

WEC: Porsche customer team Project 1 celebrates first win of the season

14/12/2019 Porsche has concluded the 2019 year with another victory in the FIA World Endurance Championship.

The race

At the eight-hour race in Sakhir (Bahrain), the American Ben Keating and his two Dutchmen teammates Larry ten Voorde and Jeroen Bleekemolen won the GTE-Am class in their No. 57 Porsche 911 RSR. After claiming pole position, the Project 1 team has moved to the top of the overall classification thanks to their maiden victory. The Porsche GT Team (GTE-Pro) has enjoyed an outstandingly successful 2019 season, however the squad was struck by misfortune at the eight-hour race.

The new Porsche 911 RSR had at times held the lead, only to have technical problems relegate both

works-run vehicles far down the field. A shock absorber broke on the No. 92 car driven by the world champions Kévin Estre (France) and Michael Christensen (Denmark), while a wheel nut on the sister car manned by Gianmaria Bruni (Italy) and Richard Lietz (Austria) came loose and caused tyre damage. The repairs resulted in both ca. 515-hp cars losing about two laps to the frontrunners. Despite perfect teamwork and a strong performance from the drivers, the gap could not be closed. Porsche heads into the second half of the season ranking second in the manufacturers' classification.

In the GTE-Am class, the three customer teams gave an impressive performances with their ca. 510-hp Porsche 911 RSR in the 2017-spec. In addition to the race winners Keating, Bleekemolen and ten Voorde, the No. 86 car fielded by Gulf Racing also took the lead at times. The all-British driver crew, Michael Wainwright, Ben Barker and Andrew Watson, concluded the final race of the year on position three after receiving a drive-through penalty. The No. 77 Porsche 911 RSR, shared by the works driver Matt Campbell (Australia), Dempsey-Proton Racing team owner Christian Ried (Germany) and the Italian Riccardo Pera, finished on sixth place. The No. 88 sister car retired after an accident. Project 1's number 56 vehicle took the flag in ninth place after a lengthy pit stop for repairs.

Comments on the race

Pascal Zurlinden (Director Factory Motorsport): "I'm delighted for our Project 1 customer squad, who claimed their first win of the season and took over the championship lead. For Ben, Jeroen and Larry – our new Porsche family members in the WEC – this is a well-deserved and tremendous success. In the GTE-Pro class, our works teams were plagued by a lot of bad luck. Finishing fifth and sixth still puts us in a good position in the championship. We'll strike back next year at the Austin round."

Alexander Stehlig (Head of Operations FIA WEC): "What a huge disappointment. We only achieved fifth and sixth at the longest and most important race of the first half of the season. The fact that a lot of points were awarded at this round makes it even worse. We had minor defects on both cars, which we'll now take a good look at. We didn't think the last outing of the year would turn out like this."

Richard Lietz (Porsche 911 RSR #91): "We simply have to accept this result. We all did our best, but sometimes we even stood in our own way. We'll learn from this and will return stronger. The important thing is that we reached the finish line with our cars and at least earned some points."

Gianmaria Bruni (Porsche 911 RSR #91): "This is not exactly the nicest present just before Christmas. Our car was fast and consistent as always, but this time we were unlucky on the technical side. We'll examine the causes in more detail during the test on Sunday. I think it is terrific how our team never gave up and kept pushing despite the setbacks. We would have deserved more, but sometimes that's how it goes in motor racing. Setbacks are just part of it."

Kévin Estre (Porsche 911 RSR #92): "Initially the race went well for us. With this track layout, it was hard to find an opportunity to overtake. But at some point it worked and I was in the lead. As a result, I was able to build a decent lead, but then bad luck struck. The left rear shock broke. We lost a lot of time

in the pits and couldn't catch up. We've lost a lot of ground in the drivers' standings."

Michael Christensen (Porsche 911 RSR #92): "Our car was strong, the team worked perfectly and we drivers did our job. A top result would have been possible at Bahrain. Unfortunately this time technology threw a spanner in the works. Things like this can happen, although of course it painful for us, particularly at this race where so many points were up for grabs."

Ben Keating (Porsche 911 RSR #57): "What a fantastic race! When you start from pole, everything is much easier. I was able to immediately build a gap at the front after the start. I was in high form. So good, in fact, that my team left me in the car for three straight stints. This had the advantage that we could save a driver change at the end. My teammates put in extremely strong drives, the team did a perfect job. This is my first win in the WEC, and it's now time to celebrate!"

Race result

GTE-Pro class
1. Thiim/Sörensen (DK/DK), Aston Martin Vantage, 235 laps
2. Molina/Rigon (E/I), Ferrari 488 GTE, 235 laps
3. Martin/Lynn (B/GB), Aston Martin Vantage, 235 laps
5. Lietz/Bruni (A/I), Porsche 911 RSR, 233 laps
6. Christensen/Estre (DK/F), Porsche 911 RSR, 233 laps

GTE-Am class
1. Keating/ten Voorde/Bleekemolen (USA/NL/NL), Porsche 911 RSR, 233 laps
2. Turner/Dalla Lana/Gunn (GB/CDN/GB), Aston Martin Vantage, 233 laps
3. Wainwright/Barker/Watson (GB/GB/GB), Porsche 911 RSR, 233 laps
6. Campbell/Ried/Pera (AUS/D/I), Porsche 911 RSR, 231 laps
9. Perfetti/Heinemeier Hansson/Cairoli (N/DK/I), Porsche 911 RSR, 214 laps
11. Preining/Al Qubaisi/de Leener (A/UAE/B), Porsche 911 RSR, 109 laps

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

Informations

The 2019/2020 FIA WEC season will resume on 22 February 2020 in Austin (USA).

Qualifying

The reigning world champions Michael Christensen (Denmark) and Kévin Estre (France) take up the race in the sister car with the starting number 92 from the second grid spot. In the GTE-Am category,

the No. 57 Porsche 911 RSR fielded by the Project 1 team tackles the eight-hour race on the Bahrain International Circuit from the best starting position.

The hunt for top times held at sunset close to the capital Manama was marked by strategies, teamwork and driving skill. Shortly after the session got underway, the Porsche GT Team sent Christensen out, while his works driver teammate Bruni waited in the pits in the sister car. As the Italian then took up the chase three minutes into the session, he found an ideal gap in the otherwise heavy traffic. In 1:55.342 minutes, Bruni turned the fastest qualifying lap of all GTE vehicles. Excellent lap times from Christensen and Estre in the Porsche 911 RSR, which is based on the high-performance 911 GT3 RS (911 GT3 RS: Fuel consumption combined 12.8 l/100 km; CO2 emissions combined 291 g/km) road-going sports car, yielded the first double pole of the season. The No. 92 car was just 0.060 seconds shy of the vehicle of its brand colleagues.

In the GTE-Am category, the Project 1 team clinched a perfect starting position for the race with the 2017-spec Porsche 911 RSR. In the No. 57 car, Dutchman Larry ten Voorde and the American Ben Keating achieved the fastest average time. For the fourth round of the year, the pair shares driving duties with Jeroen Bleekemolen (Netherlands). Porsche Young Professional Thomas Preining (Austria) takes up the race from position two in the Porsche 911 RSR (No. 88) campaigned by Dempsey-Proton Racing with his teammates Khaled Al Qubaisi (United Arab Emirates) and Adrien de Leener (Belgium).

Qualifying quotes

Fritz Enzinger (Vice President Motorsport): “Our goal is to conclude this phenomenal year for Porsche Motorsport with another highlight in Bahrain. By securing the first two grid spots we’ve achieved a perfect starting position for the race. The race over eight hours will again be tough. We’re confident that we’ll also be strong over the long distance on this challenging track. The entire team more than deserves to finish this fabulous year with another top result.”

Alexander Stehlig (Head of Operations FIA WEC): “I’m completely satisfied. The journey, which began back in 2018 with the start of our world champion season, continues just as well. It’s simply fantastic. The entire team works in such an incredibly focussed and meticulous way. At every outing, we make small adjustments to become even better. The result is our first one-two qualifying result with the new Porsche 911 RSR. I’m now very much looking forward to the race.”

Gianmaria Bruni (Porsche 911 RSR #91): “I immediately felt right at home in the car, even though we’d only worked on the race setup up to the qualifying. The team found a perfect qualifying setup. When it comes to turning a really fast lap from scratch, having complete confidence in the car and the team is a key factor. Everything came together perfectly – our team is simply the best.”

You will find further comments in the press release.

Qualifying result

GTE-Pro class
1. Lietz/Bruni (A/I), Porsche 911 RSR, 1:55.485 minutes
2. Christensen/Estre (DK/F), Porsche 911 RSR, 1:55.545 minutes
3. Calado/Pier Guidi (GB/I), Ferrari 488 GTE, 1:56.087 minutes

GTE-Am class
1. Keating/t. Voorde/Bleekemolen (USA/NL/NL), Porsche 911 RSR, 1:57.602 minutes
2. Preining/Al Qubaisi/de Leener (A/UAE/B), Porsche 911 RSR, 1:57.661 minutes
3. Perrodo/Collard/Nielsen (F/F/DK), Ferrari 488 GTE, 1:57.690 minutes
4. Perfetti/Heinemeier Hansson/Cairoli (N/DK/I), Porsche 911 RSR, 1:57.863 minutes
5. Wainwright/Barker/Watson (GB/GB/GB), Porsche 911 RSR, 1:57.977 minutes
10. Campbell/Ried/Pera (AUS/D/I), Porsche 911 RSR, 1:59.959 minutes

The preview

Porsche intends to conclude its extremely successful 2019 motorsport season with another highlight at the eight-hour race of the FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC) in Bahrain on 14 December. The sports car manufacturer from Stuttgart holds a convincing lead in the world championship after the new Porsche 911 RSR claimed a one-two at Silverstone (Great Britain) and Shanghai (China) as well as podium finishes at Fuji (Japan). Both Porsche duos are also at the top of the drivers' standings. In the GTE-Am classification, three customer teams field a total of five Porsche 911 RSR in last year's spec at the long-distance race in the Gulf region.

The race

The Bahrain International Circuit has hosted the Formula 1 Grand Prix regularly since 2004. The WEC world sports car championship was first contested on the 5.412-kilometre circuit close to the capital Manama in its 2012 inaugural season – the only exception was in the 2018/2019 Super Season. At this year's return to the challenging racetrack, the FIA WEC will race over eight hours for the first time. High daytime temperatures, falling temperatures at dusk and sand at times covering the asphalt make the race a big challenge for teams, engineers and drivers. Tyre wear on the Grand Prix circuit with its 15 turns is regarded as a critical factor for potential success. In 2015, the French works drivers Patrick Pilet and Frédéric Makowiecki won the GTE-Pro class in the Porsche 911 RSR.

The Porsche GT Team drivers

The world sports car champions Michael Christensen (Denmark) and Kévin Estre (France) share driving

duties in the No. 92 Porsche 911 RSR. The successful duo leads the overall standings after winning the previous race in Shanghai as well as achieving second place at both Silverstone and Fuji. The winners of the season-opening round in Great Britain, Richard Lietz (Austria) and Gianmaria Bruni (Italy), helm the No. 91 sister car. The new Porsche 911 RSR also underlined its enormous potential at the previous races of the 2019/2020 season with pole positions in Japan and China.

The customer teams

The German customer team Dempsey-Proton Racing fields two Porsche 911 RSR in last year's spec. At the wheel of the No. 77 car are Porsche Young Professional Matt Campbell (Australia), team owner Christian Ried (Germany) and the Italian Riccardo Pera. Porsche Young Professional Thomas Preining from Austria shares the cockpit of the No. 88 sister car.

Porsche Young Professional Matteo Cairoli (Italy) joins forces with Egidio Perfetti (Norway) and David Heinemeier Hansson (Denmark) in the No. 56 Porsche 911 RSR fielded by the German customer squad Project 1. The No. 57 vehicle is shared by the two Dutchmen Larry ten Voorde and Jeroen Bleekemolen and the American Ben Keating. Gulf Racing's No. 86 car is manned by the all-British line-up of Michael Wainwright, Ben Barker and Andrew Watson.

The Porsche 911 RSR

The new Porsche 911 RSR (2019 model year) contests its maiden race in the world sports car championship. The vehicle from Weissach, 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 eight-hour FIA WEC race in Bahrain gets underway on Saturday, 14 December at 3 pm local time (1 pm CET).

The race on TV and the Internet

Round four of the FIA WEC season will be shown in full length on www.sport1.de. The pay-TV station Sport 1+ broadcasts the entire race live from 12:30am to 9:30pm. Eurosport televises the final phase four round four live from 6.00pm on its Eurosport 2 channel. Motorsport.tv televises the race in full length. For a fee, the FIA WECapp 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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