

Porsche 963 narrowly misses the podium at the WEC season finale

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04/11/2023 After eight hours of racing at the finale of the FIA World Endurance Championship WEC, the Porsche 963 was less than a second off claiming a podium spot. The Hertz Team Jota customer team crossed the finish line in fourth place at the Bahrain International Circuit. Porsche Penske Motorsport's hybrid prototypes scored fifth and seventh. In the GTE Am class, the era of the Porsche 911 RSR in the FIA WEC ended with a win thanks to the Iron Dames team with the Belgian Sarah Bovy, Michelle Gatting from Denmark and Rahel Frey from Switzerland.

Race

The eight-hour race got underway at 2 pm local time with air temperatures of almost 32 degrees Celsius and asphalt temperatures over 40 degrees. For the Porsche Penske Motorsport works squad,

the order was thrown into disarray after the first corner: starting from P4 on the grid, Laurens Vanthoor had to run wide in his Porsche 963 to avoid a collision – which initially relegated the Belgian to ninth place. As the chase continued, a slight nudge with a GTE vehicle made it necessary to replace the front hood at the next pit stop. For the remainder of the race, the No. 6 Porsche systematically battled its way up the field and was back within reach of the podium. Ultimately, Vanthoor and his works driver teammates Kévin Estre from France and André Lotterer from Germany took the flag in fifth place.

The No. 5 sister car benefitted from the chaos in the sprint to the first corner and progressed to fourth place. However, the vehicle was unable to match the pace of its rivals, especially in the heat during the first half of the race. A problem with the speed limiter, which automatically regulates the speed on the track during a full course yellow, also earned the 514 kW (699 PS) Porsche two five-second penalties. Fréderic Makowiecki from France, the American Dane Cameron and Michael Christensen reached the finish in seventh place.

“We’ve experienced a season of mixed fortunes and still have a lot of work to do,” says Thomas Laudenbach, Vice President Porsche Motorsport. “But we’re seeing an upward trend and we were able to fight with the Ferraris today – that’s great news. I’m particularly impressed with the Hertz Team Jota squad's strong performance – congratulations on fourth place. We definitely would’ve preferred a better result for the factory team. This was our first season with the Porsche 963, and we rebuilt a lot of things at the same time. That's why we’re wrapping up the season feeling positive and looking ahead. Next year we will return significantly stronger. I’m also delighted for the Iron Dames team. The squad finally clinched its first class victory in the GTE Am, and thus brings the great era of the 911 RSR in the FIA WEC to a fitting end.”

“The last race of the 2023 season was not easy for all Porsche 963,” states Urs Kuratle, Director Factory Racing LMDh. “We at Porsche Penske Motorsport encountered a lot of minor incidents with both vehicles that we had to sort out during the race. And to be honest, it wasn’t our best race on the operational side, either. We had the speed because we were able to match the pace of the Ferraris and we also edged closer to the Toyotas. Congratulations to Hertz Team Jota!”

“We had a rough start into the race today and immediately lost important positions,” explains Jonathan Diuguid, Managing Director Porsche Penske Motorsport. “It took us a little while to fight our way back. We also sustained some damage on our number 6 Porsche 963. We had to change the nose which cost us some time and track positions. The number 5 sister car also had a rough day for various reasons. We picked up a few full-course-yellow speeding violations. Our drivers weren’t to blame for this. In general, we didn’t have the pace to fight the Toyotas today. That’s always our goal so we need to improve there. Still, as the season comes to an end we have a lot to be proud of and we have a lot to build on for the future. So we’re looking forward to the 2024 WEC season and of course the 24 Hours of Le Mans.”

The Porsche 963 fielded by Hertz Team Jota coped better with the midsummer conditions during the early part of the season finale: the LMDh hybrid prototype crewed by works driver António Félix da Costa from Portugal, William Stevens from the UK and Yifei Ye from China moved up to fourth place. Halfway through the eight-hour race, Félix da Costa even advanced to third place after overtaking a

Ferrari. However, the Portuguese driver lost this position after a braking failure. He was also handed a drive-through penalty for hindering another competitor when he rejoined the track. Nevertheless, in a gripping sprint to the finish, the trio worked their way back up to fourth position.

Proton Competition wrapped up the eight-hour race in Bahrain in tenth place. The No. 99 Porsche 963 shared by Neel Jani from Switzerland, works driver Gianmaria Bruni from Italy and the UK driver Harry Tincknell also lost positions at the start.

GTE Am class: First win for Iron Dames, the last for the Porsche 911 RSR

At its FIA WEC swan song, the 911 RSR again gave a strong performance. Heading into the race from pole position, Sarah Bovy initially held on to the lead in the Iron Dames' 378 kW (515 PS) Porsche. After a good half hour, the Belgian had to make way for Matteo Cressoni's Iron Lynx sister car. For long stretches of the final race in Bahrain, the two Porsche dominated the GTE Am class. However, halfway through the seventh hour, the charge of the leading Iron Lynx car came to an early end: after falling ill, the third driver was unable to take over the cockpit. To avoid disqualification, the team pulled out. This opened the door for Sarah Bovy and her teammates Michelle Gatting from Denmark and Rahel Frey from Switzerland. The all-female crew clinched their first class victory in the FIA World Endurance Championship after 232 laps and gave the Porsche 911 RSR a perfect farewell – from next season, the 911 GT3 R will replace the GTE vehicle. Christian Ried (Germany), Mikkel Pedersen (Denmark) and former Porsche Junior Julien Andlauer (France) brought the Dempsey Proton Racing nine-eleven over the finish line sixth in class. The customer teams GR Racing and Project1-AO secured positions eight and ten with the other 911 racers.

Drivers' comments on the race

André Lotterer (Porsche 963 #6):"Fifth place for us and seventh for our teammates is obviously not the result we wanted. We didn't have the pace we needed to win today. Tyre wear on this asphalt took a toll on our car. We did our very best. Hopefully, we can continue to improve for next season because we want to fight for victory regularly."

Frédéric Makowiecki (Porsche 963 #5):"We learned a lot this season and can be proud of where we are today. Of course, we have to continue to improve. The road to victory is certainly long. We'll all keep working hard together over winter so that we can return in even better shape in 2024 and be in the fight for the championship."

Yifei Ye (Porsche 963 #38):"It wasn't an easy first time for me here in Bahrain. The tyre degradation on this track is huge. We got off to a good start from ninth place and profited from the confusion in the first corner. We could then fight with the two Ferraris. At one point we were even in third place – it's a

shame that we had to give up this podium place shortly before the finish because of a penalty. Still, fourth place is a great result."

Gianmaria Bruni (Porsche 963 #99):"We had a tough day. Halfway through the race, we had a problem with the footrest in the cockpit, which hampered my braking. As a result, we lost time on the track and also during the pit stop to repair it. It's annoying, but such things happen in motorsport – it's all part of the learning process. We had some ups and downs in the six races with the Porsche 963 in the WEC and IMSA. We gained valuable experience that we can build on for the future."

Rahel Frey (Porsche 911 RSR #85):"Simply fantastic – at last our first victory in the World Endurance Championship. We worked hard for this for five years. It finally all came together in the last race with the Porsche 911 RSR. For me, this is the reward we deserve for the tremendous effort we've put in. Today we'll celebrate!"

Race result

Hypercar class:
1. Buemi/Hartley/Hirakawa (CH/NZ/J), Toyota #8, 249 laps
2. Conway/Kobayashi/Lopez (UK/J/ARG), Toyota #7, 249 laps
3. Fuoco/Molina/Nielsen (I/E/DK), Ferrari #50, 249 laps
4. Da Costa/Ye/Stevens (P/CHN/UK), Porsche 963 #38, 249 laps
5. Estre/Lotterer/Vanthoor (F/D/B), Porsche 963 #6, 248 laps
7. Cameron/Christensen/Makowiecki (USA/DK/F), Porsche 963 #5, 247 laps
10. Bruni/Tincknell/Jani (I/UK/CH), Porsche 963 #99, 247 laps

GTE Am class:
1. Bovy/Gatting/Frey (B/DK/CH), Porsche 911 RSR #85, 232 laps
2. Talbot/Stevenson/Fujii (AUS/UK/J), Aston Martin #777, 232 laps
3. James/Mancinelli/Ribeiras (USA/I/E), Aston Martin #98, 232 laps
6. Ried/Pedersen/Andlauer (D/DK/F), Porsche 911 RSR #77, 231 laps
8. Wainwright/Pera/Barker (UK/I/UK), Porsche 911 RSR #86, 231 laps
10. Hyett/Jeannette/Cairoli (USA/USA/I), Porsche 911 RSR #56, 230 laps
DNF Schiavoni/Cressoni/Picariello (I/I/B), Porsche 911 RSR #60

Full results: fiawec.alkamelsystems.com.

The „X" channel @PorscheRaces and Instagram @porsche.motorsport as well as @porschepenskemotorsport provide live updates from Porsche Penske Motorsport with the latest information from racetracks around the world

Qualifying

The best Porsche 963 will tackle the final round of this year's FIA World Endurance Championship WEC from the second grid row on Saturday. Works driver Kévin Estre turned the fourth-fastest qualifying lap for the 8-hour race on the Bahrain International Circuit in 1:47.712 minutes. The Frenchman shares the cockpit of the hybrid prototype with André Lotterer from Germany and Belgium's Laurens Vanthoor.

The Frenchman shares the cockpit of the 514 kW (699 PS) hybrid prototype with André Lotterer from Germany and Belgium's Laurens Vanthoor. Estre's Porsche Penske Motorsport teammate and compatriot Frédéric Makowiecki planted the No. 5 Porsche on position seven. He shares driving duties with Dane Cameron (USA) and Michael Christensen from Denmark. The two customer outfits Proton Competition and Hertz Team Jota head into the race from positions eight and nine. In the GTE Am class, the Porsche 911 RSR fielded by Iron Dames starts from pole position thanks to Sarah Bovy's (Belgium) fastest lap time.

Stuttgart. The 15-minute qualifying session for the Hypercar class began as darkness fell, with the outside temperatures remaining high at 29 degrees Celsius. The dry asphalt had reached 33 degrees Celsius. Both works-run Porsche 963 headed into the session fitted with Michelin's harder racing tyres – a compound that can also be used in the midday heat of Bahrain. The race starts at 2 pm local time and runs into the cooler night.

While Frédéric Makowiecki headed out onto the track after just over a minute, Kévin Estre waited in the pits for the first third of qualifying – and promptly set his fastest time on his third flying lap. Makowiecki, however, had to abandon his first attempt after being hampered by a rival. As a result, he only managed to turn the seventh-fastest time.

"Fourth and seventh place on the grid is not exactly the result we expected," explains Urs Kuratle, Director of Factory Racing LMDh. "While it's not that important in an 8-hour race, we're annoyed – we want to start in front of Cadillac. Our goal here in Bahrain is to beat them. The race is long and tough for the drivers, so we're well-positioned in this regard. So far, neither we nor our customers have had any technical hiccups this weekend, and that also makes us confident. If we drive a flawless race and make the right decisions like we did in Fuji, then we have a good chance."

"At the last qualifying of the 2023 WEC season, things were quite tight between P3 and P7. The drivers were only separated by a few tenths of a second," states Jonathan Diuguid, Managing Director of Porsche Penske Motorsport. "Kévin Estre put in a decent lap there. We're pleased with our good starting position for the race. The wear and performance of the tyres will be crucial. We feel well-positioned in this regard. The target is always a podium so we hope to move up the order tomorrow."

Porsche works driver Gianmaria Bruni qualified in eighth with the Porsche 963 from the Proton Competition customer team. The Italian shares the cockpit with Neel Jani from Switzerland and Harry Tincknell from the UK. The Hertz Team Jota outfit will tackle the season finale on the 5.412-kilometre

Bahrain International Circuit on Saturday from the ninth grid spot: Englishman William Stevens turned the fastest lap in the team's LMDh prototype shortly before the end of qualifying. He shares the car with works driver António Félix da Costa from Portugal and Yifei Ye. The Chinese racer is sponsored by Porsche Motorsport Asia-Pacific.

GTE Am class

After the final GTE Am qualifying in the World Endurance Championship, the fastest Porsche 911 RSR starts from pole position: with a time of 1:58.692 minutes, Sarah Bovy set the fastest time in the Iron Dames' 378 kW (515 PS) 911. The Belgian dominated the session by almost 0.3 seconds. She shares the cockpit with Denmark's Michelle Gatting and Rahel Frey from Switzerland. From next year, racing cars complying with the FIA GT3 regulations will replace the current GTE vehicles. Christian Ried posted the eighth fastest time with the Porsche fielded by his Dempsey-Proton Racing team. The German will tackle the eight-hour race from the fourth grid row in the GTE Am class. The other 911 RSR racing vehicles campaigned by the customer teams Project1-AO, GR Racing and Iron Lynx qualified in positions ten to twelve with drivers PJ Hyett (USA), Michael Wainwright (Great Britain) and Claudio Schiavoni (Italy). Only amateur racers with bronze driver status are eligible to qualify in this category.

The seventh and final race of this year's FIA WEC on the Bahrain International Circuit takes off on Saturday at 2 pm local time (noon CET). The race on the Grand Prix circuit of the island state in the Persian Gulf runs over eight hours.

Qualifying quotes from the drivers

Kévin Estre (Porsche 963 #6): "Our qualifying was good. I waited in the pits for quite some time before heading out onto the track. After two warm-up laps, I attacked but I made a few minor mistakes so I abandoned the lap and tried again. That was the right decision but it was risky: I only had this one attempt. It worked out so I'm pleased about that."

Frédéric Makowiecki (Porsche 963 #5): "I'm pretty disappointed with the result, we'd hoped for a better position. I was held up by a competitor on my flying lap, which cost me crucial time and a much better grid position. Still, sometimes such things happen in motorsport."

Gianmaria Bruni (Porsche 963 #99): "We continue to improve as a team. Qualifying showed that we are getting there step by step – even though we haven't done any testing here. Unfortunately, on my fastest lap, a rival made a mistake in front of me and simply kept driving without letting me past."

Will Stevens (Porsche 963 #38): "The changeable conditions during the free practice sessions turned this qualifying into a bit of an unknown. In the last few days, we focused primarily on our race setup, so qualifying wasn't our highest priority. I had problems with the brake balance during the session – the front wheels kept locking up. This further complicated matters. Still, I think we're well positioned for the

race and I'm looking forward to tomorrow."

Sarah Bovy (Porsche 911 RSR #85): "Securing the last pole position of the GTE Am era in the World Endurance Championship for Porsche means a lot to me – it's a very emotional moment, I even shed tears on the cool-down lap. In Bahrain, it's always very tricky finding the right balance between performance and tyre wear. We knew that we probably only had one lap where everything had to come together. My team gave me the perfect car for this."

Qualifying result

Hypercar class:
1. Buemi/Hartley/Hirakawa (CH/NZ/J), Toyota #8, 1:46.564 minutes
2. Conway/Kobayashi/Lopez (UK/J/ARG), Toyota #7, 1:47.053 minutes
3. Bamber/Lynn/Westbrook (NZ/UK/UK), Cadillac #2, 1:47.265 minutes
4. Estre/Lotterer/Vanthoor (F/D/B), Porsche 963 #6, 1:47.712 minutes
7. Cameron/Christensen/Makowiecki (USA/DK/F), Porsche 963 #5, 1:47.946 minutes
8. Bruni/Tincknell/Jani (I/UK/CH), Porsche 963 #99, 1:47.964 minutes
9. Da Costa/Ye/Stevens (P/CHN/UK), Porsche 963 #38, 1:48.555 minutes

GTE Am class:
1. Bovy/Gatting/Frey (B/DK/CH), Porsche 911 RSR #85, 1:58.692 minutes
2. Talbot/Stevenson/Fujii (AUS/UK/J), Aston Martin #777, 1:58.982 minutes
3. Al Harthy/Dinan/Eastwood (OMN/USA/IRL), Aston Martin #25, 1:59.161 minutes
8. Ried/Pedersen/Andlauer (D/DK/F), Porsche 911 RSR #77, 2:00.063 minutes
10. Hyett/Jeannette/Cairoli (USA/USA/I), Porsche 911 RSR #56, 2:00.294 minutes
11. Wainwright/Pera/Barker (UK/I/UK), Porsche 911 RSR #86, 2:01.275 minutes
12. Schiavoni/Cressoni/Picariello (I/I/B), Porsche 911 RSR #60, 2:01.547 minutes

Full results: fiawec.alkamelsystems.com

Preview

Porsche Penske Motorsport has set its sights on another podium finish at the final round of the 2023 FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC) season. The works team fields two Porsche 963 in the eight-hour race in Bahrain. The customer teams Hertz Team Jota and Proton Competition contest the top hypercar class with one hybrid prototype each. In the GTE-Am category, five partner teams will tackle the final event of the year for the last time with the Porsche 911 RSR. From 2024, the FIA WEC then switches to GT3-class vehicles.

Traditionally, the FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC) wraps up the season with a race at the Bahrain International Circuit. The Porsche Penske Motorsport team travels to the Formula 1 circuit in

the island state in the Persian Gulf with its two Porsche 963 race cars for the first time. After clinching a podium result at the previous round in Japan, the factory squad is again aiming for the podium.

“We've experienced a season of mixed fortunes, however we always gave our absolute best in the fierce competition of the hypercar class,” states Thomas Laudenbach. Looking ahead to the season finale, the Vice President of Porsche Motorsport adds: “It would be great for our entire team, the drivers and our fans if we could bring home another podium result in Bahrain. The last race in Fuji clearly underlined our recent progress. We're keen to build on this and head into the winter break with a podium finish. After the final round in Manama, we'll take part in the official FIA WEC test day with our Porsche 963. On this occasion, our new DTM champion Thomas Preining will drive the car for the first time. I'm very curious to see how he'll do.”

“I expect us to be at the front of the field in Bahrain,” explains Urs Kuratle, Director of Factory Racing LMDh. “In the intense heat of the desert, tyre management plays a major role. We've made critical progress in this respect over recent months. We're well prepared. I also feel optimistic about the fact that the Formula 1 track near Manama has hardly any bumps and the kerbs are comparatively flat – that should suit our Porsche 963. We'd like to conclude the first season with the Porsche Penske Motorsport team in the FIA WEC with another podium success.”

“We knew this first season in the World Endurance Championship would be tough and that fighting for podiums was a challenging goal given the circumstances,” comments Jonathan Diuguid, Managing Director Porsche Penske Motorsport. “The last race at Fuji was a clear demonstration of what's possible when we work the strategy to our advantage with great driving and a well-balanced Porsche 963. We plan to head to Bahrain and do the same. This time, however, we need to turn the race lead into a win and wrap up the season with a result that we all deserve for the effort put in and the level of talent we have.”

The race

The FIA WEC was first contested on the 5.412-kilometre Bahrain International Circuit in Sakhir near the Manama capital in its 2012 inaugural season. The only time the endurance race was not held here was in the 2018/2019 season. High daytime temperatures, falling temperatures at dusk and fine sand often covering the asphalt make the race a huge challenge for teams, engineers and drivers. Tyre wear is a major consideration on the Grand Prix circuit with its 15 turns. A consistent pace over a full stint is regarded as the key to success. For the eight-hour race in Bahrain, points will be multiplied by a factor of 1.5 and rounded up (38-27-23-18-15-12-9-6-3-2).

On Sunday (5 November) after the final race of the season, numerous cars will head out onto the track again, including the Porsche 963. In the two official test sessions, works driver Thomas Preining from Austria will drive the hybrid prototype for the first time. The 25-year-old from Linz was recently crowned the drivers' champion in this year's DTM in the Porsche 911 GT3 R. Porsche also won the manufacturers' championship, with Preining's Manthey-EMA squad taking home the team title in the

tradition-steeped German racing series.

Porsche customer teams and drivers

The privateer teams Proton Competition and Hertz Team Jota field one Porsche 963 each in the top hypercar class. Works driver António Félix da Costa from Portugal, Will Stevens from the UK and the Porsche Motorsport Asia-Pacific selected driver from China Yifei Ye will compete for the British team. Works driver Gianmaria Bruni from Italy joins forces with Neel Jani from Switzerland and Englishman Harry Tincknell at the wheel of Proton Competition's car. The trio last finished on the podium at the season finale of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship at Road Atlanta.

Five identical Porsche 911 RSR will tackle the GTE-Am category for the last time. From 2024, FIA GT3 cars will replace the GTE vehicles. Project1-AO again fields "Rexy", a favourite with the fans. The bright green 911 decked out in a dinosaur design will be helmed by the Americans PJ Hyett and Gunnar Jeannette and the Italian Matteo Cairoli. The yellow Iron Lynx car and the Iron Dames pink contender will add even more colour to the grid lineup. The only all-female trio Michelle Gatting (Denmark), Sarah Bovy (Belgium) and Rahel Frey (Switzerland) share the Iron Dames Porsche. The customer squads Dempsey-Proton Racing and GR Racing will campaign two racing cars.

Drivers' comments before the race

Michael Christensen (Porsche 963 #5): "A tough and busy season comes to an end with the finale in Bahrain. We've learned a lot in the past months and translated our insights from the races on both sides of the Atlantic into better performance. This makes me confident that we'll see further progress in Bahrain and have the chance to finish on the podium again. It'd be wonderful if we could finish the season third in the manufacturers' standings."

Kévin Estre (Porsche 963 #6): "I feel optimistic and hope that we can match the speed of our last race in Japan. Maybe we could even improve a little bit – that'd be great! The track characteristics in Bahrain are quite different from Fuji: It's mainly about preserving the tyres on the aggressive asphalt over a long stint. It won't be easy but it's always the key to success in Bahrain. I'd like to wrap up our difficult season with a highlight."

Will Stevens (Porsche 963 #38): "I'm really looking forward to Bahrain and the last race of the season. It's been an exciting year and we've learned a lot about the Porsche 963. Hopefully, we can continue the steep learning curve that we've seen from race to race. We want to finish 2023 with a success. I like the Bahrain circuit. It's very different from the others on the calendar: although the asphalt offers little grip, it's tough on the tyres. That always throws a nice challenge at us."

Gianmaria Bruni (Porsche 963 #99):"We want to continue our upward trend. The pace of our Porsche 963 at the IMSA race in Indianapolis and the WEC event in Fuji was great but we weren't able to reap

the rewards. That changed recently at Road Atlanta – we finished on the podium there at the last race in North America. We started the season late, but have gained a great deal of experience, data and knowledge over the past weeks. I'm confident that we'll be very strong again in Bahrain."

Overview of teams and drivers

Hypercar class (Porsche 963):
Porsche Penske Motorsport (#5): Dane Cameron (USA), Michael Christensen (DK), Frédéric Makowiecki (F)
Porsche Penske Motorsport (#6): Kévin Estre (F), André Lotterer (D), Laurens Vanthoor (B)
Hertz Team Jota (#38): António Félix da Costa (P), Will Stevens (UK), Yifei Ye (CHN)
Proton Competition (#99): Gianmaria Bruni (I), Harry Tincknell (UK), Neel Jani (CH)

GTE-Am class (Porsche 911 RSR):
Project1-AO (#56): PJ Hyett (USA), Gunnar Jeannette (USA), Matteo Cairoli (I)
Iron Lynx (#60): Claudio Schiavoni (I), Matteo Cressoni (I), Alessio Picariello (B)
Dempsey-Proton Racing (#77): Christian Ried (D), Mikkel Pedersen (DK), Julien Andlauer (F)
Iron Dames (#85): Sarah Bovy (B), Michelle Gatting (DK), Rahel Frey (CH)
GR Racing (#86): Michael Wainwright (UK), Riccardo Pera (I), Ben Barker (UK)

The schedule (local time, CET +2)

Thursday, 2 November
12:15 pm – 1:35 pm: Free practice 1
5:30 pm – 7:00 pm: Free practice 2

Friday, 3 November
Noon – 1:00 pm: Free practice 3
4:15 pm – 4:30 pm: Qualifying GTE-Am
5:05 pm – 5:20 pm: Qualifying Hypercars

Saturday, 4 November
2:00 pm – 10:00 pm: Race

MEDIA ENQUIRIES



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Video

https://newstv.porsche.com/porschevideos/264868_en_3000000.mp4

Image Sublines

Path: Porsche 963 narrowly misses the podium at the WEC season finale/Images/img_7.jpg
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Subline: Thomas Laudenbach, Vice President of Porsche Motorsport

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Title: Urs Kuratle, Director Factory Motorsport LMDh, 2023, Porsche AG
Subline: Urs Kuratle, Director of Factory Racing LMDh

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