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WEC: Porsche extends its lead

Porsche has come third and fifth with its two 919 Hybrids in a thrilling six-hour race at the Fuji International Speedway. The race at a glance.



How the race went in the LMP1 class

Porsche defended its lead in both, the manufacturers' and drivers' classifications, at the seventh out of nine rounds of the FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC). Toyota achieved a victory on home soil. After 244 laps all three manufacturers engaged in the top category LMP1 were within 18 seconds.

For quite a while Timo Bernhard (DE), Brendon Hartley (NZ) and Mark Webber (AU) had chances to win the race; in the end they finished third. The reigning world champions had started from second place on the grid. This year's Le Mans winners and current championship leaders, Romain Dumas (FR), Neel Jani (CH) and Marc Lieb (DE), had started from sixth position. They were unhappy with the car's balance for some of the time and came fifth. Because their closest rivals in the drivers' championship took more points than them, their advantage has shrunk to 23 points.

In the manufacturers' standings, Porsche (263 points) has increased its lead over Audi (204). Toyota follows with 174 points and there are two more six-hour races to come. The race at the foot of Mount Fuji was held in constantly dry conditions at ambient temperatures of around 20 degrees Celsius.

How the race went for car number 1:

For a long time start-driver Mark Webber holds P2 behind the number 8 Audi. In lap 21 he lets his former Formula One colleague Kamui Kobayashi pass in his faster number 6 Toyota. The order at the top is: number 8 Audi ahead of the number 6 Toyota and the number 1 Porsche. This doesn't change for most of the race, including five stops for refuelling and driver and tyre changes. After 36 laps Webber hands over to Timo Bernhard, after 73 laps Brendon Hartley jumps in. After 110 laps once again Webber gets behind the wheel, followed by Bernhard at the end of lap 147. As clouds gather in the sky the track temperature drops and the number 1 Porsche gets closer to the second placed Toyota.

On lap 156 Bernhard manages to overtake Stéphane Sarrazin in his Toyota who conter-attacks immediately. One lap later Bernhard snatches P2 and afterwards closes the gap to the leading Audi. After 183 laps Hartley takes over the number 1 car. After his stop he

rejoins the race in P3 behind the number 6 car. A great duel evolves between the Kiwi and Kobayashi who change positions several times. Driving in second position, the Japanese driver refuels for the last time without changing tyres, while Hartley does change tyres after 220 laps and hands over to Webber. The Australian struggles from balance problems towards the end and can no longer fight for the race win. He brings the car home in third position.

How the race went for car number 2:

Romain Dumas improves temporarily from sixth to fifth at the start but is back to P6 after lap one. When the number 7 Audi gets in trouble on lap 15, the Frenchman is promoted to fifth. He reports a loose rear end of the car. After 36 laps Neel Jani takes over for a double stint. Initially he can close the gap but after the next tyre change after 73 laps he faces balance problems: tyre pick up that sticks inside the front bodywork disturbs the aerodynamics.

Therefore, the front bodywork gets changed at the next stop after 110 laps. Marc Lieb continues driving, at the end of lap 147 it is Dumas again. After 183 laps Jani takes over for the final stints. The Swiss driver stops for fuel after 220 laps. Improving a position isn't within reach anymore, he brings home the car in fifth.

How the race went in the GT class

Porsche customer teams are continuing on their successful path in the Sports Car World Endurance Championship WEC. After Abu Dhabi Proton Racing's GTE-Am class win in Mexico City, KCMG went on to clinch second in Austin and secured another podium spot on Sunday in Fuji, Japan: Porsche works driver Wolf Henzler (Germany), Christian Ried (Germany) and Joel Camathias (Switzerland) crossed the finish line in third in the 470 hp Porsche 911 fielded by the team from Hong Kong. Rounding off the fine performance from Porsche customer squads on the 4.563-kilometre racetrack at the foot of Mount Fuji, Gulf Racing claimed fourth place with Abu Dhabi Proton Racing finishing on fifth.



Joel Camathias, Christian Ried and Wolf Henzler (l-r) from the KCMG team

In the fiercely contested GTE-Pro class, the Porsche works drivers Richard Lietz (Austria) and Michael Christensen (Denmark) were unable to join in the fight for the top places. The pair ultimately brought home seventh place in the 911 RSR run by Dempsey Proton Racing.

Race results

GTE-Pro class

1. Priaulx/Tincknell (USA/GB/GB), Ford GT, 212 laps
2. Mücke/Pla (D/F), Ford GT, 212
3. Bruni/Calado (I/GB), Ferrari 488 GTE, 212
4. Rigon/Bird (I/GB), Ferrari 488 GTE, 212

5. Sörensen/Thiim (DK/DK), Aston Martin, 211
6. Stanaway/Turner (NZ/GB), Aston Martin, 211
7. Christensen/Lietz (D/A), Porsche 911 RSR, 210

GTE-Am class

1. Lamy/Dalla Lana/Lauda (P/CAN/A), Aston Martin, 208 laps
2. Collard/Perrodo/Aguiar (F/F/P), Ferrari F458 Italia, 207
3. Ried/Henzler/Camathias (D/D/CH), Porsche 911 RSR, 206
4. Wainwright/Carroll/Barker (GB/GB/GB), Porsche 911 RSR, 205
5. Al Qubaisi/Long/Heinemeier Hansson (UAE/F/DK), Porsche 911 RSR, 200
6. Yamagishi/Ragues/Taylor (J/F/USA), Chevrolet Corvette, 172

Quotes after race

Fritz Enzinger, Vice President LMP1: "Since Le Mans we have won all the WEC races. Today it is a podium finish, but after an exciting race. In the end only seconds decided the first three places. Congratulations to Toyota for their win on home soil. Respect to Audi for a strong performance as well. We were able to improve our position in the manufacturers' standings. Now we head to the final stages of the season, we are looking forward to the last two races of the season."

Andreas Seidl, Team Principal: "Congratulations to Toyota on a well deserved victory. We fell a little short today for getting a better position. Thanks to a strong performance from the three drivers and the entire team, halfway through the race our number 1 car was able to catch up to the two front runners. But with our last set of tyres we ultimately didn't have the potential to fight for the race win. Our number 2 car had a difficult race and for some time could not go the speed of the leading cars. We will do everything to analyse why this was and make sure it doesn't happen again at the next race in Shanghai. Nevertheless we have managed to increase our manufacturers' championship lead in Fuji, which is the track that suits the characteristics of our 919 the least. In the drivers' championship the number 1 crew still has a comfortable lead."

More quotes in the press releases in "downloads".

The Sports Car World Championship WEC

Sports prototypes and GT vehicles contest the Sports Car World Endurance Championship (WEC) in four classes: LMP1 (eg. Porsche 919 Hybrid), LMP2, LMGTE-Pro (eg. 911 RSR) and LMGTE-Am (eg. 911 RSR). They all compete together in one race but are classified separately.

Round eight of the Sports Car World Endurance Championship WEC will be contested in Shanghai/China on 6 November.

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Porsche 919 Hybrid extends manufacturers' championship lead in Japan, press release, 10/16/2016, Porsche AG
Another podium for Porsche customer team KCMG with third, press release, 10/16/2016, Porsche AG

Videos

<https://player.vimeo.com/video/187528127>

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