Porsche wins GTE class at the virtual 24 Hours of Le Mans

15/06/2020 The newly founded Porsche Esports Team has won the first edition of the virtual 24 Hours of Le Mans. In the hands of works driver Nick Tandy and Porsche-Junior Ayhancan Güven as well as the professional sim racers Josh Rogers and Tommy Östgaard, the digital version of the 2017-spec 911 RSR took the flag in first place on the 13.626-kilometre Circuit des 24 Heures after a total of 339 laps.

In the GTE class, they crossed the finish line after a flawless marathon sprint twice around the clock with a one-lap lead over the second-placed crew. Exactly 50 years after Porsche's first overall victory at the real classic, the quartet now adds to the success of Hans Herrmann and Richard Attwood. On June 14, 1970, the German-British duo won the 24 Hours of Le Mans at the wheel of the 917 KH. With a total of 19 overall wins at the endurance season highlight, Porsche has notched up more victories than any other manufacturer to date. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the real Le Mans 24 Hours has been postponed to the 19/20 September.

Porsche tackled the digital event with four virtual 911 RSR. Each car was crewed by two real racing drivers and two esports professionals from the Coanda Simracing team. From the very beginning, the driver crew of the No. 93 car proved particularly competitive. After a strong start for Dempsey-Proton's No. 88 Porsche 911 RSR, Tandy – the 2015 Le Mans overall winner – handed the car off to Östgaard and after a good four hours, they swept into the lead. Putting in a remarkably steady drive, both Güven and Rogers extended their lead, and not even two pit stops due to technical problems could halt their charge. At around 6.15am with the rising sun, 20-year-old Rogers also turned the fastest race lap in the GTE class in 3:48.203 minutes.

The No. 92 Porsche 911 RSR was also on a steady course for a podium spot, only to have works driver Matt Campbell, Porsche-Junior Jaxon Evans, Mack Bakkum and Jeremy Bouteloup fall victim to a server error almost an hour before the end of the race. They reached the finish line ranking 11th in the GTE class.

Another candidate for a top-three finish was the No. 91 car, driven by the two Porsche Formula E works drivers André Lotterer and Neel Jani as well as the American Mitchell de Jong and Martti Pietilä from Finland. After running in the top four until the early hours of the morning, a server problem while changing drivers cost valuable time just as they were about to head into the final third of the race. For them, the digital Le Mans concluded in 12th place.

Bad luck plagued works drivers Simona de Silvestro and Patrick Pilet as well as sim racers Martin Krönke and David Williams. De Silvestro became entangled in an accident after just 30 minutes and fell far down the field. Pilet's crash midway through the race then threw them out of contention.

Comments on the race

Fritz Enzinger (Vice President Porsche Motorsport): „In the virtual world of racing, as well, meticulous preparation and total concentration over more than 24 hours contributed to this great result. My heartfelt thanks to Marco Ujhasi, the drivers and the entire Porsche Esports Team."

Pascal Zurlinden (Director Factory Motorsport): "That was a dream weekend for Porsche – what better way is there to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Porsche's first overall victory at Le Mans than to win the GTE class at the inaugural edition of the virtual 24-hour race? Congratulations to all drivers and particularly to the crew of the No. 93 Porsche 911 RSR. My sincere thanks as well to the fledgling Porsche Esports Team. The hard work of the last days and weeks has paid off. Congratulations as well to the ACO and the WEC for organising such a great event within just a few short weeks. Our endurance fans couldn't have wished for a better replacement for the originally planned real Le Mans race. This event made us even more eager to tackle the postponed race in September."

Marco Ujhasi (Manager Esports Porsche Motorsport): "I'm particularly proud that we were able to win as the Porsche Esports Team today. For me and many others, the story behind it began years ago: in 2013 we won Le Mans with the 911 RSR on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Porsche 911. In 2018, the victory coincided with the ‚70 Years of Porsche Sports Cars' celebration. And now, exactly 50 years after Porsche's first overall Le Mans victory, we secured the GTE class win at the inaugural virtual edition. This was not only thanks to the four drivers in the number 93 car but also to a 30-strong team. And we also have to acknowledge our partners, Coanda Simsport and Peter Dimov, the founder of the Virtual Racing School, for this great success. Thank you so much. And now we'll celebrate. In real-life."

Nick Tandy (Porsche 911 RSR #93): "This win is balm for the soul. We have some very difficult months behind us. The long break without real racing was and is a real strain for everyone at Porsche Motorsport, as well as for the fans and the drivers. For this reason, the virtual 24 Hours of Le Mans was a brilliant initiative to revive motor racing. On this very day five years ago, I climbed to the top step of the podium as the overall Le Mans winner. Now to win the virtual race, it doesn't get much better!"

Result

LMP2 class

1. Deletraz/Marciello/Wisniewski/Brzezinski (CH/I/POL/POL), Oreca 07 LMP2, 371 laps
2. Dillmann/Guerrieri/Simoncic/Pedersen (F/ARG/SLO/DK), Oreca 07 LMP2, 371 laps
3. Canapino/Aitken/Arana/Romanidis (ARG/GB/E/GR), Oreca 07 MP2, 371 laps

GTE class:

1. Tandy/Güven/Rogers/Östgaard (GB/TR/AUS/N), Porsche 911 RSR, 339 laps
2. Thiim/Westbrook/Sörensen/Biancolilla (DK/GB/DK/I), Aston Martin Vantage, 338 laps

3. Juncadella/Beche/Jajovski/Kappet (E/CH/NMK/EST), Corvette C7.R, 337 laps
5. Pera/Hartog/Francesconi/van Dooren (I/NL/I/NL), Porsche 911 RSR, 337 laps
9. Pereira/Olsen/Neuendorf/Siara (LUX/N/D/POL), Porsche 911 RSR, 335 laps
11. Evans/Campbell/Bakkum/Bouteloup (NZ/AUS/NL/F), Porsche 911 RSR, 333 laps
12. Lotterer/Jani/DeJong/Pietilä (D/CH/USA/FIN), Porsche 911 RSR, 333 laps
16. Hörr/Kolkmann/Giusa/Müller (D/D/D/D), Porsche 911 RSR, 325 laps
DNF Barker/Watson/Maguire/Masciulli (GB/GB/IRL/I), Porsche 911 RSR, 324 laps
DNF Pilet/de Silvestro/Krönke/Williams (F/CH/D/GB), Porsche 911 RSR, 166 laps

Qualifying

The Porsche Esports Team takes up the virtual 24 Hours of Le Mans tomorrow from pole position in the GTE-class. After today's 20-minute qualifying session, four 911 RSR cars locked out the first four grid spots, with a total of six Porsche placed in the top ten. Joshua Rogers clocked the best time on the 13.626-kilometre Circuit des 24 Heures in 3:46.550 minutes.

The Australian topped the time charts in all three sectors, albeit not in the same lap. Nevertheless, the 20-year-old driving the No. 93 RSR relegated his American teammate Mitchell deJong to second place by 0.632 seconds. The second grid row is occupied by the No. 88 Porsche campaigned by Dempsey-Proton Racing driven by Kevin van Dooren from the Netherlands, and the Frenchman Jeremy Bouteloup in the factory squad's third 911 RSR. David Williams rounds off the result for Porsche with sixth place in the No. 94 car.

The virtual 24 Hour of Le Mans gets underway tomorrow (Saturday, 13 June) at 3pm. Each of the four 911 RSR fielded by the Porsche Esports Team is shared by two professional sim racers and two works driver, including the three overall winners of the real long-distance classic, Neel Jani (CH), André Lotterer (D) and Nick Tandy (GB).

Qualifying quotes

Marco Ujhasi (Manager Esports at Porsche Motorsport): "What a great start for our fledgling Porsche Esports Team. We worked hard during the past weeks and, thanks to perfect teamwork, we managed to fully incorporate the experiences from the real and virtual racing world. The significantly higher grip conditions didn't surprise us and enabled this fantastic result in today's qualifying. Now we're going to have a virtual dinner together and then we'll turn our full attention to preparing for the race."

Joshua Rogers (Porsche 911 RSR #93): "Wow. That was one of the best laps I've ever done. I made a few mistakes, particularly in the last chicane. But now I'm on pole, and I even beat my teammate, Mitchell. I couldn't have expected anything more in the quali. All in all, that was a strong team effort. We're looking forward to the race tomorrow. Starting on the front row makes it a little easier but it's not the be-all and end-all in a 24-hour race."

Mitchell deJong (Porsche 911 RSR #91): "I'm very happy I could put the number 91 car on second place and to have a front-row Porsche lockout in the GTE class. I'm thrilled that the race gets underway tomorrow with Neel Jani taking the car to the green flag. We're in a great position to fight for some fantastic results."

Jeremy Bouteloup (Porsche 911 RSR #92): "Things went okay in the number 92 Porsche Esports 911 RSR. I'm not entirely satisfied with my performance although both of my attempts were decent and safe enough for place four. This is just one small part of the job and we're looking forward to doing most of it tomorrow in the race."

David Williams (Porsche 911 RSR #94): "To lock out the front row and have four cars in the top six overall is an incredible result for the whole team! I was a little conservative on my first run and a bit scrappy on my second but still very happy to put the number 94 car in sixth position for tomorrow."

Result Porsche participants

1. Joshua Rogers/Nick Tandy/Ayhancan Güven/Tommy Östgaard (AUS/GB/TR/N), Porsche 911 RSR, 3:46,550 min
2. Mitchell DeJong/André Lotterer/Neel Jani/Martin Pietilä (USA/D/CH/FIN), Porsche 911 RSR, 3:47,182 min
3. Kevin van Dooren/Riccardo Pera/Loek Hartog/Michael Francesconi (NL/I/NL/I), Porsche 911 RSR, 3:47,819 min
4. Jeremy Bouteloup/Jaxon Evans/Matt Campbell/Mack Bakkum (F/NZ/AUS/NL), Porsche 911 RSR, 3:47,965 min
6. David Williams/Patrick Pilet/Simona de Silvestro/Martin Krönke (GB/F/CH/D), Porsche 911 RSR, 3:48,213 min
10. Zbigniew Siara/Dylan Pereira/Matteo Cairoli/Tim Neuendorf (POL/LUX/I/D), Porsche 911 RSR, 3:48,897 min
11. Adam Maguire/Ben Barker/Andrew Watson/Eros Masciulli (IRL/GB/GB/I), Porsche 911 RSR, 3:48,931 min
19. Danny Giusa/Laurents Hörr/David Kolkmann/ Lukas Müller (D/D/D/D), Porsche 911 RSR, 3:50,226 min

Drivers for the Porsche Esports team (all Porsche 911 RSR)

No. 91:

André Lotterer (DE) / Neel Jani (CH) / Mitchell Dejong (USA) / Martti Pietilä (FIN)

No. 92:

Jaxon Evans (NZ) / Matt Campbell (AUS) / Mack Bakkum (NED) / Jeremy Bouteloup (FRA)

No. 93:

Nick Tandy (GB) / Ayhancan Güven (TR) / Josh Rogers (AUS) / Tommy Ostgaard (NOR)

No. 94:

Patrick Pilet (F) / Simona DeSilvestro (CH) / Martin Krönke (DE) / David Williams (GB)

Info

Motorsport fans can follow the race as a live stream at motorsports.porsche.com, which is supplemented by background reports on the Porsche Esports Team. The Porsche channels on YouTube, Instagram and Twitch offer exclusive behind-the-scenes insights into the paddock of the Porsche works squad. Moreover, the digital race of the FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC) and the 24 Hour of Le Mans can be viewed on YouTube, with the Le Mans 24 Hours also shown on Facebook and Twitch.

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