

Porsche defends world championship lead with podium result in Japan

06/10/2019 Porsche has successfully defended its lead in the world championship at round two of FIA World Endurance Championship. At the six-hour race in Fuji (Japan), Denmark's Michael Christensen and the Frenchman Kévin Estre finished in second place with the No. 92 Porsche 911 RSR.

The race

Porsche has successfully defended its lead in the world championship at round two of FIA World Endurance Championship. At the six-hour race in Fuji (Japan), Denmark's Michael Christensen and the Frenchman Kévin Estre finished in second place with the No. 92 Porsche 911 RSR. At the same time, the world champions moved into the lead of the drivers' championship. Their factory driver colleagues Gianmaria Bruni (Italy) and Richard Lietz (Austria), who won the season-opening round at Silverstone (Great Britain), saw the chequered flag in sixth place. In the GTE-Am class, the Porsche customer team

from Germany, Project 1, finished on third place.

Christensen and Estre launched an impressive charge through the field in the race at the foot of Mount Fuji. Thanks to fast lap times and the team's clever strategic decisions, the ca. 515 hp 911 RSR, which is based on the high-performance Porsche 911 GT3 RS* road-going sports car, worked its way up the order from the last grid spot. When rain set in after the first third of the race, the Porsche GT Team opted for the best tyre choice, and completed the pit stops at the right time during the caution phases. The Silverstone winners, Lietz and Bruni, had less luck in the number 91 sister car. A puncture, a drive-through penalty and ongoing misfiring problems relegated the polesitters down the field to sixth place. In the manufacturers' classification, Porsche retains its lead after round two of the season. In the drivers' championship, Christensen/Estre have moved into the lead ahead of their works driver colleagues Bruni/Lietz (position 3).

In the GTE-Am category, the Porsche customer team Project 1 celebrated its first podium result of the season. Jeroen Bleekemolen (Netherlands), Ben Keating (USA) and Felipe Fraga (Brazil) achieved third place after a spirited chase in the No. 57 Porsche 911 RSR. The trio had taken up the race from the back of the grid. The No. 56 sister car, driven by Porsche Young Professional Matteo Cairoli (Italy) among others, crossed the finish line in seventh place. The two Porsche 911 RSR fielded by Dempsey-Proton Racing concluded the race on fifth and ninth place. The identical vehicle campaigned by Gulf Racing came eighth.

Round three of the 2019/2020 World Endurance Sports Car Championship will be contested on 10 November in Shanghai (China).

Comments on the race

Fritz Enzinger (Vice President Motorsport): “After the one-two success at Silverstone we've now finished on the podium at Fuji with our new Porsche 911 RSR. We're still at the top of the manufacturers' championship, and a Porsche duo is also leading the driver's classification. Our balance sheet looks good. We're now feeling confident and full of excitement for the upcoming race in China."

Pascal Zurlinden (Director Factory Motorsport): “The overall result with both vehicles doesn't really meet our expectations, but we're pleased about second place for the number 92 car. In the first two races of the season, we've secured a one-two at Silverstone as well as a podium result and pole position at Fuji. That's a great start for our new Porsche 911 RSR. We're heading to the next races feeling highly motivated."

Alexander Stehlig (Head of Operations FIA WEC): “Pole position on Saturday, second in the race on Sunday, we can be very pleased with this. Everything went according to plan with our number 92 car, but the number 91 vehicle was plagued with troubles. Damage from a puncture, a drive-through penalty and misfiring – it seems pretty much everything that could go wrong did go wrong. I hope that we've used up all the bad luck for the rest of the season. We'll be back in full force again at Shanghai."

Gianmaria Bruni (Porsche 911 RSR #91): “Early on in the race our car was strong. I managed to fight amongst the frontrunners and even take the lead for a long time. Then a penalty and a puncture threw us down the field. When the misfiring began, all our chances went up in smoke. Such things can sometimes happen with a brand new car. What’s important is that our vehicle has huge potential.”

Richard Lietz (Porsche 911 RSR #91): “After the super pole position on Saturday, we were disappointed with how the race went for us on Sunday. Our pace was good at the beginning but unfortunately the penalty, tyre problem and misfiring relegated us to sixth place. We’ll now take a very good look at this and fix the problem.”

Kévin Estre (Porsche 911 RSR #92): “After our bad luck in qualifying we started with one set of tyres less than all the other cars. We made up for this disadvantage with a perfect strategy and flawless work in the cockpit. After finishing in second place twice in a row we’re now at the top of the championship standings. Like last year, we’d like to retain this position until the end of the season.”

Michael Christensen (Porsche 911 RSR #92): “When you start from the last grid spot and cross the finish line in second, then you’ve definitely done everything right. Our strategy worked perfectly, we got the absolute maximum out of it. Thanks to this podium result, Kévin and I are now leading the world championship. We’re certainly can’t complain about that.”

Race result

GTE-Pro class
1. Sörensen/Thiim (DK/DK), Aston Martin Vantage, 211 laps
2. Christensen/Estre (DK/F), Porsche 911 RSR, 210 laps
3. Lynn/Martin (GB/B), Aston Martin Vantage, 210 laps
6. Lietz/Bruni (A/I), Porsche 911 RSR, 208 laps

GTE-Am class
1. Yoluc/Eastwood/Adam (TR/IRL/GB), Aston Martin Vantage, 208 laps
2. Perrodo/Collard/Nielsen (F/F/DK), Ferrari 488 GTE, 207 laps
3. Keating/Fraga/Bleekemolen (USA/BR/NL), Porsche 911 RSR, 207 laps
5. Campbell/Ried/Pera (AUS/D/I), Porsche 911 RSR, 207 laps
7. Perfetti/Heinemeier Hansson/Cairoli (N/DK/I), Porsche 911 RSR, 206 laps
8. Wainwright/Barker/Watson (GB/GB/GB), Porsche 911 RSR, 204 laps
9. Preining/de Leener/Hoshino (A/B/J), Porsche 911 RSR, 198 laps

The qualifying

The new Porsche 911 RSR will take up round two of the FIA World Endurance Championship at Fuji

(Japan) from pole position. Gianmaria Bruni and Richard Lietz, the winners of the season-opener at Silverstone (Great Britain), turned the fastest lap in the number 91 vehicle.

The No. 92 sister car driven by Kévin Estre (France) and Michael Christensen (Denmark) will tackle the six-hour race from the sixth grid spot. In the GTE-Am class, Porsche's German customer team Project 1 achieved the first grid position.

Under blues skies and in temperatures of around 30 degrees Celsius at the foot of the famous Mount Fuji, the qualifying turned into a gripping shootout. Initially, the Porsche GT Team employed tactics and sent only the number 92 vehicle out with world sports car champion Estre at the wheel. In heavy traffic, the Frenchman made minor errors. Afterwards, his teammate Christensen nudged the barriers slightly in his first flying lap. As a result of the damage to the rear of the car, the Dane was unable to improve on his time.

The tactic of the No. 91 vehicle, however, worked perfectly. Bruni (Italy) found a decent gap in the dense traffic and initially set the third fastest time. Lietz (Austria) then managed to make full use of the immense potential of the new Porsche 911 RSR (2019 model year), which is based on the high-performance 911 GT3 RS road-going sports car. With an average time of 1:37.356 minutes, the WEC front-runners posted the first pole position for Stuttgart sports car manufacturer's new racer.

In the GTE-Am category, the Brazilian Felipe Fraga and the American Ben Keating set the fastest time at the wheel of the Porsche 911 RSR fielded by Project 1. The pair shares the cockpit of the No. 57 car with the experienced Dutchman Jeroen Bleekemolen. The No. 56 sister car of the German squad takes up the second race of the season from fifth place. The two identical ca. 510 hp vehicles campaigned by Dempsey-Proton Racing start from the positions six and eight. Gulf Racing qualified on ninth.

Qualifying quotes

Fritz Enzinger (Vice President Motorsport): “Richard and Gimmi turned immaculate laps, we can only congratulate them. The fact that we're starting from pole after just the second qualifying of the season with our Porsche 911 RSR on the back of our victory from the season-opening round at Silverstone is a clear sign: our brand new car is the real deal. This makes me confident for the six-hour race."

Pascal Zurlinden (Director Factory Motorsport): “We can all feel proud of the maiden pole position for the new Porsche 911 RSR. So far at Fuji we've were at the top in all sessions. That bodes well for a strong performance in the race. I have mixed feelings about the qualifying. Things didn't go so well with our number 92 car. We have to take a good look at what happened there."

Alexander Stehlig (Head of Operations FIA WEC): Pole position is the perfect reward for our entire team. In spite of our Silverstone victory, we had some homework to do. It was essential to get more speed over an entire lap out of the car. It seems we succeeded in this. It's a shame that it didn't go so well for the sister car, but even from sixth place everything is possible.

Gianmaria Bruni (Porsche 911 RSR #91): “Everything ran like clockwork for us. Our team put a perfectly prepared Porsche 911 RSR on the track for us for this morning's qualifying. We drivers then made the most of the car's huge potential in the session. Our starting position for the race is perfect. I'm confident that we'll be strong over the six-hour duration.”

Richard Lietz (Porsche 911 RSR #91): “We found a great qualifying setup during the free practice. Pole position is a huge success. Now we'll set the car up for the race. I'm curious to see if our setup for the six-hour race is as good. To set pole position after our victory at Silverstone is the perfect way to start the season.”

Kévin Estre (Porsche 911 RSR #92): “The car's balance wasn't bad, it was just that we lacked a bit of speed. Now we have to see why. The strategy implemented by our sister car seemed to be better. We're not really where we want to be, but I still expect our chances to be good for the race.”

Michael Christensen (Porsche 911 RSR #92): “I wanted to attempt another flying lap and I went all-out in turn three. Unfortunately I went too wide and I lost the rear of the car on the kerb and the bumps behind it and I hit the barriers. Unfortunately this means additional work for our mechanics. It's a pity, but that's how it goes in motor racing sometimes.”

Qualifying result

GTE-Pro class
1. Lietz/Bruni (A/I), Porsche 911 RSR, 1:37.356 minutes
2. Calado/Pier Guidi (GB/I), Ferrari 488 GTE, 1:37.379 minutes
3. Thiim/Sörensen (DK/DK), Aston Martin Vantage, 1:37.466 minutes
6. Christensen/Estre (DK/F), Porsche 911 RSR, 1:37.980 minutes

GTE-Am class
1. Keating/Fraga/Bleekemolen (USA/BR/NL), Porsche 911 RSR, 1:38.733 minutes
2. Yoluc/Eastwood/Adam (TR/IRL/GB), Aston Martin Vantage, 1:38.821 minutes
3. Perrodo/Collard/Nielsen (F/F/DK), Ferrari 488 GTE, 1:38.850 minutes
5. Perfetti/Heinemeier Hansson/Cairoli (N/DK/I), Porsche 911 RSR, 1:39.022 minutes
6. Preining/de Leener/Hoshino (A/B/J), Porsche 911 RSR, 1:39.025 minutes
8. Campbell/Ried/Pera (AUS/D/I), Porsche 911 RSR, 1:39.549 minutes
9. Wainwright/Barker/Watson (GB/GB/GB), Porsche 911 RSR, 1:39.610 minutes

Full results: http://fiawec.alkamelsystems.com

The preview

Porsche heads to round two of the FIA World Endurance Championship at Fuji (Japan) as the leader of all GTE-Pro classifications. After claiming a one-two result at the season-opener from Silverstone (Great Britain), the successful works squad is aiming to again finish on the podium with the two Porsche 911 RSR racers. In the GTE-Am category, the customer teams Project 1, Gulf Racing and Dempsey Proton Racing field a total of five Porsche 911 RSR in last year's spec. The 4.563-kilometre-long Fuji Raceway presents engineers and drivers with special challenges. The racetrack, which was opened in 1965, features a combination of many tight passages and a long 1.475-kilometre start-finish straight. Working out a suitable setup requires a compromise between high speed and a great deal of downforce in the corners. During the Japanese typhoon season, the races contested at the foot of the famous Mount Fuji are often plagued by changeable weather conditions. In 2013, the race had to be red-flagged after 16 laps due to torrential rain. In the 2018/2019 Super Season, the reigning world drivers' champions Kévin Estre (France) and Michael Christensen (Denmark) celebrated a decisive victory at Fuji with their Porsche 911 RSR on the way to winning the title.

The Porsche GT Team drivers

Silverstone winners Richard Lietz (Austria) and Gianmaria Bruni (Italy) tackle round two of the 2019/2020 FIA WEC season in the No. 91 Porsche 911 RSR. The second vehicle (No. 92) is shared by the reigning champions Kévin Estre (France) and Michael Christensen (Denmark). After the one-two result at the season-opening round with the two new Porsche 911 RSR, the driver crews currently rank first and second in the world championship standings. Porsche heads to the second race of the season as the leader of the manufacturer's classification.

The customer teams

The number 56 Porsche 911 RSR in last year's spec fielded by the customer team Project 1 is shared by Porsche Young Professional Matteo Cairoli (Italy), the reigning GTE-Am champion and Le Mans class winner Egidio Perfetti from Norway as well as David Heinemeier Hansson (Denmark). Sharing driving duties in the No. 57 sister car is the American Ben Keating, Felipe Fraga from Brazil and the former Porsche Mobil 1 Supercup champion Jeroen Bleekemolen from the Netherlands.

The all-British driver line-up of Ben Barker, Andrew Watson and Michael Wainwright will helm the No. 86 racer run by Gulf Racing. In the No. 77 Porsche 911 RSR fielded by Dempsey-Proton Racing, the Porsche Young Professional Matt Campbell (Australia) joins forces with team owner Christian Ried (Germany) and the Italian Riccardo Pera. In the No. 88 sister car, Porsche Young Professional Thomas Preining (Austria) will be joined by Adrien de Leener (Belgium) and Satoshi Hoshino (Japan). With five vehicles on the grid, Porsche is represented by the largest contingent in the fiercely contested GTE-Am class.

The Porsche 911 RSR

The new Porsche 911 RSR (2019 model year) contests its maiden race in the FIA WEC. The vehicle from Weissach, which produces around 515 hp depending on the air restrictor, is based on the high-performance 911 GT3 RS* road-going sports car. Compared to its extremely successful predecessor model, the car for the GTE-Pro class of the FIA WEC received improvements to areas such as driveability, efficiency, ergonomics and serviceability. About 95 percent of the car is new. The 911 RSR is powered by a 4.2-litre, six-cylinder boxer engine.

The schedule

The six-hour FIA WEC race at Fuji gets underway on Sunday, 6 October at 11am local time (4am CEST).

The race on TV and the Internet

Round two of the FIA WEC season will be shown in full length on www.sport1.de. The free-to-air station Sport 1 will televise live from Japan on 6 October from 3:55am to 8:00am. The pay-TV station Sport 1+ broadcasts the entire race live from 3:30am to 10:30am. Eurosport televises the final phase live from 8.30am. Motorsport.TV televises the race in Japan in full length. For a fee, the FIA WEC app offers live streaming and live timing.

The Sports Car World Endurance Championship WEC

In the Sports Car World Endurance Championship (WEC), which was first contested in 2012, sports prototypes and GT vehicles compete in four classes: LMP1, LMP2, GTE-Pro and GTE-Am. They all compete together in one race but are classified separately. The Porsche factory squad contests the GTE-Pro class as the reigning world manufacturers' champions, while the customer teams Dempsey Proton Racing, Project 1 and Gulf Racing fight for honours in the GTE-Am class.

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