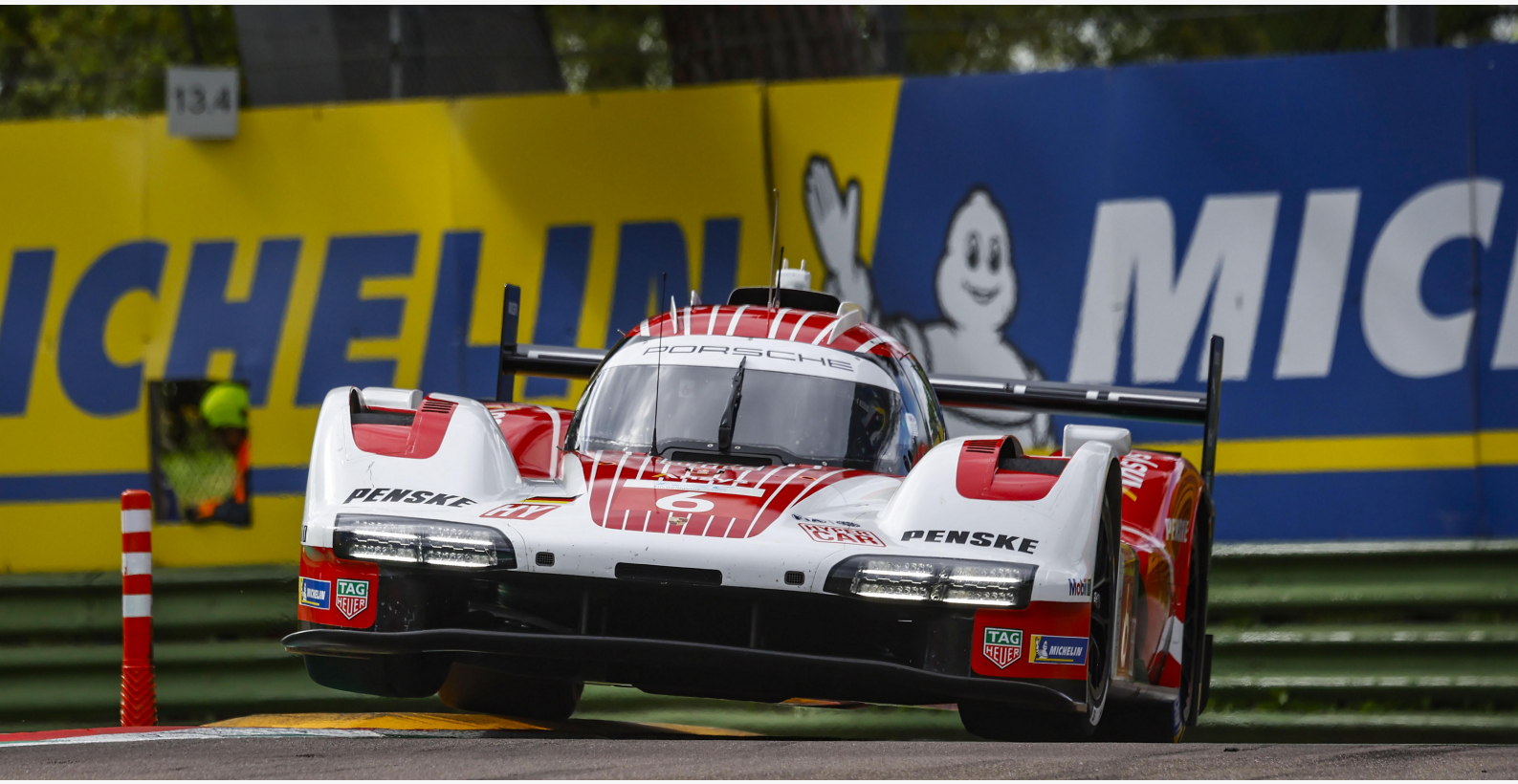


Porsche 963 race cars chase points from the midfield in Imola

19/04/2025 Porsche Penske Motorsport's two Porsche 963 tackle the six-hour race in Imola from the middle of the top Hypercar class. Frenchmen Kévin Estre and Julien Andlauer wrapped up the qualifying session on the Italian Grand Prix circuit in positions eight and twelve respectively. Estre ultimately finished tenth in the Hyperpole session. In the LMGT3 class, Manthey 1st Phorm's Porsche 911 GT3 R secured seventh place on the grid.

The battle for grid positions for the six-hour race of the FIA World Endurance Championship took place in Imola under sunny conditions and temperatures just above 20 degrees Celsius. At the wheel of the No. 6 Porsche 963, world champion Estre set the eighth-fastest time in the first of the two-part qualifier. This secured him a spot in the final Hyperpole for the top ten. The Frenchman concluded the ten-minute session in tenth place. In the race, Estre will share the 503 kW (684 PS) hybrid prototype with Belgian Laurens Vanthoor and Australian Matt Campbell.

Bad luck plagued teammate Andlauer in the No. 5 sister car in the hotly contested qualifying: The Frenchman missed the Hyperpole by just 0.068 seconds. Joined in the cockpit by fellow countryman

Mathieu Jaminet and Michael Christensen of Denmark, the 25-year-old will tackle the second race of the FIA WEC season from twelfth place.

"Getting just one car into the top 10 isn't exactly a dream result for us," states Urs Kuratle. The Director Factory Motorsport LMDh adds: "In the Hyperpole, Kévin Estre slid slightly in the first corner on his flying lap. Things like that can happen. We'll start from positions ten and twelve. We can still do a lot in a six-hour race. Our team is working brilliantly. We aim to make up positions in the field on Sunday."

"Kévin Estre and Julien Andlauer did a good job and both made the most of what's currently possible," said Jonathan Diuguid, Managing Director Porsche Penske Motorsport. "At the moment, we're a bit off the pace compared to our rivals. We have some work to do. We now need to deliver a spotless performance on race day to progress – we're determined to score as many world championship points as possible."

The Proton Competition customer squad will start the six-hour race on Easter Sunday from P14. Nico Varrone drove the No. 99 Porsche 963 in qualifying. In the race, the Argentinian will share driving duties with Swiss driver Neel Jani and Nico Pino from Chile.

LMGT3 class: Best Porsche 911 GT3 R on P7

In the LMGT3 class, the Manthey 1st Phorm team delivered a solid performance. American Ryan Hardwick finished eighth, thus qualifying the No. 92 car for the Hyperpole session. For the final shootout, local ace Riccardo Pera took the wheel of the up to 416 kW (565 PS) Porsche 911 GT3 R, with the Italian setting the seventh-fastest lap time in the Hyperpole. The identical 911 fielded by Iron Dames will head into the race from 14th place. In the No. 85 car, Frenchwoman Célia Martin was just 0.137 seconds shy of a top-10 result.

Round two of the FIA World Endurance Championship gets underway on Sunday, 20 April, at 1:00 pm local time (CEST) and runs over six hours.

Kerbs in focus: Flying cars and adverse performance peaks

Opened in 1952, the Imola Grand Prix circuit is considered an old-school racetrack: narrow run-off areas, deep gravel beds, and high kerbs can be merciless. The kerbs in particular throw major challenges at both drivers and engineers. The tried-and-true motorsport approach of "the shortest line is the fastest" is not necessarily the case here: In addition to the stresses on tyres and suspension components, the peak power specified by the regulations serves as a limiting factor.

"When the rear axle lifts while driving over a kerb, the wheels continue to turn. While this is not critical, the situation gets tricky when the wheels make contact again with the track," explains Stefan Moser,

Technical Director LMDh. ☒The tyres suddenly regain grip, which leads to torque peaks and vibrations in the drivetrain. This generates sharp fluctuations, measured by the mandatory torque sensor on the drive shafts." The regulations limit the maximum power output of the Hypercar and LMGT3 vehicles. These values, measured at the drive axle, are monitored live out on the track. Exceeding the prescribed limit can result in penalties.

☒Using electronic control, we have to ensure that the torque at the drive shafts remains within the legal limits at all times," explains Moser. This is a tricky task, especially since the governing body also monitor the differential. Very rarely do both rear wheels touch down at the same time after kerb-hopping. The result: One wheel regains grip sooner than the other. Power peaks therefore occur on one side. ☒From a technical perspective, this makes the challenge even greater. We're constantly learning in this regard," says the Porsche Motorsport engineer.

Drivers' comments after the qualifying

Julien Andlauer (Porsche 963 #5):☒Many cars qualified within a tight timeframe. A tenth of a second can make a difference of five positions or even more. In such a tight battle, you always wonder how far you can push yourself to the limit without exceeding the track limits. In my second attempt, I wanted to push a little harder. By that point, the rear tyres were a bit worn, but I was catching up with other cars. We'll give it our best shot to make up many positions from P12."

Kévin Estre (Porsche 963 #6):☒We reached the Hyperpole. At least it was a bit better than the first WEC race weekend in Qatar. Still, we're off the pace compared to others. That's disappointing. Tenth on the grid isn't ideal. We need to deliver a flawless race, take advantage of every opportunity that comes our way and score as many points as possible towards the world championship."

Nico Varrone (Porsche 963 #99):☒We didn't go testing in Imola, so we had to use the free practice sessions to get our setup right. We managed that despite a few setbacks. Qualifying went well: We're not far behind the Porsche Penske Motorsport factory cars. We aim to bring home points tomorrow."

Célia Martin (Porsche 911 GT3 R #85):☒I'm neither completely satisfied nor dissatisfied. The cars in our class were all very close together. I should've perhaps pushed the limit a little earlier. Unfortunately, overtaking is very difficult on this narrow track. But I take it as a positive that I'm in the middle of the pack as a newcomer. Now let's look ahead to the race. Things could go much better on Sunday."

Riccardo Pera (Porsche 911 GT3 R #92):☒The quali was okay. Our Porsche 911 GT3 R felt great. I did my best but not a lot more was possible. Seventh place is significantly better than our last attempt in Qatar. I'm hoping for a race without any major dramas. Let's see what happens after six hours. I'm optimistic."

Qualifying result

Hypercar class:
1. Pier Guidi/Calado/Giovinazzi (ITA/GBR/ITA), Ferrari #51, 1:28.920 minutes
2. Kubica/Ye/Hanson (POL/CHN/GBR), Ferrari #83, 1:29.678 minutes
3. D. Vanthoor/Marciello/Magnussen (BEL/ITA/DNK), BMW #15, 1:29.885 minutes
10. Campbell/Estre/Vanthoor (AUS/FRA/BEL), Porsche 963 #6, 1:30.815 minutes
12. Andlauer/Christensen/Jaminet (FRA/DNK/FRA), Porsche 963 #5, 1:30.862 minutes
14. Jani/Pino/Varrone (SUI/CHL/ARG), Porsche 963 #99, 1:31.382 minutes

LMGT3 class:

1. Al Harthy/Rossi/van der Linde (OMA/ITA/RSA), BMW #46, 1:42.355 minutes
2. Umbrarescu/Schmid/Lopez (ROM/AUT/ARG), Lexus #87, 1:42.661 minutes
3. James/Robichon/Drudi (USA/CDN/ITA), Aston Martin #27, 1:42.703 minutes
7. Hardwick/Lietz/Pera (USA/AUT/ITA), Porsche 911 GT3 R #92, 1:43.376 minutes
14. Frey/Gatting/Martin (SUI/DNK/FRA), Porsche 911 GT3 R #85, 1:44.440 minutes

Full results and championship standings https://fiawec.alkamelsystems.com.

The ◪X◪ channel @PorscheRaces, the WhatsApp Channel Porsche Motorsport and Instagram @porsche.motorsport as well as @porschepenskemotorsport provide live updates from Porsche Motorsport with the latest information from racetracks around the world.

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