That was 2021 Le Mans

22/08/2021 The 24 Hours of Le Mans at a glance.

4:04 pm

The Porsche GT Team finishes the 24 Hours of Le Mans in third and fourth place. The best customer racer ranks fifth.

3:08 pm

The No. 91 911 RSR is in need of a repair in the Porsche garage.

11:38 am

A little more than four hours to go and the 911 RSR #92 is still ranking third in the GTE-Pro category.

9:35 am

Interim report 2

After a long night at the 24 Hours of Le Mans, the Porsche GT Team has an excellent chance to score a podium result. As the sun rose on Sunday morning, the No. 92 Porsche 911 RSR driven by Kévin Estre, Neel Jani and Michael Christensen was running in third in the GTE-Pro class after 16 hours of racing. The identical No. 91 vehicle currently ranks fourth. However, both factory-run cars have lost contact with the leaders. The reason for this is the special regulations for the deployment of safety cars in the endurance classic in France.

Unlike other racing events, when an incident occurs at Le Mans, three safety cars are sent out onto the track at the same time. This is due to the sheer length of the circuit at 13.626 kilometres. As the result, the field is divided into three groups. If drivers are behind the same safety car as the leader, they can regain lost ground. Those who follow the second safety vehicle are immediately disadvantaged through no fault of their own, losing at least 90 seconds. This happened twice to the works team's two Porsche 911 RSR. Thus, they lost around three minutes to the leaders in the fiercely contested GTE-Pro class.

"The night is over – and it was relatively quiet for our works cars," concludes Alexander Stehlig, Head of Operations FIA WEC. "However, the big issue for us was our bad luck with the safety cars. We ended up

in the second group and thus lost a lot of ground on the two leading cars. We're chasing down the frontrunners and fighting hard. We still have eight hours of racing to go. Our cars are running very well and our pace is strong, so we're still feeling confident."

The nine-eleven fielded by the customer team HubAuto Racing, which took up the endurance classic from pole position, ranks fifth in the GTE-Pro class after 16 hours of racing. The WeatherTech Racing squad, however, had to throw in the towel. Early on Sunday morning, the chassis of the No. 79 car was damaged in an accident involving the American Cooper MacNeil. Continuing the race proved impossible. Bad luck also plagued Porsche's customer teams contesting the GTE-Am category. The two cars fielded by the German team Project 1 and Proton Competition's No. 99 entry also retired. GR Racing's 911 is 15 laps behind after extensive repairs. The best-placed Porsche 911 RSR at dawn in the amateur class is the No. 77 car campaigned by Dempsey-Proton Racing, in which the Porsche works driver Matt Campbell from Australia competes. The No. 88 sister car and the vehicle run by Absolute Racing are also within the top ten.

Drivers' comments on the race so far

Neel Jani (Porsche 911 RSR #92): "Overall, it's a rather difficult race for us. We're trying to establish ourselves in third place for now. Unfortunately, we can't do much more at the moment. We don't always have the ideal vehicle balance on our No. 92 car. I hope this will change as the temperature rises throughout the morning. We're fighting on relentlessly, but we also need a little bit of luck in this year's race."

Frédéric Makowiecki (Porsche 911 RSR #91): "I always have a lot of fun driving at Le Mans at night. The track builds up more and more grip. That suits us. The competition is definitely strong. They have an obvious advantage, especially in the close duels. We can keep up in the slipstream on the long straights, but we can't get past due to the differences in top speeds. We have to be patient."

Matt Campbell (Porsche 911 RSR #77): "After my second triple-stint in this race, I need a bit of a rest now. After a somewhat mediocre start, things are going very well for us now. We're slowly but surely making up some ground again. The night was eventful. There were many incidents, plenty of yellow flags and several safety car phases. The competition at the top of our GTE-Am class is very strong. We can only try to continue to get the most out of our car. Let's see what comes of it at the end."

7:00 am

These are the standings in the GTE-Pro category after 15 hours.

4:00 am

We have reached the half-way point and the two 911 RSR of the Porsche GT Team are running fourth and fifth.

1:10 am

GTE-Pro category standings after nine hours of the Le Mans 24 Hours.

10:33 pm

Bad luck for Project 1, but driver Egidio Perfetti gave the thumbs up.

8:26 pm

Interim report

Difficult weather conditions made an impact on the early phase of the Le Mans 24-hour race. Despite this, the Porsche works team and the customer squad WeatherTech Racing have managed to settle into promising positions. The No. 79 car fielded by the American privateer team held third place over long stretches during the first four hours in the hotly contested GTE-Pro class. Due to an alternative pit stop strategy, the car fell back to fifth place just before the four-hour mark. The two ca. 515 PS Porsche 911 RSR campaigned by the factory squad are running in positions four and seven after four hours. Gianmaria Bruni in the No. 91 and Kévin Estre in the No. 92 sister car were hampered by a less than ideal tyre choice and also became caught up in incidents.

Shortly before the start of the 89th edition of the endurance classic in France, heavy rainfall caused extremely slippery conditions on the 13.626-kilometre racetrack. In the beginning, the stewards of the meeting kept the safety car out on the circuit for two extra laps. The asphalt then dried up so quickly that the rain-tyre-shod works cars came up against insufficient grip. Gianmaria Bruni was unable to avoid a slower LMP2 prototype. The side of the Italian's No. 91 car sustained minor damages. His works driver teammate Kévin Estre lost ground after a spin and lost even more time with a brief excursion into the gravel trap after switching to slicks. During a safety car phase after about three and a half hours, bad luck hit the crew of Gianmaria Bruni, Richard Lietz and Frédéric Makowiecki and they lost almost two minutes to the top.

“The first hours were extremely eventful. Both factory cars lost positions in the initial phase due to insufficient grip and minor incidents. We've been in pursuit mode since the second hour of racing,” states Alexander Stehlig, Head of Operations FIA WEC. “Luckily, during the full course yellow, the No.

92 car ended up behind the same safety car as the leading pack. So the gap is small. Our No. 91 got caught up behind the second safety car and subsequently lost contact with the leaders. We still have many hours ahead of us. The outcome is anything but a foregone conclusion. The situation remains gripping!"

At the wheel of the No. 79 entry from WeatherTech Racing, the works driver Laurens Vanthoor gave a strong performance in the early phase. Faced with changing track conditions, the Belgian systematically worked his way up the order and handed the Porsche 911 RSR off to Earl Bamber after two stints. For the next two hours, the New Zealander was only a few seconds off third place. Because of a longer pit stop, the American Cooper MacNeil is now running in fifth place. The identical vehicle fielded by the HubAuto Racing customer team currently holds eighth place. In the GTE-Am category, the No. 88 pole-setting 911 of Dempsey-Proton Racing with Porsche Young Professional Julien Andlauer at the wheel initially retained the lead. A lengthy pit stop, however, threw the vehicle back. The best-placed 911 RSR in the amateur class after four hours is Project 1's No. 56 entry in position seven.

Drivers' comments on the initial phase

Kévin Estre (Porsche 911 RSR #92): "Unfortunately we opted for the wrong tyres at the start. That made our first stint extremely difficult. The car's balance wasn't great and the grip was poor. I also spun once. When the track quickly dried up, we drove an extra lap compared to our team colleagues in the sister car because we didn't want to have both vehicles in the pits at the same time. We lost a lot of time on this additional lap because the conditions were no longer suitable for wet tyres. The car ran much better on slicks. I hope that we can fight our way back to the top during the night at the latest."

Gianmaria Bruni (Porsche 911 RSR #91): "The start was totally chaotic. Several cars from the LMP2 class that started ahead of us were really slow on the wet track. In the Esses before Tertre Rouge, one of these cars suddenly appeared in front of us. I dodged to one side, Kévin veered to the other side in the sister car. We couldn't avoid contact. Our car sustained a few damages on the side, so the balance wasn't ideal during my stints. When we switched drivers, the team repaired the damage as quickly as they could."

Laurens Vanthoor (Porsche 911 RSR #79): "Because the track was still very wet at the start, the race director decided to leave the safety car out on the track for two more laps. That suited us perfectly because we'd started on tyres for drying conditions. The longer the first stint lasted, the better we did. Still, I couldn't keep up with the two Ferraris. They managed to pull away, especially on the straights. That was a big surprise."

Julien Andlauer (Porsche 911 RSR #88): "The initial phase after the race went green was wild. I couldn't see anything in the spray. Under these conditions, it was simply a matter of handing the car to my teammate Dominique in one piece. I managed to stay with the frontrunners and the pace was good. If we can continue like this, then a lot is possible."

7:30 pm

Alexander Stehlig, Head of Operations FIA WEC, explains how the Porsche GT Team handles safety car phases.

6 pm

After two hours of racing at Le Mans, these are the Porsche 911 RSR positions in GTE-Pro.

4 pm

Green light! Le Mans 2021 has started.

The Hyperpole

The Belgian, who is the brother of the Porsche works driver Laurens Vanthoor, came out on top against strong opposition from all works teams in the cut-throat hunt for top times. In the GTE-Am category, 911 racing cars will take up the race on Saturday at 16:00 from the first three grid spots. At the wheel of Dempsey-Proton Racing's No. 88 entry, Porsche Young Professional Julian Andlauer from France was more than half a second faster than Benjamin Barker in the identical car of GR Racing and Matteo Cairoli in Project 1's No. 56 vehicle.

The Hyperpole is the final qualifying session to secure the best grid positions for the 89th edition of the Le Mans 24-hour race. The six fastest cars from the previous day's qualifying were eligible to compete in both classes. In favourable weather conditions with cool temperatures at sunset, the two factory-run Porsche 911 RSR racers went out on to the 13.626-kilometre racetrack as soon as the session began. With a 23-strong field from four classes, they had to get the cleanest possible lap with little traffic. Hence, the start of the final qualifying session turned hectic. All drivers immediately went in pursuit of the top time – with the associated high risk.

Bad luck for Kévin Estre in the 911 RSR #92

Under these circumstances, Kévin Estre experienced bad luck in the No. 92 car of the Porsche works team. The Frenchman went all-out on his first flying lap but had to radio the pits at about the seven-kilometre mark: "I've had a crash. I'm ok but I can't continue. I'm so sorry!" Estre had lost control of the ca. 515 PS 911 at the entrance to the famous Indianapolis turn and hit the barriers with the rear of his car. The damage to the vehicle prevented him from continuing. The Hyperpole session was stopped for around ten minutes due to the accident.

When the session restarted, Gianmaria Bruni planted the No. 91 sister car on P5. The Italian struggled with persistent understeer and was unable to tap the full potential of his 911 RSR. Meanwhile, Dries Vanthoor turned heads at the wheel of HubAuto Racing's customer car: at his first Le Mans drive in a Weissach racing car, the Belgian set the fastest lap time in the GTE-Pro class in 3:46.882 minutes. The rivals from Ferrari and Corvette had no answer to Vanthoor's time. "Pole position for HubAuto Racing in the GTE-Pro, and a grid lockout with Dempsey-Proton, GR Racing and Project 1 occupying the first three spots in the GTE-Am category – what a fantastic result for our customer teams," said a delighted Pascal Zurlinden, Director Factory Motorsport. "We're not satisfied with positions five and six for our works cars. Still, we'll pull out all stops in the race. All in all, the results show very clearly that Porsche Motorsport's customer squads always receive top-quality material which enables them to drive at the highest level!"

Stehlig: "Like a double-edged sword."

"The result of this qualifying feels like a double-edged sword for us. Congratulations to HubAuto Racing. They clinched pole position in the GTE-Pro class at their very first outing with the 911 RSR. And the car is new for Dries Vanthoor. A mega success," adds Alexander Stehlig, Head of Operations FIA WEC. "For us as the works team, the qualifying didn't go as well. Kévin made a mistake during his first hot lap. He slid into the barriers and unfortunately had to abandon the session. Gianmaria Bruni's car didn't achieve what we'd hoped for either with fifth place. We now have some work ahead of us and we'll do our homework so that we can perform better on Saturday."

For the strong Porsche customer teams in the GTE-Am class, everything ran like clockwork. Porsche Young Professional Julien Andlauer, who had already left a lasting impression in the qualifying and free practice sessions, gave his rivals no chance. With a lap time of 3:47.987 minutes, the Frenchman was in a league of his own in front of home crowds. Britain's Benjamin Barker ranked second in GR Racing's 911 RSR just 0.573 seconds behind, with Matteo Cairoli in third, 0.889 seconds off class pole in the Project 1 car.

Drivers' comments after the Hyperpole

Dries Vanthoor (Porsche 911 RSR #72): "This is only my second time at Le Mans and the team isn't yet completely familiar with the car either. The practice sessions didn't go so smoothly, but it looks like we've progressed in the right direction with the changes to my car. This is just the start of a long race weekend, but right now I'm very happy."

Gianmaria Bruni (Porsche 911 RSR #91): "

That was a difficult qualifying. We'd modified the setup beforehand to further improve our Porsche. It worked, but it wasn't possible to jump in the car and immediately implement the changes. It was really dark when I went out on my second set of tyres. I lacked a bit of confidence in these conditions because

this is my first Le Mans lap at night – I took a break in yesterday's second free practice."

Kévin Estre (Porsche 911 RSR #92): "I'm very disappointed and mad with myself. The start of the lap wasn't great, somehow I didn't get a feel for the brakes and I wasn't as fast as I wanted to be. I lacked the confidence that's needed. I was a touch too fast in the Indianapolis area. I lost the car and hit the tyre wall backwards. It wasn't a major crash, but the rear is badly damaged – it's such a shame for our team."

Julien Andlauer (Porsche 911 RSR #88): "It's just incredible! The car was absolutely awesome – just like in the practice and qualifying sessions. We only had to refuel for the Hyperpole, fit fresh tyres and put our foot down. The team has done an incredible job over the past few days. A huge thank you for that. This is my first attempt at the Hyperpole – and I promptly set pole position. I couldn't be happier. Now we have a long race ahead of us. But we're definitely heading into the 24-hour competition feeling terrific."

Benjamin Barker (Porsche 911 RSR #86): "The car was fantastic and my team did an excellent job. It's a shame that the session was red-flagged at one stage. At that point, I was two-tenths of a second faster in sectors one and two of my first flying lap – I reckon that would have been a very good time. On my second attempt, I didn't want to take any unnecessary risks and was more cautious. In the final sector, I made a minor mistake and that cost me a bit of time. All in all a great result and a good starting position for the 24-hour race."

Matteo Cairoli (Porsche 911 RSR #56): "I actually wanted to do something nice for the team tonight, but unfortunately it wasn't enough for pole. I thought we'd be closer to the top. Luckily, the race is long and we still have plenty of time to improve. Congratulations to Julien Andlauer on his exceptional lap."

Hyperpole results

GTE-Pro class
1. Martin/Parente/D. Vanthoor (B/P/B), HubAuto Racing, Porsche 911 RSR #72, 3:46.882 minutes
2. Serra/Molina/Bird (BR/E/GB), AF Corse, Ferrari 488 GTE #52, 3:47.063 minutes
3. Milner/Tandy/Sims (USA/GB/GB), Corvette Racing, Chevrolet Corvette C8.R #64, 3:47.093 minutes
4. Calado/Pier Guidi/Ledogar (GB/I/F), AF Corse, Ferrari 488 GTE #51, 3:47.247 minutes
5. Lietz/Bruni/Makowiecki (A/I/F), Porsche GT Team, Porsche 911 RSR #91, 3:47.696 minutes
6. Estre/Jani/Christensen (F/CH/DK), Porsche GT Team, Porsche 911 RSR #92, no lap time

GTE-Am class
1. Andlauer/Bastien/Arnold (F/USA/D), Dempsey-Proton Racing, Porsche 911 RSR #88, 3:47.987 minutes
2. Wainwright/Barker/Gamble (GB/GB/GB), GR Racing, Porsche 911 RSR #86, 3:38.560 minutes

3. Perfetti/Cairoli/Pera (N/I/I), Team Project 1, Porsche 911 RSR #56, 3:48.876 minutes
4. Lacorte/Sernagiotto/Fuoco (I/I/I), Cetilar Racing, Ferrari 488 GTE #47, 3:49.387 minutes
5. Iribe/Millroy/Barnicoat (USA/GB/GB), Inception Racing, Ferrari 488 GTE #71, 3:49.477 minutes
6. Keating/Pereira/Fraga (USA/L/BR), TF Sport, Aston Martin Vantage AMR #33, 3:49.676 minutes

Full results and points' standings: fiawec.alkamelsystems.com

At the start of the one-hour qualifying session on the storied 13.626-kilometre circuit in France, Kévin Estre put in a dazzling performance in the No. 92 car. The local hero set a new lap record for GTE cars in 3:46.779 minutes on his very first flying lap. This time was then undercut again by two Ferraris. For the race, Estre shares the cockpit of the 911 RSR with his works driver colleague Neel Jani from Switzerland and Denmark's Michael Christensen. The Italian Gianmaria Bruni also qualified the second factory-run 911 RSR for the Hyperpole. His co-drivers for the race this coming weekend are Richard Lietz from Austria and Frenchman Frédéric Makowiecki.

The drivers of Porsche's strong customer team contingent also turned heads. In the GTE-Pro class, Dries Vanthoor turned a blistering lap in the second half of the session and planted the No. 72 entry from HubAuto Racing on a sensational fifth place. In the GTE-Am category, the Porsche Young Professional Julien Andlauer also shone: The Frenchman set a new record for the amateur class with Dempsey-Proton Racing's No. 88 car in 3:48.620 minutes and landed on P1 with a lead of almost half a second. Britain's Benjamin Barker secured second place in the identical 911 RSR fielded by GR Racing. At the very last moment, Italy's Matteo Cairoli scored fifth with the No. 56 entry from Project 1.

Drivers' comments after the qualifying

Kévin Estre (Porsche 911 RSR #92): "We wanted to set the pace in the very first lap. That worked and was enough for P1 at that moment. We were sure that this time would give us entry into the Hyperpole so we stayed in the pits – and things turned out just as we'd thought. Third place with a gap of seven-tenths of a second to the fastest is okay for the qualifying session. The lap times are incredibly fast this year: Gimmi's top time from three years ago was beaten by 1.5 seconds. But we're where we want to be: in the Hyperpole. Tomorrow we'll go for P1."

Gianmaria Bruni (Porsche 911 RSR #91): "That was a really intense qualifying. Both works cars made it into the Hyperpole. Now we have to see what we can do in the shootout. Our No. 91 car ran well today, but it's not yet perfect. We'll take another close look at the data and we hope to extract a little more performance for the Hyperpole."

Dries Vanthoor (Porsche 911 RSR #72): "We didn't expect we'd make it into the Hyperpole but our team did a great setup job for the qualifying and it went really well. The fastest lap wasn't the best lap of my life, but it was okay – and it was enough to get into the Hyperpole. That was our big goal. I'm really excited to see what we can do in tomorrow's shootout."

Julien Andlauer (Porsche 911 RSR #88): “We didn't have enough time in the first practice session to find a perfect setup for our car. So in the session, we went out on used tyres to get a feel for it and to check out how it felt. What can I say? The car was simply fantastic! I veered off the track slightly on the first fresh set of tyres, so the first lap time was voided. On my second attempt, everything came together perfectly. The performance was good but we haven't yet achieved everything. Tomorrow we'll go max-attack in the Hyperpole!”

Benjamin Barker (Porsche 911 RSR #86): “Second place is great but I don't attach a lot of importance on qualifying for a 24-hour race. In my view, it's much more importance for the car to have excellent balance. That helps us in the race – especially when it really matters. Still, I'm pleased with today's result of course. I think we can go even faster. Let's see if we can do that in the Hyperpole.”

Matteo Cairoli (Porsche 911 RSR #56): “That was the toughest qualifying in my life so far! The pressure intensifies as the session progresses. On my flying lap, I kept running into slower traffic just before the finish line. I never got a really free run. I just scraped into the top six shortly before the end of the session. I'm really pleased about that. Tomorrow is another day and we'll do our very best again.”

Qualifying result

GTE-Pro class
1. Serra/Molina/Bird (BR/E/GB), AF Corse, Ferrari 488 GTE #52, 3:46.011 minutes
2. Calado/Pier Guidi/Ledogar (GB/I/F), AF Corse, Ferrari 488 GTE #51, 3:46.581 minutes
3. Estre/Jani/Christensen (F/CH/DK), Porsche GT Team, Porsche 911 RSR #92, 3:46.779 minutes
5. Martin/Parente/D. Vanthoor (B/P/B), HubAuto Racing, Porsche 911 RSR #72, 3:47.599 minutes
6. Lietz/Bruni/Makowiecki (A/I/F), Porsche GT Team, Porsche 911 RSR #91, 3:47.624 minutes
7. MacNeil/Bamber/L. Vanthoor (USA/NZ/B), WeatherTech Racing, Porsche 911 RSR #79, 3:47.682 minutes

GTE-Am class
1. Andlauer/Bastien/Arnold (F/USA/D), Dempsey-Proton Racing, Porsche 911 RSR #88, 3:48.620 minutes
2. Wainwright/Barker/Gamble (GB/GB/GB), GR Racing, Porsche 911 RSR #86, 3:49.100 minutes
3. Lacorte/Sernagiotto/Fuoco (I/I/I), Cetilar Racing, Ferrari 488 GTE #47, 3:49.102 minutes
5. Perfetti/Cairoli/Pera (N/I/I), Team Project 1, Porsche 911 RSR #56, 3:49.608 minutes
9. Inthraphuvasak/Latorre/Tincknell (T/F/GB), Proton Competition, Porsche 911 RSR #99, 3:49,788 minutes
12. Ried/Campbell/Evans (D/AUS/NZ), Dempsey-Proton Racing, Porsche 911 RSR #77; 3:49.913 minutes
13. Haryanto/Picariello/Seefried (RI/B/D), Absolute Racing, Porsche 911 RSR #18, 3:50.016 minutes
20. Olsen/Buchardt/Foley (N/N/USA), Team Project 1, Porsche 911 RSR #46, 3:51.411 minutes
23. Renauer/Ineichen/Bohn (D/CH/D), Herberth Motorsport, Porsche 911 RSR #69, 3:52.960 minutes

Lates News

The Porsche GT Team is competing in this year's 24 Hours of Le Mans with two 911 RSR in the GTE-Pro class. In order to provide reporters with a flow of comprehensive information direct from the event, in addition to opportunities of talking to the works drivers and team management, Porsche has opened up a number of communication channels at Le Mans.

These include personal 'Meet the Team' events for accredited journalists in front of the Porsche Hospitality in the paddock and regular interview sessions during the race via the Zoom video conference platform.

News and comprehensive background stories about the Porsche GT Team, the Porsche customer teams, as well as the 24 Hours of Le Mans, will be presented on the motorsport media microsite media.porsche.com/motorsport – from current press releases, homestory portraits of the drivers to numerous videos that can be shared on social media portals. The microsite will be regularly updated and supplemented with new content.

The @PorscheRaces Twitter account can also be accessed via the Motorsport Media Microsite. This account presents near real-time information from the racetrack with facts, photos and short videos. Whether this covers a driver change, choice of tyres or reasons for delays, @PorscheRaces is the fastest and most reliable source for journalists and fans alike. Quotes and press releases will also be posted here. This is the place where journalists, bloggers and the online community download press releases, photos and videos – without having to log in. The @porsche_newsroom Instagram account supplements the service with exclusive photos.

An image and film archive, in addition to press information can be found on the Porsche Press database. Journalists and bloggers can register at press.porsche.com to receive press releases automatically. Press releases, photos and videos can also be accessed without having to log in.

Discover the whole Porsche Motorsport world: From ABB FIA Formula E World Championship to GT factory and customer racing as well as Porsche's own one-make cup series such as the Porsche Mobil 1 Supercup through to the virtual Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup, an overview of the sports car manufacturer's range of racing activities is available on the Porsche Motorsport Hub, which is easy to access via motorsports.porsche.com. This content can also be accessed easily on https://www.porsche.com, https://www.facebook.com/porsche and https://www.youtube.com/user/Porsche.

Test day

With a lap time of 3:52.901 minutes, the 911 RSR driven by Kévin Estre (France), Neel Jani (Switzerland) and Michael Christensen (Denmark) set the best time in the GTE-Pro class during this

morning's session. The No. 91 sister car shared by the works driver trio Gianmaria Bruni (Italy), Richard Lietz (Austria) and Fréderic Makowiecki (France) concluded the two sessions in second with 3:52.904 minutes – a time almost identical to their brand colleagues'. The two Porsche customer teams WeatherTech Racing and Hub Auto Racing wrapped up the day in third and sixth place out of the eight participants in this category. The WeatherTech car crewed by the Belgian works driver Laurens Vanthoor, Cooper MacNeil (USA) and Earl Bamber (New Zealand) finished the afternoon session as the fastest in the Pro category.

In the GTE Am division, the No. 99 entry fielded by Proton Competition and Project 1's No. 56 car secured positions one and two with their identical 911 RSR. In this class, amateur drivers with FIA "bronze" or "silver" status share the cockpit with professionals. At the wheel of Dempsey-Proton Racing's No. 77 car, Hollywood actor Michael Fassbender celebrated his GTE debut at Le Mans. However, the Irish-German will not contest the race.

The season highlight of the FIA World Endurance Championship WEC takes off this Saturday at 4pm. The test day is the only opportunity before the start of the actual Le Mans week to fine-tune the mechanical and aerodynamic setup on the 13.626-kilometre combination of permanent circuit and public roads. At the pre-test in high summer, teams faced hot asphalt temperatures of almost 50 degrees Celsius. On Sunday, the twelve 2019-generation 911 RSR turned a total of 991 laps, which corresponds to a distance of 13,503 kilometres.

With 19 outright victories and 108 class wins, Porsche is by far the most successful manufacturer at the French 24-hour classic. The most recent win for a nine-eleven in the GTE-Pro class on the storied racetrack was in 2018. At that time, Kévin Estre, Michael Christensen and Belgium's Laurens Vanthoor sat in the cockpit. In addition to the factory delegation, seven customer teams with a total of seven works drivers as well as the Porsche Young Professional Julien Andlauer (France) will tackle the 89th edition of the famous endurance race. They can earn twice as many points towards the world championship as in the shorter FIA WEC races. After clinching two class wins from the first three races this season, the works drivers Estre and Jani currently lead the drivers' classification. Porsche ranks second in the manufacturers' world championship, just seven points behind the leader.

Comments on the test day

Alexander Stehlig (Porsche Head of Operations FIA WEC): "The test day went well for us. The racetrack had surprisingly decent grip, which we hadn't expected, and we found some very typical conditions in the morning session. We can already see that it'll be a very close race – seven of the eight cars in the Pro category are within three-tenths of a second. The team and the car that can achieve the best performance with the fewest mistakes will be at the front in the end. We managed to systematically tick off all items on our to-do list. We now have two days to work on the 911 RSR and analyse all the data before we continue on Wednesday afternoon."

Richard Lietz (Porsche 911 RSR #91): "We were able to implement what we learned from the morning

session in the afternoon and thus further improve the car's balance. Ultimately, this resulted in a more stable rear axle in fast corners. Now we just have to find a little more grip on the front axle in the slow corners, and we'll be good."

Gianmaria Bruni (Porsche 911 RSR #91): "Today was okay. We worked through our job sheet and tried a few things to see how they went. I made a minor mistake on the last stint – I tried something new on the first lap and lost the car. But not much happened."

Kévin Estre (Porsche 911 RSR #92): "Compared to previous years, the track was very clean with good grip. The Le Mans organisers did a great job here. We managed to start work on the setup very early – and that's generally not the case. Our Porsche felt really good from the get-go and we quickly got up to speed. Still, we went through our checklist and found a few things. We now have a lot of data to analyse and discuss. It's always difficult to know what the competition is doing, but we'll concentrate on our own business. We're pleased because we've learned a lot and we were always up with the play in terms of balance and lap times."

Neel Jani (Porsche 911 RSR #92): "My first laps in a GT racer at Le Mans were a new experience, but they were also great fun. It was very hot today, I can't remember the last time we had such temperatures at Le Mans. It's forecast to be very warm on the race weekend, but the high temperatures suited us. We may have to do some work on the car so that we can cope with the heat better."

Florian Latorre (Porsche 911 RSR #99): "I think we got a good start into the race week. All drivers set a good pace. We didn't make any mistakes and we were able to give the car a few additional tweaks. This was my first time in the 911 RSR. We're very satisfied with today's test sessions."

Michael Fassbender (Porsche 911 RSR #77): "That was my first attempt in the 911 RSR here at Le Mans. I'm taking it step by step. It feels great to be here and a part of this event."

Results, GTE-Pro class:

1. Estre / Jani / Christensen (F/CH/DK), Porsche GT Team, Porsche 911 RSR #92, 3:52.901 minutes
2. Lietz / Bruni / Makowiecki (A/I/F), Porsche GT Team, Porsche 911 RSR #91, 3:52.904 minutes
3. MacNeil / Bamber / L. Vanthoor (USA/NZ/B), WeatherTech Racing, Porsche 911 RSR #79, 3:52.938 minutes
6. Martin / Parente / D. Vanthoor (B/P/B), HubAuto Racing, Porsche 911 RSR #72, 3:53.221 minutes

GTE-Am class

1. Inthraphuvasak / Latorre / Tincknell (T/F/GB), Proton Competition, Porsche 911 RSR #99, 3:54.472 minutes
2. Perfetti / Cairoli / Pera (N/I/I), Team Project 1, Porsche 911 RSR #56, 3:54.502 v

4. Andlauer / Bastien / Arnold (F/USA/D), Dempsey-Proton Racing, Porsche 911 RSR #88, 3:54.619 minutes
6. Wainwright / Barker / Gamble (GB/GB/GB), GR Racing, Porsche 911 RSR #86, 3:54.668 minutes
9. Haryanto / Picariello / Seefried (RI/B/D), Absolute Racing, Porsche 911 RSR #18, 3:55.011 minutes
14. Renauer / Ineichen / Bohn (D/CH/D), Herberth Motorsport, Porsche 911 RSR #69, 3:55.595 minutes
18. Ried / Campbell / Evans / Fassbender (D/AUS/NZ/IRL), Dempsey-Proton Racing, Porsche 911 RSR #77; 3:55.895 minutes
20. Olsen / Buchardt / Foley (N/N/USA), Team Project 1, Porsche 911 RSR #46, 3:56.190 minutes

The preview

So far in this season's FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC), the factory squad has secured two class wins from three races. The legendary Circuit de la Sarthe hosts round four on 21/22 August, when Porsche again relies on a three-driver crew in each of its cars.

In total, 12 911 RSR racers will tackle the GTE-Pro and GTE-Am classes at the 89th edition of the world's fastest endurance race. The event starts this Sunday (15 August) with the pre-test on the 13.626-kilometre course, which takes in the circuit and public roads. With 19 overall victories and 108 class wins to its credit, Porsche is by far the most successful manufacturer at the 24-hour race in France.

"We contested Le Mans for the first time last year with the Porsche 911 RSR-19 and we struggled a bit against the fierce competition in the GTE-Pro class," recalls Pascal Zurlinden, Director Factory Motorsport. "I'm positive we'll be significantly more competitive this year. We've gathered a huge amount of data and experience with our works team and our customer squads, who get the chance this year to field the latest version of the 911 in the WEC. These insights help us find the perfect setup. We also performed strongly on the high-speed track at Monza. Our success there gave us an extra boost for Le Mans."

The 24 Hours of Le Mans is extremely popular with motor racing fans and is the highlight on the FIA World Endurance Championship calendar. Situated south of the 150,000-inhabitant city, the course consists mainly of public roads, with hundreds of trucks and cars driving the legendary Mulsanne straight every day on their way between Le Mans and Tours. Treacherous ruts present special challenges, especially in the rain.

While the long-distance classic was originally set for June, the 89th 24-hour race is being contested in August this year due to the coronavirus pandemic. Unlike last year, up to 50,000 fans will be able to watch the action live from the racetrack as the latest generation Porsche 911 RSR tackles the world's greatest endurance race for only the second time.

"I'm convinced that we'll be much more competitive this year," says Alexander Stehlig, Head of

Operations FIA WEC. “In the meantime, we’ve gathered considerably more experience with the car, and the successes at Spa and Monza have been hugely encouraging. There’s no better incentive for us than a win on the high-speed circuit in Italy. What’s important at the 24-hour race is to maintain contact with the leading pack at all times so that we’re in a position at the end to fight for victory. This means that we have to attack right from the start. I think this a promising recipe for success.”

Due to the length of the 24-hour race, double the usual points are awarded compared to a conventional six-hour WEC race. As such, the race has often proven to be decisive in terms of the WEC manufacturer and driver standings. The highlight of the year also features a special qualifying rule: in the Pro class, only the six fastest cars from the one-hour qualification session on Wednesday (18 August) are permitted to take part in the Hyperpole held the following day. This session then determines the best grid positions for the race.

Porsche GT Team drivers

The regular WEC drivers Gianmaria Bruni from Italy and Richard Lietz from Austria join forces with Frenchman Frédéric Makowiecki in the cockpit of the No. 91 Porsche 911 RSR. The Frenchman, who contested this year’s eight-hour race in Portugal, brings a wealth of experience with him. Makowiecki has contested the Le Mans classic a total of ten times – for the last four years sharing driving duties in the factory-run vehicle with Bruni and Lietz. In the No. 92 sister car, Frenchman Kévin Estre and Neel Jani from Switzerland receive reinforcement from Danish racer Michael Christensen. The trio used the WEC race in Portimão in June to get in sync with each other. Estre and Jani currently lead the drivers’ championship after scoring two class wins from three races. In the manufacturers’ classification, Porsche ranks second just seven points behind the leader.

The customer teams

Two customer teams tackle the 24 Hours of Le Mans with the Porsche 911 RSR in the GTE-Pro class – a category that is usually the domain of factory teams. WeatherTech Racing puts its trust in Laurens Vanthoor from Belgium, Earl Bamber from New Zealand and the American amateur driver Cooper MacNeil. Sharing the cockpit of the identical vehicle campaigned by HubAuto Racing from Taiwan are Maxime Martin from Belgium, Alvaro Parente from Portugal and Belgian Dries Vanthoor – the younger brother of Porsche works driver Laurens Vanthoor.

A total of eight of the latest generation Porsche 911 RSR racers will contest the GTE-Am category, in which amateur drivers with a Bronze or Silver FIA status share a car with professionals. Dempsey-Proton Racing runs two 911 from Weissach. The German customer team also fields another vehicle under the name Proton Competition. Project 1 has also registered two entries. The customer squads Absolute Racing, Herberth Motorsport and GR Racing will also campaign a car each at Le Mans.

An overview of the teams and drivers

GTE-Pro class
Porsche GT Team #91 – R. Lietz (A) / G. Bruni (I) / F. Makowiecki (F)
Porsche GT Team #92 – K. Estre (F) / N. Jani (CH) / M. Christensen (DK)
HubAuto Racing #72 – M. Martin (B) / A. Parente (P) / D. Vanthoor (B)
WeatherTech Racing #79 – C. MacNeil (USA) / E. Bamber (NZ) / L. Vanthoor (B)

GTE-Am class
Absolute Racing #18 – A. Haryanto (RI) / A. Picariello (B) / M. Seefried (D)
Team Project 1 #46 – D. Olsen (N) / A. Buchardt (N) / R. Foley (USA)
Team Project 1 #56 – E. Perfetti (N) / M. Cairoli (I) / R. Pera (I)
Herberth Motorsport #69 – R. Renauer (D) / R. Ineichen (CH) / R. Bohn (D)
Dempsey-Proton Racing #77 – C. Ried (D) / M. Campbell (AUS) / J. Evans (NZ)
GR Racing #86 – M. Wainwright (GB) / B. Barker (GB) / T. Gamble (GB)
Dempsey-Proton Racing #88 – J. Andlauer (F) / D. Bastien (USA) / L. D. Arnold (D)
Proton Competition #99 – V. Inthraphuvasak (T) / F. Latorre (F) / H. Tincknell (GB)

Porsche's outright victories at Le Mans

1970 – Herrmann (D) / Attwood (GB) – Porsche 917 KH
1971 – Marko (A) / Van Lennep (NL) – Porsche 917 KH
1976 – Ickx (B) / Van Lennep (NL) – Porsche 936
1977 – Ickx (B) / Haywood (USA) / Barth (D) – Porsche 936/77
1979 – Ludwig (D) / Whittington (USA) / Whittington (USA) – Porsche 935 K3
1981 – Ickx (B) / Bell (GB) – Porsche 936
1982 – Ickx (B) / Bell (GB) – Porsche 956
1983 – Schuppan (AUS) / Haywood (USA) / Holbert (USA) – Porsche 956
1984 – Pescarolo (F) / Ludwig (D) – Porsche 956
1985 – Barilla (I) / Ludwig (D) / Krages (D) – Porsche 956
1986 – Bell (GB) / Stuck (D) / Holbert (USA) – Porsche 962C
1987 – Bell (GB) / Stuck (D) / Holbert (USA) – Porsche 962C
1994 – Dalmas (F) / Haywood (USA) / Baldi (I) – Dauer Porsche 962 LM
1996 – Wurz (A) / Reuter (D) / Jones (USA) – TWR Porsche WSC-95
1997 – Kristensen (DK) / Alboreto (I) / Johansson (S) – TWR Porsche WSC-95
1998 – Aiello (F) / McNish (GB) / Ortelli (F) – Porsche 911 GT1
2015 – Bamber (NZ) / Tandy (GB) / Hülkenberg (D) – Porsche 919 Hybrid
2016 – Jani (CH) / Lieb (D) / Dumas (F) – Porsche 919 Hybrid
2017 – Bernhard (D) / Hartley (NZ) / Bamber (NZ) – Porsche 919 Hybrid

Drivers' comments before the race

Richard Lietz (Porsche 911 RSR #91): "We were positively surprised that we were so competitive at Monza. The racetrack there needs as much top speed as the Le Mans circuit, so this is a good sign. Still, we know very well from last year how challenging the competition is at this 24-hour race. I'm expecting a very tough fight in the GTE-Pro class. Le Mans is obviously a big highlight for every driver. We'll do our absolute best. I'm really looking forward to the test and the race week in France."

Gianmaria Bruni (Porsche 911 RSR #91): "Le Mans is always unpredictable. At this event, teams and drivers have to be prepared for every eventuality. That makes a sporting prognosis virtually impossible. I've planted our Porsche on pole position for the past three years and I'm eager to continue this streak. I hope that we have a clean race and that we ultimately reap the rewards of our efforts. Our number 91 car has finished the last three races second in class. Hopefully, we'll now manage to finally climb to the top step of the podium."

Frédéric Makowiecki (Porsche 911 RSR #91): "At last the big highlight of the year is almost here. I'm always very excited about this race. And I'm even more excited for this year because finally spectators will return to the track – that's fantastic! It was empty last year. The whole event felt like a test, not the greatest endurance race in the world. These avid fans contribute significantly to the special Le Mans charm. We're competing with our Porsche 911 RSR in a class with eight other cars, all of which are on the same level. It'll be a thrilling and wonderful competition and we feel we have a good chance to succeed."

Kévin Estre (Porsche 911 RSR #92): "As a Frenchman, Le Mans is obviously a big highlight on the calendar. We're heading there leading the drivers' championship after our class win at Monza – you don't need more motivation than that! We struggled at Le Mans last year. Now we know our car a lot better and we're definitely well-positioned. What's more, a total of four 911 RSR are contesting GTE-Pro class. If we combine the findings of all the squads from the practice sessions, we'll have a perfect foundation for working out an ideal setup for the race."

Neel Jani (Porsche 911 RSR #92): "After our Monza win, we're heading to Le Mans with confidence and in high spirits. Still, everyone knows that anything can happen at any time in this major 24-hour race. I've experienced this first-hand both in a positive and negative sense. I've contested Le Mans every year since 2009, except last season. So that makes me all the more excited to return to this very special racetrack. We're well prepared and we can hardly wait for the start of the event with the pre-test a week before the race."

Michael Christensen (Porsche 911 RSR #92): "I'm delighted to finally compete at Le Mans again. And I'm even more delighted that the fans can return to the track. The grandstands won't be full, but the Le Mans atmosphere simply lives from the spectators' passion. I hope that we'll be competitive. I'd really love to stand at the top of the podium – like in 2018 when we won there with our 911 RSR decked out in the Pink Pig livery."

The schedule (all times CEST)

Sunday, 15 August
09:00 am to 13:00 – Pre-test session 1
14:00 to 19:00 – Pre-test session 2

Wednesday, 18 August
14:00 to 17:00 – Free practice 1
19:00 to 20:00 – Qualifying
22:00 to midnight – Free practice 2

Thursday, 19 August
14:00 to 17:00 – Free practice 3
21:00 to 21:30 – Hyperpole
22:00 to midnight – Free practice 4

Saturday, 21 August
11:30 to 11:45 – Warmup
16:00 – Start 89th edition of the 24 Hours of Le Mans

Sunday, 22 August
16:00 – Finish 89th edition of the 24 Hours of Le Mans

The race on TV, via livestream and on the Porsche Motorsport microsite

The entire event will be televised free by RTL NITRO for the first time after the RTL Group secured the broadcasting rights for the FIA WEC and the 24 Hours of Le Mans. Eurosport will also report extensively on the 89th edition of the classic. Via their paid apps, the World Endurance Championship (WEC) and the ACO, which organises the 24 Hours of Le Mans, will offer a livestream and live timing.

Detailed information on the Porsche 911 RSR, the team and the works drivers will be available via the Porsche Motorsport website: https://media.porsche.com/motorsport, where media multipliers will also find the latest updates and news, background stories, image galleries and numerous video features.

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