

Sebastian Vettel tests the Porsche 963

22/03/2024 The Porsche Penske Motorsport works team and the winner of 53 Formula 1 Grands Prix, Sebastian Vettel, are looking forward to putting the Porsche 963 through its paces. This coming week, the German will take the wheel of the hypercar at the Motorland Aragón.

Porsche Penske Motorsport forges ahead with its preparations for this year's 24 Hours of Le Mans with a 36-hour long run in Spain. Vettel has already spent extensive time in a simulator to prepare for the Spanish circuit in Aragón. At a rollout of the Porsche 963 on the test track at Porsche's R&D Centre in Weissach, he turned his first laps in the hybrid prototype.

Gaining experience in the cockpit of a hypercar prototype

Sebastian Vettel enters new terrain with this test drive: for the first time, the four-time Formula 1 world champion will gain experience in the cockpit of a hypercar prototype. Since 2023, the Porsche Penske Motorsport works team and private teams have campaigned the Porsche 963 in the North American

IMSA sports car series and the FIA World Endurance Championship WEC. After winning three IMSA races last year, Porsche Penske Motorsport succeeded in kicking off the 2024 season with a win in both championships. In the WEC, which also incorporates the Le Mans 24-hour highlight, the entire field including the hybrid race car will run on biofuel. This fuel has been used in the WEC since March 2022.

“I’m looking forward to testing the Porsche 963. I already got the chance to get a feel for the car during a rollout in Weissach,” says Sebastian Vettel. “I’ve always followed other racing series and my curiosity for endurance events encouraged me to just give it a shot. Now I’m excited about the long run in Aragon and I’m looking forward to my time behind the wheel. It’ll definitely take an adjustment and some getting used to but everyone in the team is very open and helps me. This will be a new experience for me. We will then see what happens next in this respect – at the moment there are no further plans for the future.”

“We’re delighted that Sebastian Vettel is interested in our Porsche 963,” explains Thomas Laudenbach, Vice President Porsche Motorsport. “There was no question for us that we’d be thrilled to support his request for an opportunity to test and provide him with extensive preparation and plenty of time to drive our hybrid prototype – there’s no doubt we’ll learn a lot from his valuable feedback. Our 36-hour long run with Porsche Penske Motorsport and our works drivers at Motorland Aragón offers a perfect environment for this.”

Getting to know the special features

Vettel has prepared systematically for the test with the Porsche 963. On 14 March, he met the operations crew at the Porsche Penske Motorsport facility in Mannheim. The next day, on 15 March, the German completed an extensive simulator session at Porsche Motorsport. There, he got to know the engineers and familiarise himself with the special features and complex control systems of the Le Mans prototype. On 21 March, he got his first taste of the Porsche 963 on the in-house test track at the Weissach R&D Centre. It proved to be an unusual experience for the 36-year-old: After 299 Grand Prix starts in Formula 1 single-seaters, it had been some time since Vettel had driven a racing car with a roof – previously only at the Race of Champions or turning demo laps.

Next week, Porsche Penske Motorsport will head to the 5.078-kilometre circuit at Motorland Aragón near Alcañiz to conduct a 36-hour long run. Joining Sebastian Vettel for the test are the works drivers Matt Campbell (Australia), Michael Christensen (Denmark), Frédéric Makowiecki (France) Kévin Estre (France), André Lotterer (Germany) and Laurens Vanthoor (Belgium). This endurance test serves as preparation for the highlight of the season in Le Mans on 15/16. June. As the record holder, Porsche aims to secure its 20th outright victory at the Circuit des 24 Heures.

To increase the chances of the desired success, Porsche Penske Motorsport will field a third Weissach-made hybrid prototype at the French endurance classic in 2024. Mathieu Jaminet from France has already been confirmed to helm the No. 4 car. The customer teams Hertz Team Jota and Proton Competition have entered three more Porsche 963 race cars. Two Porsche 911 GT3 R campaigned by

Manthey EMA and Manthey Pure Rxcing will tackle the new LMGT3 category.

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