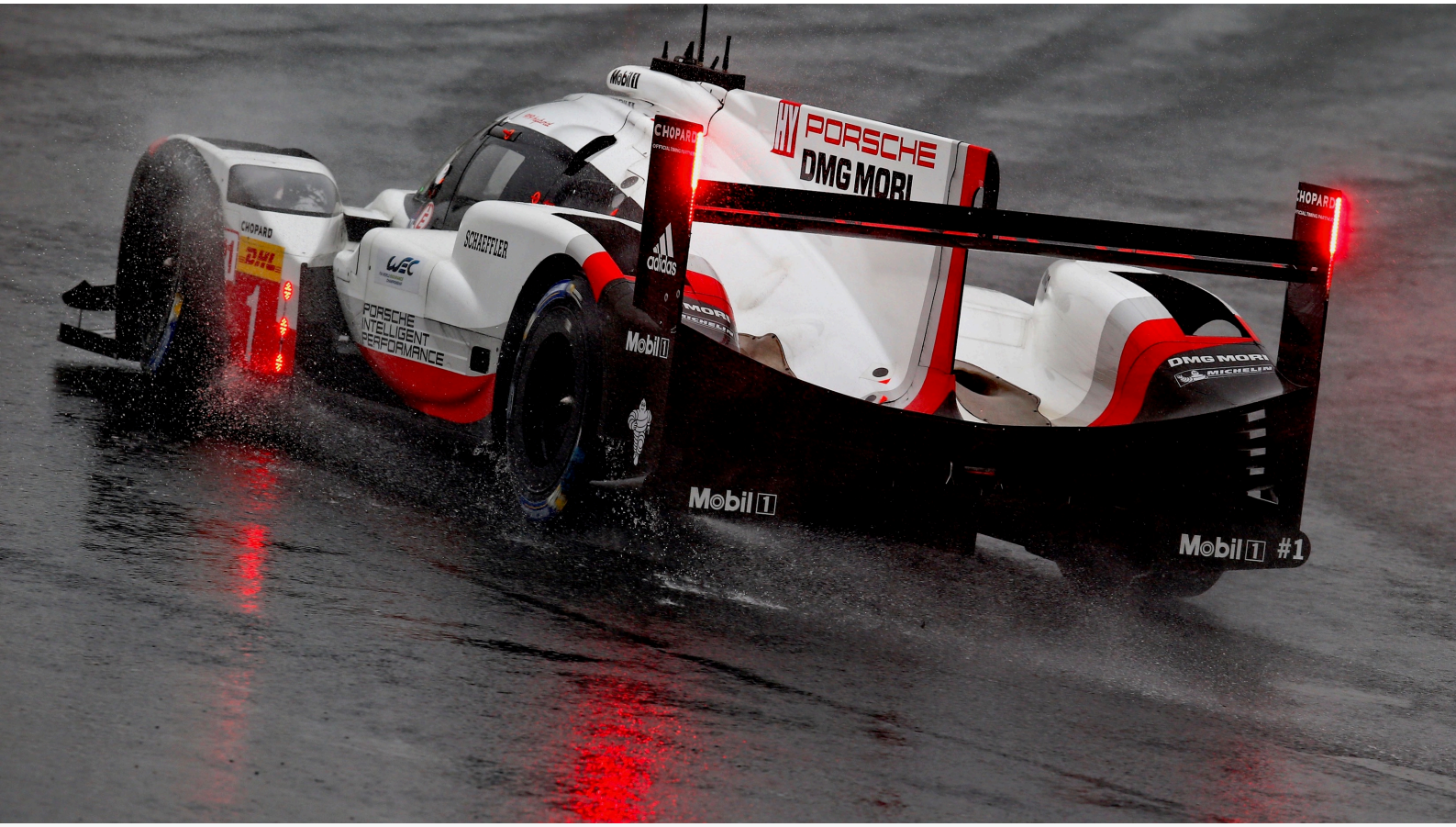


Rain, fog, red flag: Porsche 919 Hybrids finish third and fourth

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15/10/2017 The Porsche LMP Team had to be content with third and fourth place finishes at the seventh of nine rounds of the FIA WEC. The Porsche GT Team scored two podium spots with the Porsche 911 RSR.

In torrential rain at the Fuji Speedway, with the Holy Mountain hidden behind a curtain of dark clouds, Patrick Dempsey waved the green flag and sent the 26 starters on their way. In 2015, the Hollywood star had won his first world championship race in Fuji with his 911 RSR. This time, the Porsche ambassador and co-owner of the Dempsey Proton Racing kept his fingers crossed for his squad at the pit wall. It worked: The Porsche Young Professional Matteo Cairoli (Italy) and his German teammates Christian Ried and Marvin Dienst, who have already notched up two wins so far this season at the Nu□rburgring and in Mexico, netted another podium place with third in the GTE-Am class. With this, they reclaimed the lead in the overall

classification of the FIA Endurance Trophy.

Due to the heavy downpour, the race started behind the safety car, with the field going green again after five laps. In the GTE-Pro class, Richard Lietz got away perfectly from pole position, with Michael Christensen following suit in the second 911 RSR: After seven laps he had gained two positions and was running in third. When the weather turned worse, the safety car was again deployed for almost an hour, before the race was eventually red-flagged due to bad visibility. The drivers parked their cars on the finish straight. The restart came after 32 minutes, and after a good two hours, when Richard Lietz pitted for the first time, Michael Christensen moved into the lead.

The race strategy played a decisive role

After 2:20 hours, the stewards of the meeting again decided to send the safety car out due to poor visibility on the rain-drenched Fuji Speedway. Both 911 RSR came into the pits for a splash-and-dash refuelling stop before quickly returning to the racetrack. It was clear already at that point that the race strategy on this day would play a decisive role. This time the safety car stayed out on the track for 26 minutes. After half the distance, Michael Christensen was in fourth with Richard Lietz in fifth. The Dane had just fought his way up to third place when his charge was again thwarted by another safety car phase. The Porsche GT Team strategists summoned the two 911 RSR into the pits for a driver change. Kévin Estre replaced Michael Christensen in the #92 car, with Frédéric Makowiecki taking the cockpit of the #92 Porsche from Richard Lietz. When the race director gave the rain battle the go-ahead shortly afterwards, Kévin Estre snatched the lead, with Frédéric Makowiecki running third.

The fourth safety-car phase of the season's most unpredictable race was the first as the result of an accident. The race quickly picked up the pace and the rain eased slightly, but now fog rolled in. This, however, was no excuse for the lapped Ford pilot to ram into the leading Kévin Estre almost without braking and forcing him into a spin. Unsurprisingly, the 911 RSR of the Frenchman sustained damages: The collision affected the aerodynamics at the front as well as the diffuser at the rear. The result ofthis was that not only did the vehicle fall back to third place, but from this point on it lost around a second per lap to the front-runner. The fact that his teammate and compatriot, Frédéric Makowiecki, inherited the lead was only a small consolation. At a later stage, however, Makowiecki lost his top spot in a close overtaking manoeuvre with a Ferrari. From that point on, he continued in second, with Kévin Estre in third.

Thick fog: No restart of the race

When the fog became thicker on the Fuji Speedway and the pilots complained of worsening visibility, the stewards of the meeting opted for another safety car phase. Thirteen minutes later, the field was halted again with the red flag. This was the last caution phase of this eventful

seventh round of the Sports Car World Endurance Championship WEC: With no improvement expected, the race was not restarted.

Comments on the race

Alex Stehlig, Programme Manager WEC: "The conditions today were very tricky. The many safety car phases and red flags made it very difficult for the engineers to make the right decisions. However, the team worked brilliantly and had interpreted these interruptions correctly. It was bitter that an already lapped competitor cost our leading #92 car a possible win. The #91 drove a steady race, but directly after the restart it didn't have the pace for a short time to fend off the Ferrari. Second and third are still great results. We were among the fastest over the entire race weekend. It's a shame that it wasn't enough to yield our first win in this world championship."

Find quotes of the drivers in the press release (downloads).

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