined: we want the victory in Le Mans!" Next year, Porsche Penske Motorsport will take part in the world's largest endurance race in France with at least two factory entries. Everyone involved wants to further extend Porsche's record at Le Mans with a 20th overall win. ⊠Despite all the successes this year, there is this little race in France that everyone wants to win. We haven't managed that – not yet..." laughs Kuratle, looking at the highlight of the coming season.

Statistics Porsche Penske Motorsport 2024

FIA World Endurance Championship WEC:
Number of races: 8
Wins: 2
Further podium places: 7
Pole positions: 2

IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship:

Number of races: 9
Wins: 4
Further podium places: 8
Pole positions: 1

MEDIA ENQUIRIES



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Video

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