Porsche 911 GT3 R wins in Manthey's anniversary year

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06/06/2021 The Manthey customer team has clinched its seventh outright victory at the Nürburgring 24-hour race.

The result

At the 49th edition of the endurance classic, works drivers Kévin Estre from France, Michael Christensen from Denmark and the Italian Matteo Cairoli crossed the finish line in first place at the wheel of the No. 911 Porsche 911 GT3 R. This triumph rounds off the 25th anniversary celebrations of the team from the Eifel. Manthey expanded its accomplishment as the most successful team with the seventh win at the 24-hour race. It was also the 13th victory for a Porsche racing car. The Huber Motorsport customer squad achieved an emphatic win in the Pro-Am class with a 500+PS 911. Bad weather saw the race red-flagged for over 14 hours on Saturday evening. Consequently, the total driving time was only around nine and a half hours.

“Congratulations to the Manthey team. The crew did a flawless job, the drivers gave a terrific show at the wheel of the Porsche 911 GT3 R,” said a delighted Fritz Enzinger, Vice President Porsche Motorsport. “I’m also particularly pleased about Huber Motorsport’s Pro-Am class win. Our customer teams can be very proud of their achievements. Unfortunately, the strong performance was not always rewarded accordingly, as numerous vehicles had to retire after becoming entangled in other competitors’ accidents.”

The 24-hour race took off on Saturday afternoon in difficult track conditions. Works driver Kévin Estre gave an inspired performance in the Manthey-run Porsche 911 GT3 R on the partly flooded track. Within four laps, the Frenchman had charged through the field from eleventh to the front. The identical vehicles of Rutronik Racing, Huber Motorsport, KCMG, Frikadelli Racing and Falken Motorsports made up many positions until the beginning of the 14-hour break at 9:30 pm. Thick fog was the reason for the interruption. Prior to this, Frikadelli Racing’s No. 30 entry was hampered by bad luck. First, a power steering defect had to be repaired; a little later a damaged differential – the result of a puncture – threw the car out of contention. For the final sprint over three and a half hours, the customer teams lined up the other 911 GT3 R on the grid in promising positions on Sunday morning.

At the restart shortly before midday on Sunday, it was again Kévin Estre who treated around 10,000 spectators in the grandstands to some gripping racing. At the wheel of the so-called “Grello” Porsche

911 GT3 R, the 32-year-old came from sixth place to the front of the field and handed the car off to Michael Christensen in first place. The Dane turned heads with consistently fast laps and maintained the lead in the No. 911 car. Estre successfully fended off all attacks in the last hour of racing to take the flag by a margin of 8.817 seconds. In addition to Estre, Christensen and Cairoli, Lars Kern also competes for the Manthey squad, however the experienced Porsche development driver was unable to contest the race on account of ill health.

The Falken Motorsport team battled for a podium spot to the last lap in the No. 44 car but narrowly missed out on a podium result. Germany's Sven Müller, the two Austrians Martin Ragginger and Klaus Bachler as well as Alessio Picariello from Belgium finished in fourth place. The No. 33 sister car achieved ninth place. Eighth went to the Porsche 911 GT 3 R fielded by Huber Motorsport with the German drivers Stefan Aust, Philipp Neuffer, Nico Menzel and Marco Seefried. The outfit under team boss Reinhard Huber remained in the top ten over the entire distance and even spent some laps in the lead. In the Pro-Am class, Huber Motorsport was the unchallenged leader.

"A race weekend doesn't end much better than that," states Sebastian Golz, Project Manager Porsche 911 GT3 R. "In the preparation, our customer teams drove from one victory to the next on the Nordschleife, and now this big win at the 24-hour race – simply perfect. This victory is the result of a strong team effort from Manthey, close cooperation with Porsche and open communication between all teams. Thank you to everyone!"

Porsche's other customer teams experienced less luck. The vehicles campaigned by Frikadelli Racing, KCMG and Rutronik Racing were fast over long distances but were all involved in accidents. The damages sustained forced the vehicles into the pits before the end of the 24-hour race, which ultimately only ran for only nine and a half hours due to the prolonged interruption.

Comments on the race

Nicolas Raeder (Manthey team principal): "We're incredibly proud that we managed to win the Nürburgring 24-hour race on our 25th anniversary. It was a very short but extremely intense race. We didn't compete last year and I'd almost forgotten how exciting it is. The team and the Porsche back office worked brilliantly. We didn't make any mistakes, and that gave us the leading edge in the end."

Olaf Manthey (Manthey team founder): "2006 was the most emotional victory at the 24-hour race on the Nürburgring because it was our first. But this one on our 25th anniversary, I can only say: I love the entire Manthey team and I will never stop loving them!"

Kévin Estre (Porsche 911 GT3 R #911): "First I have to catch my breath and take it all in. The race was unusually short and perhaps for this reason it was extremely intense and exhausting. Our car was really strong over the weekend and the team did a flawless job. I'm proud of the Manthey crew. It means a great deal to win in the anniversary year."

Michael Christensen (Porsche 911 GT3 R #911): "We worked our way to the front with a mammoth team effort and defended it consequently. Thank you to everyone who made this success possible. I'm incredibly proud of the team, of my teammates Michael and Kévin – and a little bit of myself too."

Matteo Cairoli (Porsche 911 GT3 R #911): "This is the most wonderful moment in my life so far! I still have tears of joy in my eyes and I have no words to describe how I feel. Kévin's drive was simply out of this world. Of course, our victory is a team effort and also Porsche's but I think Kévin actually achieved something absolutely magical in this race."

Reinhard Huber (Huber Motorsport team principal): "Last year we competed in two classes and won both. This year we did it again with our Porsche 911 GT3 R in the Pro-Am class and also won the SP7 class. Of course, you always hope for such a result, but when you see it on the official results it's just incredible."

Stefan Aust (Porsche 911 GT3 R #23): "That was a tough and very unusual race. Unfortunately, there weren't even ten hours of real racing so we amateurs couldn't contribute much. Our professional drivers and our team did a great job. We deserved this victory and we'll be celebrating accordingly."

Results for the Porsche 911 GT3 R

1. Estre/Cairoli/Christensen (F/I/DK), Manthey #911
4. Bachler/Ragginger/S. Müller/Picariello (A/A/D/B), Falken Motorsports #44
8. Neuffer/Aust/N. Menzel/Seefried (D/D/D/D), Huber Motorsport #23
9. Bachler/Werner/Preining/Arnold (A/D/A/D), Falken Motorsports #33
22. Pilet/Makowiecki/Martin/Olsen (F/F/B/N), Frikadelli Racing #31
63. Imperatori/Burdon/Liberati/Holzer (CH/AUS/I/D), KCMG #18
DNF. Dumas/Andlauer/L. Vanthoor/T. Müller (F/F/B/D), Rutronik #3
DNF. Jaminet/Tandy/Bamber/Campbell (F/GB/NZ/AUS), Frikadelli Racing #30

Interim report 1

Taking up the race from eleventh in the so-called "Grello" run by the Manthey customer team, the Frenchman worked his way to the top within just four laps. After the first hours of racing, the No. 911 car is comfortably holding its own among the top group.

The identical 911s fielded by Huber Motorsport and KCMG also made impressive progress in the early phase. Germany's Nico Menzel overtook numerous vehicles during his first stint, with his compatriot Marco Seefried even reaching fourth overall in the No. 23 car. Thanks to this performance, Huber Motorsport now holds a clear lead in the Pro-Am class. Joshua Burdon brought the No. 18 entry of the Asian customer team KCMG up to sixth place.

Bad luck, however, has hampered the Frikadelli Racing squad. Australia's Matt Campbell made up numerous places during the first hour of racing before handing the No. 30 car off to Earl Bamber. The New Zealander had just become used to the tricky conditions on the drying Nordschleife when he had to return to the pits with damaged power steering. The repairs cost the crew four laps. A little later, a puncture caused the car to spin. The No. 31 sister car is still running among the top 10, despite a spin, as is Rutronik Racing's Porsche 911 GT3 R. The two vehicles campaigned by Falken Motorsports are currently chasing down the leading pack.

"First of all, we can say that after our mediocre performance in the wet qualifying session, we made the right choices based on our analyses. In the extremely wet early phase, the cars were very fast, and all of our customer teams made up a lot of ground," concludes Sebastian Golz, Project Manager Porsche 911 GT3 R. "So far we've seen that all vehicles are maintaining a steady and strong pace. That makes us very confident for the next few hours. The fact that Frikadelli Racing's number 30 car had to pit for repairs was a bit of a setback."

Drivers' comments on the race so far

Kévin Estre (Porsche 911 GT3 R #911): "We opted against wet tyres at the start – and that decision was spot on. Our Porsche 911 GT3 R was simply fantastic in the initial phase so I was able to reach the front pretty quickly. But then it got very, very difficult. The first part of the track was literally underwater but the second half was dry. That was incredibly stressful mentally, but it turned out really well."

Nico Menzel (Porsche 911 GT3 R #23): "That was an exciting and exhausting start to the race. We went out on slicks but the rain became too heavy and we had to pit early to change the tyres. Afterwards, the track was so wet in some areas that it was simply a matter of keeping the car on the road. I managed that well. At times we actually matched the pace of the frontrunners. We're leading the Pro-Am category and are doing well. It can continue like this."

Josh Burdon (Porsche 911 GT3 R #18): "I openly admit: When it started to rain on some parts of the track before the start, I got a bit nervous. But that quickly disappeared once the race got underway. Our team made the right tyre choice. By the time I came into my first pit stop, I'd made up about ten positions, and then a couple more in the second stint. At the end of my drive, I handed the car over to my teammate in fifth place. That's not too bad considering that we started from P26."

Qualifying

The Rutronik customer team will take up the Nürburgring 24-hour race from the ninth grid spot with the Porsche 911 GT3 R. Under extremely challenging conditions on a drenched track, Porsche Young Professional Julien Andlauer set the fastest time of all 911 drivers. The 21-year-old Frenchman lapped the 25.378-kilometre circuit in 10:14.558 minutes. The identical vehicles fielded by Manthey (#911) and Frikadelli Racing (#31) head into the popular endurance race in the Eifel from positions eleven and

twelve on Saturday afternoon at 3:30 pm.

The five Porsche 911 GT3 R campaigned by Frikadelli Racing, Manthey, Huber Motorsport and Rutronik had already earned a nomination for the final shootout for the top-20 grid spots thanks to their strong performances in the qualifying race and at two rounds of the Nürburgring Endurance Series (NLS; formerly VLN). The customer squads KCMG and Falken Motorsports still had a chance in the Top-Qualifying 1 to secure a place in the individual time trials. However, their mission was foiled shortly before heavy rain and a thunderstorm set in. The number 18 car starts from P26, with Falken's two 911 heading into the race from positions 28 and 29.

The decisive second part of the Top Qualifying was postponed by 30 minutes due to the torrential rain. With a lot of water on the track, the drivers struggled with a lack of grip and aquaplaning. While Andlauer turned a clean lap at the wheel of the No. 3 car, Kévin Estre spun during his second and final flying lap in the Adenauer forest and hit the barriers. The Frenchman managed to return to the pits with minor damages to his car. Matt Campbell also experienced misfortune. In the Bergwerk section, the Australian works driver ended up in the barriers with Frikadelli Racing's No. 3 car and had to abandon his qualifying attempt, while his teammate Dennis Olsen from Norway qualified the sister car on P12. Nico Menzel planted Huber Motorsport's 911 on position 15.

"It's a sobering result from our perspective," concludes Sebastian Golz, Project Manager Porsche 911 GT3 R. "On the wet track, we were too far off the frontrunners with all of our customer cars. We need to take a close look at the data to see why we didn't get the tyres up to the optimal operating window under these conditions. We'll now delve deeper to find a solution before the race starts so that we'll be competitive even if the track is wet."

Drivers' comments on the qualifying

Julien Andlauer (Porsche 911 GT3 R #3): "That was the first time I've ever driven on the Nordschleife in rain, so I had no idea what to expect over the long lap. I cautiously felt my way and gained more and more confidence in the car. I wanted to pick up the pace on the second lap but I was hampered by traffic. All in all, I'm very happy because I was the fastest driver in a Porsche 911 GT3 R. I would never have expected that."

Kévin Estre (Porsche 911 GT3 R #911): "That was anything but easy. On my first hot lap, everyone was aquaplaning and I got stuck behind an Audi that sprayed up a lot of water. The visibility was incredibly bad. On the second lap, I was on track to improve my time but then I spun. The car sustained minor damages. P11 is not ideal, but it's not the end of the world either. Our car will definitely be strong in the race."

Dennis Olsen (Porsche 911 GT3 R #31): "That was no fun at all. It was a tough fight to even keep the car on the track. When braking for the corners, the vehicle kept sliding straight ahead. Every corner was a nail-biter. Still, I managed to turn my laps without hitting anything. I simply didn't want to take any

unnecessary risks because it wouldn't be good to leave a pile of scrap metal behind. Position twelve is okay. We'll go all-out in the race."

Grid positions of the Porsche 911 GT3 R

9. Dumas/Andlauer/L. Vanthoor/T. Müller (F/F/B/D), Rutronik #3
11. Estre/Cairoli/Christensen/Kern (F/I/DK/D), Manthey #911
12. Pilet/Makowiecki/Martin/Olsen (F/F/B/N), Frikadelli Racing #31
15. Neuffer/Aust/N. Menzel/Seefried (D/D/D/D), Huber Motorsport #23
18. Jaminet/Tandy/Bamber/Campbell (F/GB/NZ/AUS), Frikadelli Racing #30
26. Imperatori/Burdon/Liberati/Holzer (CH/AUS/I/D), KCMG #18
28. Bachler/Werner/Preining/Arnold (A/D/A/D), Falken Motorsports #33
29. Bachler/Ragginger/S. Müller/Picariello (A/A/D/B), Falken Motorsports #44

The preview

Porsche customer teams tackle the Nürburgring 24-hour race with a large contingent of around 38 vehicles in ten different classes. The famed Eifel marathon has been contested since 1970 and is considered one of the world's toughest motor racing challenges. No less than eight Porsche 911 GT3 R fielded by six squads take on the top SP9 class to fight for overall victory at the long-distance classic, which gets underway on 5 June at 3:30 pm (CEST). One lap of the racetrack consists of a 25.378-kilometre combination of the Nordschleife and Grand Prix circuit. The odds look good for a Porsche to clinch the 13th win at the Nürburgring. The customer team Frikadelli Racing has clearly underlined the huge potential of the 500+hp GT3 racer from Weissach with a one-two result at the qualification race. The squad from Barweiler, a village just a stone's throw from the Nürburgring, campaigns two vehicles helmed by three works drivers from the Porsche squad as well as five other Nordschleife specialists.

At the 49th edition of the tradition-steeped race, Falken Motorsports also fields a pair of 911 GT3 R, with a driver line-up that includes factory driver Thomas Preining from Austria. The customer teams Huber Motorsport, Rutronik Racing and KCMG each run one GT3 vehicle from Weissach. With six outright victories to its credit, Manthey-Racing is the most successful outfit at the 24-hour marathon in Germany's hilly Eifel region and competes with the famous yellow and green "Grello" vehicle with the starting number 911. Works driver Kévin Estre from France is one of the drivers for the squad, which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year.

Porsche makes up the largest contingent on the grid

Every year, the 24-hour race on the 25.378-kilometre combination of the Nordschleife and Grand Prix circuit is a highlight on the Eifel racing calendar. This year, around 125 cars in 24 class divisions have registered. "With almost 40 vehicles on this year's grid line-up, Porsche is once again the most strongly

represented brand. This once again emphasises the trust that customers have in our racing cars and our service," says Michael Dreiser, Director Motorsport Sales. "We're absolutely delighted and I'd like to thank them all very much for this. The performance and reliability of the cars are important factors on the way to possible success on the Nordschleife – and the rest is up to the drivers and teams. I'm certain that our customers are well prepared for the tough task ahead."

"The season couldn't have started better: three wins from three races," states Sebastian Golz, Project Manager Porsche 911 GT3 R, referring to the first two rounds of the Nürburgring Endurance Series (NLS; known as VLN until 2019) as well as the qualification race for the 24-hour classic. "The results clearly show that the work invested by the teams, drivers and Porsche is heading in the right direction. Still, we can't afford to rest on our laurels. On the contrary: With extra test kilometres and a lot of creative ideas, we travel to the Eifel feeling positive. In conjunction with our experienced customer teams, we'll do everything we can to continue our winning streak this season."

Porsche's history at the 24-hour race

Porsche's success story at the Eifel classic, which has been held since 1970, has so far included twelve overall victories. In 1976, Fritz Müller, Herbert Hechler and Karl-Heinz Quirin clinched the first victory for the Stuttgart sports car manufacturer at the wheel of a Porsche 911 Carrera 3.0. In the two following years, the 911 Carrera RS proved unbeatable. In 1988, Dören Motorsport was the fastest with a 911 Carrera RSR. Five years later, Konrad Motorsport triumphed. In 2000, Phoenix Racing won with a 911 GT3 R, with Manthey-Racing starting its unprecedented winning streak soon after. From 2006 to 2009, the team from Meuspath near the Nürburgring secured four outright victories in a row. Two more victories followed in 2011 and 2018. Thanks to six overall wins, Manthey-Racing is the most successful squad at the Nürburgring 24-hour race.

An overview of the Porsche teams and drivers (SP9 class)

Rutronik Racing (#3) – Dumas/Andlauer/L. Vanthoor/T. Müller (F/F/B/D)

KCMG (#18) – Imperatori/Burdon/Liberati/Holzer (CH/AUS/I/D)

Huber Motorsport (#23) – Neuffer/Aust/N. Menzel/Seefried (D/D/D/D)

Frikadelli Racing Team (#30) – Jaminet/Tandy/Bamber/Campbell (F/GB/NZ/AUS)

Frikadelli Racing Team (#31) – Pilet/Makowiecki/Martin/Olsen (F/F/B/N)

Falken Motorsports (#33) – Bachler/Werner/Preining/Arnold (A/D/A/D)

Falken Motorsports (#44) – Bachler/Ragginger/S. Müller/Picariello (A/A/D/B)

Manthey-Racing (#911) – Estre/Cairoli/Christensen/Kern (F/I/DK/D)

The schedule (all times CEST)

Thursday, 3 June
12:30 – 14:00 pm – Qualifying 1
20:30 – 23:30 pm – Qualifying 2

Friday, 4 June
15:30 – 16:30 pm – Qualifying 3
18:30 – 20:50 pm – Top-Qualifying 1+2

Saturday, 5 June
11:30 am – 12:30 pm – Warmup
15:30 pm – Start 24-hour race

Sunday, 6 June
15:30 pm – Finish 24-hour race

TV and internet coverage of the 24-hour race

Live coverage and straightforward timing of all sessions are shown on the website www.24h-rennen.de

Drivers' comments before the race

Julien Andlauer (Porsche 911 GT3 R #3): "I've been racing on the Nordschleife for three years now, but I still lack the experience of many of my teammates. I'm very familiar with the Porsche 911 GT3 R, but I've never driven it at the 24-hour Eifel classic before. It'll be exciting! At the two NLS events and the qualifying race, we collected a lot of data that will help us immensely with the setup for this big highlight. There's huge excitement, but there's also respect. I'm still a rookie in this race."

Matt Campbell (Porsche 911 GT3 R #30): "I'm thrilled that I'm sitting in one of Frikadelli Racing's extremely well-crewed cars this year. The squad has prepared meticulously for the upcoming 24-hour race and has achieved great successes on the Nordschleife. The car is very well set up and we're very happy with how things are panning out. Now we want to tap the full potential of the car, the team and the drivers at the highlight of the year."

Frédéric Makowiecki (Porsche 911 GT3 R #31): "It's one of the most beautiful and toughest races on the planet, and I always look forward to it. We're heading to the 24-hour race very well prepared this year. The two previous outings on the Nordschleife ran perfectly. Frikadelli scored one-two results twice

– and we're keen to repeat this on the first weekend in June. I don't like to talk about luck when it comes to motor racing, because that's something you can never rely on in our sport. Still, you need a bit of luck if you want to win on the Nordschleife. A lot can happen in 24 hours on this difficult track, especially with changeable weather conditions and in a field with cars going different speeds. It's sometimes out of the hands of the teams and drivers. In this special case, it helps to have Lady Luck on your side."

Thomas Preining (Porsche 911 GT3 R #33): "It's always full on at the Nürburgring 24-hour race – and I love it! We prepared well at the NLS races and in the subsequent qualifying race and we're heading into the weekend feeling very confident. Still, compared to the competition, the lead-up to the 24-hour race is more labour-intensive for us. We're the only team running on Falken tyres, so we've had to be responsible for finding the right compounds. That has been our focus over the past few weeks. I expect a very close fight in the top SP9 class."

Kévin Estre (Porsche 911 GT3 R #911): "At last another 24-hour race at the Nürburgring! I couldn't compete last year because Porsche didn't send all of the Le Mans drivers to the Eifel. That makes me all the more excited for this year's event. Our preparation with Manthey-Racing's Grello went well. We won a race in the endurance series at the Nürburgring and were consistently fast at the other events as well. The competition is really strong – especially when I look at the other Porsche 911 GT3 R in the top class..."

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Video

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