



Porsche Penske Motorsport keen to end the season with another highlight

02/11/2023 Preview, FIA World Endurance Championship WEC, Round 7, Sakhir (Bahrain)

- Works team aims for the podium in Bahrain with the two Porsche 963
- Customer squads compete with two additional hybrid prototypes
- Porsche's partner teams field five 911 RSR in the GTE-Am class
- Last outing for the 911 RSR in the FIA WEC competition
- DTM champion Thomas Preining drives the Porsche 963 in a rookie test

Porsche Penske Motorsport has set its sights on another podium finish at the final round of the 2023 FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC) season. The factory team fields two Porsche 963 in the eight-hour race in Bahrain. The customer teams Hertz Team Jota and Proton Competition contest the

top hypercar class with one 699 hp hybrid prototype each. In the GTE-Am category, five partner teams will tackle the final event of the year for the last time with the Porsche 911 RSR. Beginning in 2024, the FIA WEC will switch to GT3-class vehicles.

Atlanta. Traditionally, the FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC) wraps up the season with a race at the Bahrain International Circuit. The Porsche Penske Motorsport team travels to the Formula 1 circuit in the island state in the Persian Gulf with its two Porsche 963 race cars for the first time. After clinching a podium result at the previous round in Japan, the factory squad is again aiming for the podium.

"We've experienced a season of mixed fortunes, however we always gave our absolute best in the fierce competition of the hypercar class," states Thomas Laudenbach. Looking ahead to the season finale, the Vice President of Porsche Motorsport adds: "It would be great for our entire team, the drivers and our fans if we could bring home another podium result in Bahrain. The last race in Fuji clearly underlined our recent progress. We're keen to build on this and head into the winter break with a podium finish. After the final round in Manama, we'll take part in the official FIA WEC test day with our Porsche 963. On this occasion, our new DTM champion Thomas Preining will drive the car for the first time. I'm very curious to see how he'll do."

"I expect us to be at the front of the field in Bahrain," explains Urs Kuratle, Director of Factory Racing LMDh. "In the intense heat of the desert, tire management plays a major role. We've made critical progress in this respect over recent months. We're well prepared. I also feel optimistic about the fact that the Formula 1 track near Manama has hardly any bumps and the curbs are comparatively flat – that should suit our Porsche 963. We'd like to conclude the first season with the Porsche Penske Motorsport team in the FIA WEC with another podium success."

"We knew this first season in the World Endurance Championship would be tough and that fighting for podiums was a challenging goal given the circumstances," comments Jonathan Diuguid, Managing Director Porsche Penske Motorsport. "The last race at Fuji was a clear demonstration of what's possible when we work the strategy to our advantage with great driving and a well-balanced Porsche 963. We plan to head to Bahrain and do the same. This time, however, we need to turn the race lead into a win and wrap up the season with a result that we all deserve for the effort put in and the level of talent we have."

The race

The FIA WEC was first contested on the 3.36-mile (5.412-km) Bahrain International Circuit in Sakhir near the Manama capital in its 2012 inaugural season. The only time the endurance race was not held here was in the 2018/2019 season. High daytime temperatures, falling temperatures at dusk and fine sand often covering the asphalt make the race a huge challenge for teams, engineers and drivers. Tire wear is a major consideration on the Grand Prix circuit with its 15 turns. A consistent pace over a full stint is regarded as the key to success. For the eight-hour race in Bahrain, points will be multiplied by a factor of 1.5 and rounded up (38-27-23-18-15-12-9-6-3-2).

On Sunday (November 5) after the final race of the season, numerous cars will head out onto the track again, including the Porsche 963. In the two official test sessions, works driver Thomas Preining from Austria will drive the hybrid prototype for the first time. The 25-year-old from Linz was recently crowned the drivers' champion in this year's DTM in the Porsche 911 GT3 R. Porsche also won the manufacturers' championship, with Preining's Manthey-EMA squad taking home the team title in the tradition-steeped German racing series.

Porsche customer teams and drivers

The privateer teams Proton Competition and Hertz Team Jota field one Porsche 963 each in the top hypercar class. Works driver António Félix da Costa from Portugal, Will Stevens from the UK and the Porsche Motorsport Asia-Pacific selected driver from China Yifei Ye will compete for the British team. Works driver Gianmaria Bruni from Italy joins forces with Neel Jani from Switzerland and Englishman Harry Tincknell at the wheel of Proton Competition's car. The trio last finished on the podium at the season finale of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship at Michelin Raceway Road Atlanta.

Five identical, Porsche 911 RSR will tackle the GTE-Am category for the last time. Beginning in 2024, FIA GT3 cars will replace the GTE vehicles. Project1-AO again fields "Rexy", a favorite with the fans. The bright green 911 decked out in a dinosaur design will be helmed by the Americans PJ Hyett and Gunnar Jeannette and the Italian Matteo Cairoli. The yellow Iron Lynx car and the Iron Dames pink contender will add even more color to the grid lineup. The only all-female trio Michelle Gattling (Denmark), Sarah Bovy (Belgium) and Rahel Frey (Switzerland) share the Iron Dames Porsche. The customer squads Dempsey-Proton Racing and GR Racing will campaign two racing cars.

Drivers' comments before the race

Michael Christensen, Driver, No. 5 Porsche 963: "A tough and busy season comes to an end with the finale in Bahrain. We've learned a lot in the past months and translated our insights from the races on both sides of the Atlantic into better performance. This makes me confident that we'll see further progress in Bahrain and have the chance to finish on the podium again. It'd be wonderful if we could finish the season third in the manufacturers' standings."

Kévin Estre, Driver, No. 6 Porsche 963: "I feel optimistic and hope that we can match the speed of our last race in Japan. Maybe we could even improve a little bit – that'd be great! The track characteristics in Bahrain are quite different from Fuji. It's mainly about preserving the tires on the aggressive asphalt over a long stint. It won't be easy but it's always the key to success in Bahrain. I'd like to wrap up our difficult season with a highlight."

Will Stevens, Driver, No. 38 Porsche 963: "I'm really looking forward to Bahrain and the last race of the season. It's been an exciting year and we've learned a lot about the Porsche 963. Hopefully, we can continue the steep learning curve that we've seen from race to race. We want to finish 2023 with a success. I like the Bahrain circuit. It's very different from the others on the calendar: although the

asphalt offers little grip, it's tough on the tires. That always throws a nice challenge at us."

Gianmaria Bruni, Driver No. 99 Porsche 963: "We want to continue our upward trend. The pace of our Porsche 963 at the IMSA race in Indianapolis and the WEC event in Fuji was great but we weren't able to reap the rewards. That changed recently at Road Atlanta – we finished on the podium there at the last race in North America. We started the season late, but have gained a great deal of experience, data and knowledge over the past weeks. I'm confident that we'll be very strong again in Bahrain."

Overview of teams and drivers

Hypercar class (Porsche 963):

Porsche Penske Motorsport, No. 5: Dane Cameron (USA), Michael Christensen (Denmark), Frédéric Makowiecki (France)

Porsche Penske Motorsport, No. 6: Kévin Estre (France), André Lotterer (Germany), Laurens Vanthoor (Belgium)

Hertz Team Jota, No. 38: António Félix da Costa (Portugual), Will Stevens (UK), Yifei Ye (China)

Proton Competition, No. 99: Gianmaria Bruni (Italy), Harry Tincknell (UK), Neel Jani (Sweden)

GTE-Am class (Porsche 911 RSR):

Project1-AO, No. 6): PJ Hyett (USA), Gunnar Jeannette (USA), Matteo Cairoli (Italy)

Iron Lynx (No. 60): Claudio Schiavoni (Italy), Matteo Cressoni (Italy), Alessio Picariello (Belgium)

Dempsey-Proton Racing, No. 77): Christian Ried (Germany), Mikkel Pedersen (Denmark), Julien Andlauer (France)

Iron Dames, No. 85): Sarah Bovy (Belgium), Michelle Gatting (Denmark), Rahel Frey (China)

GR Racing, No. 86): Michael Wainwright (UK), Riccardo Pera (Italy), Ben Barker (UK)

Further information, photo and video material are available on Porsche Newsroom:
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FIA FIA World Endurance Championship

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