

Motorsports Sep 2, 2016

Fiesta Mexicana with the 919 Hybrid

Porsche has enjoyed a busy and trouble free beginning to the Mexico race weekend. The fifth round of the FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC) provides entirely new challenges.



The six-hour race at the multi-million population metropolis is the fifth of nine rounds of the 2016 WEC. The 4.303 kilometre long track lies 2,250 metres above sea level, which means thin air for men and machines. Furthermore, September is one of the rainiest months in the region. At the end of every lap at the "Autódromo Hermanos Rodríguez" the drivers arrive at a right-left-hander to dive into a baseball stadium that can accommodate 26,000 spectators – fiesta Mexicana on steep grandstands.

Having won in Silverstone, Le Mans and at the Nürburgring, the Porsche Team leads the manufacturers' world championship with 164 points ahead of Audi (129) and Toyota (97). In the drivers' world championship, the trio of Romain Dumas (FR), Neel Jani (CH) and Marc Lieb (DE) is leading. The Le Mans winners have 106 points to their tally, the second placed Audi trio has a total of 73 points. The Porsche sister car's crew of Timo Bernhard (DE), Brendon Hartley (NZ) and Mark Webber (AU) currently ranks eighth with a score of 28.5 points. The reigning World Champions were unlucky in the first three rounds, but struck back by winning the six-hour race at the Nürburgring in July.

Thirty-two cars are registered for the venue between the Sierra Nevada and the twin volcanoes of Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuati. The field of prototypes and sports cars is divided into four classes. The Porsche 919 Hybrid belongs to the highest category of the class one Le Mans prototypes (LMP1). In the LMP2 class four Mexican drivers are competing: the brothers Ricardo and Roberto González jr as well as Alfonso Diaz Guerra and Luis Diaz.

Facts and figures

The six-hour race in Mexico City is the fifth out of nine rounds of the 2016 WEC and starts on September 3rd at 13:30 hrs local time.

At normal race speed (no safety car) the Porsche 919 Hybrid is due for refuelling after every 40 laps.

Refuelling and changing tyres may only be made sequentially, not at the same time. Only four mechanics may work simultaneously when changing tyres and may use only one wheel gun. That takes a lot longer than in Formula One, for example. The drivers are normally only changed when new tyres are needed.

A set of Michelin slick tyres should last two fuel tank fills.

The WEC efficiency regulations limit the amount of energy that can be used per lap. In Mexico City the Porsche 919 Hybrid can use 3.916 megajoule of electrical power from energy recovery systems and 1.101 kilograms or 1.506 litres of petrol.

These different types of tyres can be used: three different compounds of slick tyres for dry conditions, a hybrid tyre (no profile either but softer cover) for mixed conditions and wet weather tyres. 8.5 sets of dry weather tyres are available per car for qualifying and the race.

Inspiring for more than 60 years: Porsche motorsport in Mexico

When Porsche enters the 919 Hybrid into the fifth round of the WEC this also means a return. Back in 1954, a class win at the famous road race "Carrera Panamericana" proved to be groundbreaking for the company. From the late 50ies until the early 70ies, the Mexican brothers, Ricardo and Pedro Rodríguez, celebrated successes with Porsche. Up to the 90ies, the Porsche 962 C raced at the "Autódromo Hermanos Rodríguez".

Carrera Panamericana:

Hans Herrmann is exhausted when he brings home the Porsche 550 Spyder to the finish of the Carrera Panamericana in November 1954. The German has crossed Mexico from the South to the North. 3,077 kilometres lie behind him and the agile mid engine car. His class win in the up 1.5 litre capacity category at the sixth round of the then sports car world championship is considered as the breakthrough for the Porsche brand on the American continent. Only 36 seconds behind him Jaroslav Juhan finishes with the sister car. The German and the Prague born Guatemalan had battled for days, and in the overall result they are classified third and fourth. Ferry Porsche's idea of making the brand's name and quality famous by successful racing now also works transatlantic.

Competing at the Carrera Panamericana was a very special venture. This road race needed no more than five stagings (1950 to 1954) to become a motorsport legend and was banned because of its high risks. Since 1952, Porsche had taken part in that monstrous ride. The inspiration from these events in Mexico still lasts: Ferry Porsche named all sports cars that had the winning four camshaft engines the "Car-rera" (Spanish for "race"). The Carrera Panamericana also inspired Porsche for the name of the four-door Gran Turismo Panamera, which has been produced since 2009.

The Rodríguez brothers:

The braveness and speed of the brothers Ricardo and Pedro Rodríguez remains unforgotten. When the two young Mexicans enter the racing scene respect quickly changes to awe. From 1957, Ricardo Rodríguez successfully races the Porsche 550 Spyder and 718 RSK in Central, South and North America. In 1961, as one of the youngest drivers ever, he enters the automobile world championship (old name for Formula One). On November 1st in 1962, only 20 years old, he tragically dies in a Lotus during a practice session for the Mexican Grand Prix.

Fate doesn't leave his brother Pedro much time either. He wins a total of 15 sports car races, including the 24 hours of Daytona in 1970 and 1971 at the wheel of a Porsche 917 KH in the John Wyer team with the famous Gulf livery. In 1970 he becomes sports car world champion for Porsche with the 917. In May 1971, on the way to take victory at the 1000-kilometre race of Spa-Francorchamps (BE) with partner Jackie Oliver, he reaches an average speed of over 249 km/h. This is still the fastest sports car race ever. Only one week before he dies on July 11 in 1971, in a Ferrari at the Norisring in Germany, he wins the 1000-kilometre race at Zeltweg (AT), after being at the wheel of the 917 for 960 kilometres of the distance. In their home country the brothers become national heroes.

Porsche 962 C in Mexico:

In 1989 the FIA decides to cut the distances of all sports car world championship rounds except for Le Mans. Now Group C has 480 kilometre races, including one in Mexico City. Meanwhile the successful Porsche 962 C is in the hands of customer teams. In 1989 and 1990 drivers such as Thomas Lopez, Jonathan Palmer, Bernd Schneider, Hans-Joachim Stuck and Bob Wollek race at the "Autódromo Hermanos Rodríguez", which has been named after the famous brothers since 1979. Stuck remembers: "Of course this was the old circuit, but the crowd was enthusiastic about sports cars. It is a super decision to go back to Mexico. A six-hour race with proto-types like the Porsche 919 Hybrid is just the right thing there."

WEC debut at Mexico City: Quotes

"The race in Mexico is a huge challenge for drivers as well as also in terms of technology and logistics," said Fritz Enzinger, Vice President LMP1. "But we're very pleased about having the new destination on the calendar. This circuit breathes motorsport history and the successes of the brothers Pedro and Ricardo Rodríguez, after whom the track is named, remains unforgotten at Porsche. It was outstanding when Pedro Rodríguez became sports car world champion with the 917 in 1970. For our team it's not long ago that every circuit was new territory to us, we're only in our third year. I have full faith in the team to manage the special tasks that come from the altitude and get a little closer to our goal of the title defence."

Team Principal Andreas Seidl added: "In the technical preparation for the Mexican race a chain of what is out of the ordinary comes into play. First the altitude. Compared to normally aspirated engines, our turbo charged engine loses less power, but cooling is an issue because of the thin air with less oxygen. This goes for the powertrain as well as for the brakes. Necessarily drag is a lot lower. This makes it difficult to provide the downforce you want in the corners, but on the 1.2 kilometre straight we will see high top speeds. The circuit has a high full throttle percentage and the grip level will increase significantly unless it rains, which is something to expect as well."

Please find more pre-race quotes in the press release.

Porsche 919 Hybrid

The 919 was developed in Weissach and produces a system power of over 900 HP (662 kW). Its combustion engine is a futuristic downsizing motor: the very compact two-litre V4 turbocharged petrol engine drives the rear axle with almost 500 HP (368 kW). Two different energy recovery systems – brake energy from the front and exhaust energy – feed a lithium ion battery that, on command, passes on the energy to an E machine to power the front axle with an extra boost of over 400 HP (294 kW). At the Nürburgring the new aerodynamic package for high downforce passed its baptism. It is the 919's third aero spec this season and, necessarily, its final one, because the regulations don't allow for more in the exercise of cost cutting. Nevertheless, there is always some freedom in set-up for different circuits and various climatic conditions. For safety, the rules also permit extra cooling in Mexico.

WEC: Eurosport-Livestream

The six-hour race in Mexico City is the fifth out of nine rounds of the 2016 WEC and starts on September 3rd at 13:30 hrs local time. Europort offers a free of charge Livestream of the six-hour race in Mexico City on his [website](#).

Eurosport 1 streams a race summary on Sunday, 4th September from 9:30 to 10:45 hrs.

The official WEC App can be downloaded free of charge in its basic version and can be extended (not free of charge) by a live stream. Several live features, such as on-board cameras, timing and GPS tracking, are implemented in the Porsche Motorsport App (free of charge) and at porsche.com/fiawec.

All points' standings: <http://www.fiawec.com/courses/classification.html>

All results: <http://fiawec.alkamelsystems.com>

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Porsche sets the fastest lap of the day in Mexico City, Press release, 09/02/2016, Porsche AG

Fiesta Mexicana: taking the Porsche 919 Hybrid into a baseball stadium, Press release, 08/29/2016, Porsche AG

Porsche motorsport in Mexico – inspiring for more than 60 years, Press release, 08/24/2016, Porsche AG

Videos

<https://player.vimeo.com/video/160098933>

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