

WEC: Porsche 919 Hybrids second and third in Silverstone

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16/04/2017 Despite a well calculated but significant aerodynamic disadvantage, Porsche fought for the victory with the 919 Hybrid on Sunday in Silverstone. Richard Lietz and Frédéric Makowiecki planted the 911 RSR with the starting number 91 on the third grid spot in the GTE-Pro class.

After six hours of racing in the FIA World Endurance Championship season-opener on the challenging British Grand Prix circuit, the trio of Earl Bamber (NZ)/Timo Bernhard (DE)/Brendon Hartley (NZ) crossed the finish line just 6.173 seconds behind the winning Toyota of Sébastien Buemi (CH)/Anthony Davidson (GB)/Kazuki Nakajima (JP). Buemi had clawed in Hartley in a breath taking final stint with only seven laps to go. The second Porsche 919 Hybrid of reigning world champion Neel Jani (CH), André Lotterer (DE) and Nick Tandy (GB) finished third.

The first race of the 2017 WEC was accompanied by typical cool and changeable British weather with

rather low ambient and track temperatures of around 11 degrees Celsius and occasional light rain. However, this did not hamper the atmosphere with 50,200 fans attending over the weekend. The Porsche LMP Team – Le Mans winner and world champion in 2015 as well as in 2016 – leads the manufacturers' classification after the first of nine championship rounds on 33 points with Toyota second (26.5). In the drivers' standings, the Porsche crews are currently second and third.

How the race went for car number 1:
Jani starts three on the 27-car grid but slips behind the sister car in the first part of the opening lap. He pits after 28 laps for fuel only and continues in P4. At the second regular pit stop (fuel and tyres) after 57 laps, Tandy takes over and resumes in P4. He is up to third on lap 64 ahead of Toyota #7 which appears to have an issue. After 86 laps, Tandy comes in for fuel only and afterwards attacks the #8 Toyota. When rain sets in, Tandy stops again only three laps later (after 89 laps) and takes intermediate tyres. Having completed 98 laps, Tandy hands over to Lotterer who continues on slicks in P3 behind the leading #8 Toyota and the #2 sister Porsche. On lap 117, the #7 Toyota crashes causing a safety car period that Lotterer uses for refuelling. With 141 race laps completed, the tyre performance has dropped significantly and the team decide to stop early and let Tandy take over again. At his final stop for fuel after 171 laps, the Brit only changes the two left hand tyres – used ones from qualifying and comes home third.

How the race went for car number 2:
Hartley moves up from his fourth place start to third in the opening corners on the first lap. At the end of lap 29 he refuels and resumes in P3, consistently matching the Toyota lap times. After 59 laps, Hartley hands over to Bernhard, the German rejoining second and now ahead of Toyota #7. After 87 laps, Bernhard initially comes in for fuel only but on short notice, has intermediate tyres fitted. He rejoins the race in P2. Bamber jumps into the car 99 laps into the race, the car now on slicks again and continues in P2. During the safety car period triggered by the #7 Toyota crash, Bamber comes in for refuelling after 117 laps. On 149 laps, Hartley takes over again to chase the leading Toyota. When Hartley pits for his final refuelling after 178 laps, he leads the race by almost one minute. This and a perfect service from the pit crew enables the Kiwi to rejoin with a lead of eight seconds. It is still half an hour before the chequered flag and the Toyota not only benefits from better aerodynamics due to the high downforce configuration but also is on fresher tyres. On lap 190 of 197, and in light drizzle, Buemi squeezes himself through on the inside of Hartley's car to take the race win.

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