

Porsche Penske Motorsport looks back on positive debut year

05/12/2023 Porsche Penske Motorsport can look back on a successful debut year with the new Porsche 963. In the world's two largest endurance racing series, the new factory squad celebrated numerous successes with the hybrid prototype from Weissach. The positive balance sheet for the first season in the FIA World Endurance Championship WEC and the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship includes three race wins, two pole positions and a total of nine podium finishes.

Porsche Penske Motorsport underlined the enormous potential of the Porsche 963, especially in the IMSA series. In the nine events with the two works cars in the USA and Canada this season, the team based in Mooresville (North Carolina), USA, celebrated three victories, two pole positions and four further podium results. At the Road Atlanta finale in October, Porsche narrowly missed out on clinching the manufacturers' championship with second place. The two driver crews Nick Tandy/Mathieu Jaminet and Matt Campbell/Felipe Nasr wrapped up the season in fourth and fifth place tied on points.

In the FIA World Endurance Championship WEC – the top Hypercar class in which various prototypes compete against each other according to LMDh and LMH regulations – Porsche Penske Motorsport

created several highlights, with the Porsche 963 achieving podium finishes in the six-hour races in Portimão (Portugal) and Fuji (Japan). At the Le Mans 24-hour season highlight in June, the hybrid prototype from Weissach at times led the field. To mark the 100th anniversary of the long-distance classic in France, the Porsche works team fielded three 963 racers decked out in specially designed liveries. What's more, during the 2023 season, a total of four additional LMDh-compliant racing vehicles campaigned by customer teams tackled the action-packed endurance races on both sides of the Atlantic.

"Racing for Charity": Porsche donated a total of 911,000 euros

To mark 75 years of Porsche sports cars, the Stuttgart-based manufacturer initiated an extensive fundraising campaign during the Le Mans 24-hour race: For each of the race laps completed by the three factory Porsche 963 racers, 750 euros went into a special funds in support of the "Racing for Charity" campaign. The Porsche Penske Motorsport hybrid prototypes completed a total of 733 laps at the 100th anniversary of the world's largest endurance event. On the occasion of its anniversary, Porsche topped up the donated amount of 549,750 euros to 911,000 euros. The money went to three charitable organisations. On the day before the start of the 24 Hours of Le Mans, the organiser Automobile Club de l'Ouest had awarded the "Racing for Charity" campaign first place in the "Sustainable Endurance Award".

"While my overall assessment of the Porsche 963's debut year in its international campaign is positive, we're not satisfied," concludes Thomas Laudenbach, Vice President Porsche Motorsport. "We'd set ourselves a massive programme for 2023. We took on two of the largest endurance series in the world with two works cars and pulled together a completely new operational structure in collaboration with Team Penske. On top of that, we built, delivered and supported four customer vehicles in the first year. Our learning curve over the past few months has been steep and I'm sure that with these experiences we will achieve the goals we've set ourselves for next season. Porsche belongs at the top. We're determined to continue to pursue this path."

2023 IMSA: Porsche Penske Motorsport scores the most wins of all teams

Between the first race weekend at the end of January and the season finale in October, the works team's two Porsche 963 racing cars turned 5,768 laps as part of official sessions – a total of almost 28,500 kilometres. After a disappointing start to the season at Daytona, the hybrid prototype demonstrated its potential for the first time at round two in Sebring. In the gripping finale of the 12-hour classic, both 963 Porsches were at times on course for victory, only to retire simultaneously after a bizarre accident with seven laps to go. However, the eagerly-anticipated maiden victory followed on 15 April 2023, at the spectacular city race in Long Beach, California.

For the sprint through the streets of the harbour city just outside Los Angeles, Porsche Penske

Motorsport put its faith in a bold yet perfect strategy. The factory squad opted against a tyre change during the pit stop and thus saved crucial time. Thanks to this, both Porsche 963 swept into the lead of the fiercely contested race. Tandy (United Kingdom) and Jaminet (France) defended themselves against repeated attacks from rivals to take the flag in first place. The sister car driven by Austalian Campbell and Nasr (Brazil) rounded off the weekend with third place. This triumph gave the entire team a huge boost.

“The Long Beach race will go down in history as one of the defining moments for our team,” comments Jonathan Diuguid, Managing Director Porsche Penske Motorsport. “To be able to achieve the first victory with the Porsche 963 in just our third race of the IMSA season was an incredible moment for us. That very same weekend, the WEC crew backed this up with our first podium finish in Portimão. In order for us to achieve such a success, the entire Porsche Penske Motorsport team put in a lot of work leading up to that point. That day in southern California, we played the strategy game, which was certainly risky, but it paid off. Once the No. 6 car got out in front, the sister car played it perfectly to help defend the lead. That race was the starting point of our run for the IMSA championship and was a monumental moment for the team moving forward. That weekend is something we will never forget.”

The systematic improvements in the areas of vehicle set-up and team processes quickly yielded more highlights. At the fourth weekend of the season at the Laguna Seca Raceway, Campbell clinched the Porsche 963's first pole position. At the following six-hour race at Watkins Glen, Tandy/Jaminet crossed the finish line first. Alas, shortly afterwards, the victory was rescinded during the technical inspection: the front skid wear was less than one millimetre outside the legal tolerance.

“Around the mid-season mark, the progress we were making in the IMSA series and the FIA WEC became obvious,” reflects Urs Kuratle. The Director Factory Motorsport LMDh adds: “The strong performances and valuable successes have motivated the entire team enormously and shown that our systematic work to improve in the areas of vehicle setup, racing strategy and team processes is bearing fruit.”

At the following race in Mosport (Canada), the two Porsche 963 finished in mid-field – but then came the big comeback: Campbell/Nasr celebrated their first win of the season at the extremely popular Road America racetrack. Six weeks later, the two Porsche Penske Motorsport racing cars achieved a commanding one-two result in Indianapolis – catapulting Porsche to the top of the the standings ahead of the “Petit Le Mans” grand finale.

At the final race of the season, Lady Luck was not with the team. The No. 6 entry shared by the title hopefuls Tandy and Jaminet was shunted into retirement due to an accident caused by another competitor. Bad timing with the full course yellow phases thwarted the sister car's chance for victory. “Although it's a shame that we didn't crown our maiden season in the IMSA series with a title, all in all the season was positive,” states Thomas Laudenbach. “The competition in North America was close and gripping for the whole season. Every manufacturer added highlights and the championship was full of suspense until the very last round. It was a spectacle for the fans and a treat for everyone involved. Next year we'll be back in full force with all the experience we've gained!”

FIA WEC: Porsche 963 asserts itself as the fastest LMDh racing car

In the FIA World Endurance Championship WEC, the conditions that the Porsche Penske Motorsport factory team faced were different than in the IMSA series. On a international stage, the LMDh category racing cars went up against vehicles complying with LMH regulations in the top Hypercar class. Finding a suitable Balance of Performance (BoP) for the various concepts proved difficult in the debut year. Throughout the season, the LMH prototypes from the rival manufacturers Toyota and Ferrari were ahead. The LMDh cars fielded by Porsche and Cadillac duelled for third place – with success for the sports car manufacturer from Stuttgart.

The Porsche 963 fielded by the factory crew based in Mannheim climbed the winner's podium for the first time after the second race of the season in Portimão, Portugal. The team's consistent progress became obvious at the highlight in Le Mans when the vehicles from Porsche Penske Motorsport and the partner team Hertz Team Jota led the field for more than 200 kilometres. At the six-hour race in Fuji, Japan, the WEC factory squad rounded off its strong drive with another podium result.

The first outing of the customer-run Porsche 963 took place in May 2023. Initially, Hertz Team Jota (FIA WEC) and JDC-Miller MotorSports (IMSA) entered the competition, followed by the Proton Competition team in the second half of the year –campaigning one additional vehicle in each series. During the season, the Porsche Motorsport partners achieved commendable results. The gold-liveried 963 fielded by Hertz Team Jota at times took the overall lead at the 24 Hours of Le Mans and impressed with strong lap times. At the end of the IMSA season, Proton Competition celebrated a podium result at the "Petit Le Mans" on Road Atlanta. With a total of 27,598 kilometres of track time, the three customer teams gained crucial experience with their four vehicles as they look ahead to 2024.

Porsche 963 statistics in the 2023 season (works team, as at Nov 2023)

Wins:3
Pole positions:2
Podium results:9
Fastest race laps:1
Best practice times:8
Highest top speed:345.6 km/h (Le Mans)
Number of pit stops during races:292
Total kilometres driven:103,306
Kilometres driven (official sessions):63,180
Test kilometres:40,126
Number of circuits (races and tests):24
Kilometres in the lead:2,978 (599 laps)

Drivers employed (races and tests):13
Driver with the most kilometres: Nick Tandy (11,401 km)
Most frequently used test track: Paul Ricard (4,943 km)
Total kilometres since the 2022 project launch:133,470

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