

Triple triumph for the Porsche 963, Manthey PureRxcing wins GT3 class

02/03/2024 Porsche Penske Motorsport stormed to a maiden victory with the Porsche 963 in the FIA World Endurance Championship WEC. At the season opener in Qatar, works drivers Kévin Estre (France), André Lotterer (Germany) and Laurens Vanthoor (Belgium) crossed the finish line first at the wheel of the No. 6 car. The No. 5 sister car wrapped up the 1,812-kilometre event in third place. The customer team Hertz Team Jota rounded off Porsche's triumph with second place overall. In the new LMGT3 class, the 911 GT3 R from Manthey PureRxcing clinched first place.

Race

The Porsche 963 proved to be the car to beat early in the ten-hour race. Although Denmark's Michael Christensen lost the lead from pole position on the first lap in the No. 5 hybrid prototype, Laurens Vanthoor (Belgium) quickly worked his way into the lead in the early stages at the wheel of the sister car. After around 90 minutes, the race car from Weissach snatched first place and only relinquished it briefly over the next eight hours due to different pit stop rhythms. At the end of a nail-biting race on the

Lusail International Circuit, Estre/Lotterer/Vanthoor scored the first world championship victory for the Porsche Penske Motorsport works team with a lead of over 30 seconds.

In sunny and warm conditions during the day and significantly cooler temperatures in the final hours, the No. 5 Porsche 963 consistently matched the pace with the leading vehicle. However, misfortune plagued Campbell/Christensen/Makowiecki, with the car having to unexpectedly pit twice due to tyre damage. In a last-ditch effort, Daytona winner Matt Campbell made an impressive comeback, propelling the team to the final podium spot. Admittedly, the team also benefited from Peugeot's bad luck. The rival car had been running in second place for a long stretch only to be hampered in the final laps by a technical defect.

“We worked extremely hard and were rewarded in the best possible way. This success is difficult to put into words,” explains Thomas Laudenbach, Vice President Porsche Motorsport. “Everyone involved did an immaculate job. The team and the drivers gave a commanding performance. Congratulations as well to the entire team at home in Weissach. Nobody could have expected a triple success for Porsche. But my respect also goes to Peugeot. It's bitter to be thwarted so close to the finish line. They deserved to be on the podium with us. Manthey PureRxcing's Porsche 911 GT3 R won in the new LMGT3 class. The start of the season couldn't have gone better.”

“Today we achieved another milestone with our Porsche Penske Motorsport team,” says Roger Penske, team founder and chairman of Penske Corporation. “This is a long-term project, which started a long time ago. Experiencing our first overall victory in the FIA WEC at the start of the 2024 season is an exceptionally nice feeling. It's the result of the tireless efforts of everyone in the team.”

“Our Porsche Penske Motorsport team has now enjoyed the perfect start to the new season on both sides of the Atlantic,” comments Jonathan Diuguid. The Managing Director Porsche Penske Motorsport added: “After our victory in Daytona, we were extremely fast with both cars in Qatar today and were rewarded with a victory and a podium finish. This success was the result of hard work. We gave everything we had over the entire distance. It was tough until the last lap. Now we're all looking forward to the rest of the season.”

The Hertz Team Jota customer crew showcased the might of the Porsche 963 in Qatar. The two UK racers Callum Ilott and Will Stevens as well as the Frenchman Norman Nato delivered a flawless drive at the wheel of the No. 12 car and crossed the finish line in second place. The sister car driven by ex-Formula 1 world champion Jenson Button from Great Britain, his fellow countryman Phil Hanson and Oliver Rasmussen from Denmark maintained a spot in the top 8 over long stretches but retired with about 30 minutes left on the clock. The identical Hypercar fielded by Proton Competition with Julien Andlauer from France, Neel Jani from Switzerland and Harry Tincknell from Great Britain finished the season opener in eleventh position.

In the new LMGT3 category, Manthey PureRxcing set the benchmark. The Porsche 911 GT3 R fielded by the seasoned customer team from Germany's Eifel region dominated at the front of the 18-strong LMGT3 field over almost the entire distance. After clinching the title in the Asian Le Mans Series, the

drivers Klaus Bachler from Austria, Joel Sturm from Germany and Alex Malykhin from Great Britain now followed up with an season opening victory in the FIA WEC in Qatar. Manthey EMA's 911 took the flag in 15th place.

"This weekend we won the first world championship race based on FIA GT3 vehicles. This is a new chapter of racing history," says Sebastian Golz, Project Manager Porsche 911 GT3 R. "From the development efforts of the entire project team to the test and race preparation by the Manthey team and their drivers – this teamwork has paid off and it makes me particularly proud. We'll take some insights and homework with us from Qatar because it's just the beginning of a challenging season."

Thanks to its successes in the top Hypercar class, Porsche and the Porsche Penske Motorsport works team now lead all categories in the championship standings. Hertz Team Jota ranks first for private teams in the FIA WEC, Manthey PureRxcing tops the leaderboard in the LMGT3 class. Round two of the FIA World Endurance Championship WEC is the six-hour race in Imola on 21 April. This marks a WEC debut on the Formula 1 track there, after previous races in Monza, Italy.

Drivers' comments after the race

Kévin Estre (Porsche 963 #6): "I'm incredibly proud that we all achieved this together. Our car was extremely strong today and the team worked flawlessly. Still, it wasn't nearly as easy as it might have looked from the outside – definitely not! We encountered many tricky situations and we also had some contact with other cars. Two hours before the flag, a collision caused significant damage. But even with a less-than-ideal car, we did it. Thanks to everyone in the team and my teammates."

André Lotterer (Porsche 963 #6): "I've waited a long time for this. Finally my first victory for Porsche! Today we had three No. 6 drivers on top of the podium. This triumph is thanks to every single person in the team. Everyone worked incredibly hard and improved so many things for the new season. It works perfectly. We also experienced some nail-biting moments in the race but we kept out cool and brought home the win. We'd be happy to continue like this."

Laurens Vanthoor (Porsche 963 #6): "I'm absolutely delighted. I've dreamed of this day for a long time! It's simply incredible to see how much we've progressed compared to the start of the last season. We've improved significantly in all areas. It's great to be a part of it. I'm proud of what we've achieved and I will remember this moment for many years to come."

Frédéric Makowiecki (Porsche 963 #5): "What a tremendous start to the new WEC year with a victory for the sister car and third place for our Porsche 963. After a few setbacks, we pulled out all the stops to get back to the top. Okay, it wasn't entirely successful but at least we were all on the podium together. Now we'll celebrate today's victory as a team. It's fantastic to kick of the year like this after the difficult 2023 season."

Norman Nato (Porsche 963 #12): "Before the start of the race weekend, it was difficult to judge how

we'd stack up against the others in the Hypercar class. Did we expect to finish on the podium? Probably not – but we did it. How great is that! I can't wait for the next race."

Harry Tincknell (Porsche 963 #99): "It was a kind of learning week for us. The last time I drove the car was in Bahrain in 2023. A lot of things were new and unfamiliar. It's great to have Julien on board. The teamwork runs smoothly. Our race pace was great at times but we need to maintain this even more consistently. I'm thrilled that a Porsche won."

Klaus Bachler (Porsche 911 GT3 R #92):"What a crazy result. It was my first race in a FIA world championship so winning off the bat is simply a dream. Massive thanks to my team and fellow drivers. We put so much energy into this project and prepared everything meticulously. The first victory is in the bag. Seven more races to go – including the 24 Hours of Le Mans. There's still a lot ahead of us."

Race result

Hypercar class:
1. Estre/Lotterer/Vanthoor (F/D/B), Porsche 963 #6, 335 laps
2. Stevens/Ilott/Nato (UK/UK/F), Porsche 963 #12, 335 laps
3. Campbell/Christensen/Makowiecki (AUS/DK/F), Porsche 963 #5, 335 laps
11. Andlauer/Jani/Tincknell (F/CH/UK), Porsche 963 #99, 333 laps
18. Button/Hanson/Rasmussen (UK/UK/DK), Porsche 963 #38, 309 laps

LMGT3 class:
1. Malykhin/Sturm/Bachler (UK/D/A), Porsche 911 GT3 R #92, 299 laps
2. James/Mancinelli/Riberas (US/I/E), Aston Martin #27, 299 laps
3. Mateu/Bastard/Sorensen (F/F/DK), Aston Martin #777, 298 laps
15. Shahin/Schuring/Lietz (AUS/NL/A), Porsche 911 GT3 R #91, 284 laps

Full results on fiawec.alkamelsystems.com.

Qualifying

In the new, two-part qualification, the Frenchman Kévin Estre finished fifth in the works team's second Porsche 963. The customer team Hertz Team Jota impressed with a strong qualifying effort. Callum Ilott from the UK planted the hybrid prototype (#12) on the third grid spot. In the new LMGT3 class, the Porsche 911 GT3 R from Manthey PureRxcing secured second place.

Under almost cloudless skies and with track temperatures of around 30 degrees Celsius, the first qualifying session of the 2024 FIA WEC season treated spectators to some nail-biting moments. For the first time, two qualifying sessions were held in both classifications. In the first section, the vehicles from the Hypercar and LMGT3 categories went out on the track. In these two heats, the drivers had

twelve minutes to turn a flying lap. The ten fastest vehicles from both categories then fought for the best starting positions in two so-called Hyperpole sessions.

Matt Campbell, winner of the 24 Hours of Daytona and the 12 Hours of Bathurst, made it into the top 10 with an impressive lap time of 1:39.154 minutes – by far the fastest lap of the race weekend so far. At the wheel of the No. 5 entry, the Australian ended up with an advantage of more than four-tenths of a second over the second-placed car. Frenchman Kévin Estre achieved seventh in the No. 6 sister car and thus reached the Hyperpole. Both Porsche 963 race cars fielded by Hertz Team Jota also secured positions in the top 10.

In the final Hyperpole session, the drivers had ten minutes to tap the full potential of their fast Hypercar prototypes. Campbell shone here too, improving his times during his six laps and ultimately securing the first pole position for Porsche Penske Motorsport in the FIA WEC in 1:39.347 minutes. Estre turned the fifth fastest lap in the sister car. The British newcomer Callum Ilott put in an inspired drive with third place in the No. 12 car campaigned by Hertz Team Jota. The No. 38 vehicle driven by ex-Formula 1 world champion Jenson Button from Great Britain achieved ninth place. Proton Competition's Porsche 963 will head into the first race of the 2024 season from 13th place.

“The first pole in the FIA WEC – what a perfect start to the new season,” says Thomas Laudenbach, Vice President Porsche Motorsport. “We're especially pleased because we didn't have an easy time last year. We've worked extremely hard and made significant progress. It's great that something like this is rewarded with a top result. Our car is fast. There are four Porsche 963 in the top 10 of the Hypercar class. This is a brilliant result. Things went well in the LMGT3 class, too. Manthey is on the front row of the grid with a Porsche 911 GT3 R. We're in a great position to tackle the ten-hour race tomorrow.”

“Congratulations to the entire Porsche Penske Motorsport team and all colleagues at Porsche. Matt and the team made the most of the potential,” explains Jonathan Diuguid. The Managing Director at Porsche Penske Motorsport added: “This is Penske's 99th pole position in sports car racing – and the first for Porsche in the WEC since Bahrain 2017, so it's a historic day for us all. This partnership works! Now let's see what we can do in tomorrow's race.”

LMGT3 class: Manthey PureRxcing's Porsche 911 GT3 R on first grid row

Porsche's Manthey customer team also made its mark in qualifying for the new LMGT3 class. In the first heat, Englishman Alex Malykhin turned the second fastest time in the No. 92 Porsche 911 GT3 R. His teammate Yasser Shahin from Australia failed to make it into the Hyperpole with 13th place. In the shootout for the best starting positions, Malykhin was outpaced by just one rival and thus lines up on the grid in P2.

The “Qatar 1812 km” season opener will kick off next Saturday at 11 a.m. local time (9 a.m. CET). The

race over a planned 1,812 kilometres will run over a maximum of ten hours. Due to the length of the first race of the season, the normal World Championship points will be multiplied by a factor of 1.5.

Driver's quotes after the qualifying

Matt Campbell (Porsche 963 #5): "The first pole position for the Porsche 963 in the FIA WEC hypercar class – a perfect start and extremely important for the first race of the season. It's important to be ahead of everyone else and have as much of a free run as possible. Strategy will play a significant role in the ten-hour race in Qatar. I'm really thrilled about my first pole in the world championship!"

Kévin Estre (Porsche 963 #6): "It took long for the tyres to reach the optimum temperature. The first heat was okay, although I made a mistake on what could have been my fastest lap. The lap after that was a little slower but still good enough to get into the top 10. The Hyperpole session was about not making any mistakes and pulling everything together on one lap. Our car's balance wasn't ideal and Matt was actually faster than me today. Porsche is on pole – and that's great! We start from fifth place. That's okay too."

Callum Ilott (Porsche 963 #12): "Third place was great. However, I know I could've done more so I'm a little disappointed. Of course, we're pleased with our grid position. Let's see what we can do in the terrific Hypercar field. I'm super excited about the first race of the season."

Jenson Button (Porsche 963 #38): "I'm disappointed. It was my first qualifying in a very long time. I made a mistake in turn ten. I took the curb too wide and lost a few tenths of a second. It would've been a bit better without this faux pas, but underwhelming nevertheless. Tomorrow is a much more important day. Let's see where we stand after ten hours of racing."

Julien Andlauer (Porsche 963 #99): "We started the race weekend behind the eight ball because we still had a few things to test after the prologue. We'd already made some progress before the qualification – but unfortunately, it wasn't enough. We're still in a steep learning curve. I'm positive that our Porsche 963 will perform better in the ten-hour race than in qualifying."

Yasser Shahin (Porsche 911 GT3 R #91): "That was a difficult first qualifying for us. We're obviously disappointed that we missed out on reaching the top 10. We'll be stronger in the race tomorrow! The race is over ten long hours and anything can happen."

Alex Malykhin (Porsche 911 GT3 R #92): "We achieved great things in a tricky session. Our teamwork was sensational. My engineer told me exactly how and when I could get the most out of the Porsche 911 GT3 R. It seems I did a good job implementing the instructions. Our car is really fast. We aren't very familiar with the tyres but we've already learned a lot. We have room to improve in this area."

Qualifying result

Hypercar class:

1. Campbell/Christensen/Makowiecki (AUS/DK/F), Porsche 963 #5, 1:39.347 minutes
2. Conway/Kobayashi/de Vries (UK/J/NL), Toyota #7, 1:39.511 minutes
3. Stevens/Ilott/Nato (UK/UK/F), Porsche 963 #12, 1:39.622 minutes
5. Estre/Lotterer/Vanthoor (F/D/B), Porsche 963 #6, 1:39.981 minutes
9. Button/Hanson/Rasmussen (UK/UK/DK), Porsche 963 #38, 1:40.362 minutes
13. Andlauer/Jani/Tincknell (F/CH/UK), Porsche 963 #99, 1:40.675 minutes

LMGT3 class:

1. Van Rumpuy/Andrade/Eastwood (B/ANG/UK) , Corvette #81, 1:54.372 minutes
2. Malykhin/Sturm/Bachler (UK/D/A), Porsche 911 GT3 R #92, 1:55.179 minutes
3. Flohr/Castellacci/Rigon (CH/I/I), Ferrari #54, 1:55.182 minutes
13. Shahin/Schuring/Lietz (AUS/NL/A), Porsche 911 GT3 R #91, 1:56.650 minutes

Full results on fiawec.alkamelsystems.com.

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Title: Jonathan Diuguid (Managing Director Porsche Penske Motorsport), Thomas Laudenbach (Vice President Porsche Motorsport), Urs Kuratle (Director of Factory Motorsport LMDh) (l-r), Qatar, 2024, Porsche AG
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