



Three Porsche 911 qualify for the Hyperpole at Le Mans

08/06/2022 In the GTE-Am category, the No. 77 car of Dempsey-Proton Racing made it into the top six. Only the six fastest vehicles from each of the two GTE classes are eligible to compete for the best grid positions this Thursday from 8 pm (CEST).

Qualifying

The 911 RSR in which Michael Fassbender celebrates his Le Mans debut has not qualified for the shootout. Fassbender had an accident during the qualifying but was uninjured. "A few drops of rain fell, the red flag came out and then it began to pour – to find the ideal time window for a flying lap under these conditions was anything but easy," states Alexander Stehlig, Director Factory Motorsport FIA WEC. "Our goal was to qualify both cars for the Hyperpole. We succeeded and so we're satisfied. A look at the timesheet suggests that it's close between all manufacturers. That's exactly what we'd hoped for."

At the beginning of the qualifying session, Makowiecki in the No. 91 car and his brand colleague Vanthoor in the No. 92 sister car initially waited in the pits for a few minutes. The pit crew then sent the two vehicles out on the track at the most opportune time so that both drivers encountered as little traffic as possible and could get the most out of their ca. 378 kW (515 PS) 911. Setting a time of 3:50.999 minutes, Vanthoor was just 0.383 seconds faster than Makowiecki. Due to the wet track in the second half of the 60-minute session, it was impossible to improve the times.

In the GTE-Am class, Britain's Harry Tincknell planted the No. 77 fielded by Dempsey-Proton Racing on P5 with a time of 3:54.224 minutes – and thus made it into the Hyperpole. The grid positions for all other Porsche 911 RSR in the amateur category have already been determined. GR Racing's 911 takes up the race from position seven, with the two Project 1 cars right behind. The 911 entries campaigned by WeatherTech Racing and Hardpoint achieved positions eleven and twelve, with the two Proton cars on the 18th and 21st grid spots.

This Thursday, two free practice sessions are on the programme plus the Hyperpole, in which the battle for the best grid positions is decided in all four classes. On Friday, there will be no further races on the 13.626-kilometre Circuit des 24 Heures, instead, the drivers will take centre stage at the traditional drivers' parade in downtown Le Mans. The 90th edition of the 24-hour classic starts on Saturday at 4 pm (CEST).

Drivers' impressions after the qualifying

Laurens Vanthoor (Porsche 911 RSR #92): "It was a really good lap, and I hit it lucky. Right before turning onto the long straights, a couple of LMP2 cars overtook me, which gave me a nice slipstream. That certainly helped in achieving a decent top speed. Overall, it was a clean drive, so we deserve to be on the provisional pole position."

Frédéric Makowiecki (Porsche 911 RSR #91): "I was able to set a pretty good lap time, which was enough to get into the Hyperpole. At the same time, we gained further insight into how to optimise our car for the long 24-hour race. Our engineers have great ideas and are doing a fantastic job."

Harry Tincknell (Porsche 911 RSR #77): "For us, it was all about getting into the Hyperpole – and we did it. Our Porsche 911 RSR felt better than ever in qualifying. The team has moved in the right direction on tweaking the setup. Because the pace is so high on this track, the little things make a big difference. If the shock absorbers are altered even slightly, or the rear wing is adjusted by one degree, it's immediately noticeable. We're well-positioned. I think we'll be able to put in a strong lap in the Hyperpole. However, it's much more important to finish the race well."

Qualifying result

GTE-Pro class

1. Christensen/Estre/Vanthoor (DK/F/B), Porsche 911 RSR #92, 3:50.999 minutes
2. Garcia/Taylor/Catsburg (E/USA/NL), Corvette C8.R #63, 3:51.132 minutes
3. Bruni/Lietz/Makowiecki (I/A/F), Porsche 911 RSR #91, 3:51.382 minutes
4. Tandy/Milner/Sims (GB/USA/GB), Corvette C8.R #64, 3:51.491 minutes
5. Calado/Pier Guidi/Serra (GB/I/BR), Ferrari 488 GTE #51, 3:51.502 minutes
6. Fuoco/Molina/Rigon (I/E/I), Ferrari 488 GTE #52, 3:51.614 minutes
7. Fraga/Bird/Van Gisbergen (BR/GB/NZ), Ferrari 488 GTE #74, 3:54.116 minutes

GTE-Am class

1. Dalla Lana/Pittard/Thiim (CDN/GB/DK), Aston Martin #98, 3:52.559 minutes
2. Kimura/Schandorff/Jensen (J/DK/DK), Ferrari 488 GTE #57, 3:53.489 minutes
3. Cassidy/Flohr/Castellacci (NZ/CH/I), Ferrari 488 GTE #54, 3:53.690 minutes
5. Ried/Priaulx/Tincknell (D/GB/GB), Porsche 911 RSR #77, 3:54.224 minutes
7. Wainwright/Barker/Pera (GB/GB/I), Porsche 911 RSR #86, 3:54.323 minutes
8. Iribe/Barnicoat/Millroy (USA/GB/GB), Porsche 911 RSR #56, 3:54.510 minutes
9. Leutwiler/Cairolì/Pedersen (CH/I/DK), Porsche 911 RSR #46, 3:54.533 minutes
11. MacNeil/Andlauer/Merrill (USA/F/USA), Porsche 911 RSR #79, 3:54.912 minutes
12. Haryanto/Picariello/Rump (RI/B/EST), Porsche 911 RSR #99, 3:55.076 minutes
18. Poordad/Heylen/Root (USA/B/USA), Porsche 911 RSR #88, 3:56.516 minutes
21. Campbell/Fassbender/Robichon (AUS/IRL/CDN), Porsche 911 RSR #93, 4:07.907 minutes

Test Day

On the timesheets, the No. 91 and 92 cars occupied positions three and six in the notoriously competitive GTE-Pro class. Eight other racers from Weissach will tackle the GTE-Am category. The fastest Porsche in that class was the No. 93 entry from Proton Competition with Hollywood star Michael Fassbender as one of the driver crew. "In the morning, damage to the No. 92 car and an accident involving the sister car cost us a lot of time but things ran more smoothly after that," stated Alexander Stehlig, Director Factory Motorsport FIA WEC. "We turned a lot of laps in the afternoon and gained important data and insights into the tyres and the setup. Our engineers will now take a close look and, with the crew, make further improvements to our two Porsche 911 RSR for the first practice sessions and the qualifying next Wednesday."

The four-hour test in the morning did not go to plan for the Porsche GT Team. After four laps on the 13.626-kilometre Circuit des 24 Heures, Michael Christensen had to park the No. 92 car in the Tertre Rouge corner. The team found damage to the driveshaft. After about an hour spent on repairs, the vehicle was able to rejoin the action. At that point, the No. 91 sister car came into the pits. After Gianmaria Bruni had slid into the tyre wall at the Mulsanne corner, several components on the front of the car had to be replaced. During the first session, the two 911 RSR only managed to turn a total of 41 laps.

In the afternoon, the works team completed an extensive programme in slightly overcast conditions and

temperatures around 20 degrees Celsius to prepare for the final Le Mans outing in the GTE-Pro class. In the second session, Bruni and his teammates Richard Lietz from Austria and Frédéric Makowiecki from France lapped the legendary circuit 52 times. Christensen, Kévin Estre (France) and Laurens Vanthoor (Belgium) turned 50 laps in the No. 92 car. The main focus for the Porsche GT Team was to optimise the setup and test the tyres.

On the only day for testing before the start of the race weekend at the Sarthe, the actor and film producer Michael Fassbender ramped up preparations for his first attempt at the 24 Hours of Le Mans. The Irish-German and his teammates Matt Campbell (Australia) and Zacharie Robichon (Canada) concluded the test drive at the wheel of Proton Competition's Porsche 911 RSR seventh in the GTE-Am category. This made the No. 93 entry with its eye-catching green paintwork the fastest 911 in the amateur class. The identical cars fielded by Hardpoint (#99) and Dempsey-Proton Racing (#77) concluded the test as the second and third-best Porsche in positions ten and eleven.

The Porsche GT Team and the customer squads now have two days to prepare the 911 RSR for the first official sessions of the 2022 Le Mans 24 Hours. The first free practice will be held this coming Wednesday from 2 pm to 5 pm. The 90th edition of the endurance classic takes off on Saturday 11 June at 4 pm (CEST).

Drivers' comments after the pre-test

Richard Lietz (Porsche 911 RSR #91): "All in all, it was a good day, although we made a couple of mistakes. Hopefully that's now sorted for the race week. We've found the setup for our Porsche 911 RSR and the vehicle balance is okay. The car is as good as it was in the past two years. Whether it'll be enough to win the class this time remains to be seen. That's not only up to us."

Laurens Vanthoor (Porsche 911 RSR #92): "We had a minor technical defect early in the morning. The team worked quickly to get the car back on the track. In the afternoon we ticked off many items on our test programme without any problems. Still, it's not yet possible to gauge where we stand compared to our rivals. That will become clear over the course of the race week. I anticipate that the grip conditions on the track will change significantly in the coming days."

Michael Fassbender (Porsche 911 RSR #93): "It took me a while to get up to speed today. At first, I was overwhelmed by the sheer history of this legendary track. My second stint went a bit better but I slowed again when we changed the setup. So it was a bit of a rollercoaster. I certainly need to pick up the pace a bit, but for now, I got the car through the test day in one piece. I'll definitely improve once I get a better feel for the quirks of the circuit."

Harry Tincknell (Porsche 911 RSR #77): "We divided the test work in our team among the five cars. Each crew had different tasks. We finished in the top 10 in both sessions with our number 77 car. This is because we're full of confidence after our recent class win in Belgium and also because we all have a lot more experience in the Porsche 911 RSR on this special Le Mans circuit. I think we're heading into

the most important race week of the year well prepared.”

Pre-test results

GTE-Pro class

1. Tandy/Milner/Sims (GB/USA/GB), Corvette C8.R #64, 3:54.001 minutes
2. Fuoco/Molina/Rigon (I/E/I), Ferrari 488 GTE #52, 3:54.037 minutes
3. Bruni/Lietz/Makowiecki (I/A/F), Porsche 911 RSR #91, 3:54.263 minutes
4. Calado/Pier Guidi/Serra (GB/I/BR), Ferrari 488 GTE #51, 3:54.395 minutes
5. Fraga/Bird/Van Gisbergen (BR/GB/NZ), Ferrari 488 GTE #74, 3:54.437 minutes
6. Christensen/Estre/Vanthoor (DK/F/B), Porsche 911 RSR #92, 3:54.444 minutes
7. Garcia/Taylor/Catsburg (E/USA/NL), Corvette C8.R #63, 3:54.504 minutes

GTE-Am class

1. Kimura/Schandorff/Jensen (J/DK/DK), Ferrari 488 GTE #57, 3:54.827 minutes
2. V. d. Zande/Kvamme/Hart (NL/USA/USA), Ferrari 488 GTE #66, 3:55.241 minutes
3. Dezoteux/Ragues/Aubry (F/F/F), Ferrari 488 GTE #71, 3:55.349 minutes
6. Campbell/Fassbender/Robichon (AUS/IRL/CDN), Porsche 911 RSR #93, 3:55.747 minutes
10. Haryanto/Picariello/Rump (RI/B/EST), Porsche 911 RSR #99, 3:55.780 minutes
11. Ried/Priaulx/Tincknell (D/GB/GB), Porsche 911 RSR #77, 3:55.850 minutes
17. Wainwright/Barker/Pera (GB/GB/I), Porsche 911 RSR #86, 3:56.376 minutes
18. MacNeil/Andlauer/Merrill (USA/F/USA), Porsche 911 RSR #79, 3:56.489 minutes
20. Iribe/Barnicoat/Millroy (USA/GB/GB), Porsche 911 RSR #56, 3:56.670 minutes
21. Leutwiler/Cairolì/Pedersen (CH/I/DK), Porsche 911 RSR #46, 3:57.049 minutes
22. Poordad/Heylen/Root (USA/B/USA), Porsche 911 RSR #88, 3:58.353 minutes

The preview

The endurance classic on the 13.626-kilometre Circuit des 24 Heures in the west of France will be contested for the 90th time and represents round three of the FIA World Endurance Championship WEC. The Porsche GT Team will field two ca. 378 kW (515 PS) 911s. In the GTE-Am class, five customer squads campaign a total of eight 911 RSR. After careful preparation as part of the Porsche Racing Experience and two years in the European Le Mans Series (ELMS), Hollywood star Michael Fassbender celebrates his Le Mans debut in the No. 93 entry. He has documented his personal “Road to Le Mans” journey in his own YouTube series: www.porsche.com/RoadToLeMans. With 19 outright victories and 108 class wins, Porsche is by far the most successful manufacturer in the world's most important sports car race.

“We’re tackling the 24 Hours of Le Mans well prepared, with huge determination and as the leaders of the WEC rankings,” says Thomas Laudenbach, Vice President Porsche Motorsport. “This is the last time the works team will contest the tradition-steeped classic with the two 911 RSR. We still have a score

to settle there: Since the debut in 2019, our cars have won on almost all racetracks on the FIA WEC calendar – only the GTE-Pro class win at Le Mans is missing from our list of successes. We want to change this. There's no doubt that our RSR, the six works drivers and the team are capable of this. And our customer squads certainly have good chances to succeed in the 23-strong GT3-Am class field."

Since its first race outing in the FIA WEC, the 2019-generation Porsche 911 RSR has notched up seven class wins from 16 races. The cars from Weissach have set pole position 14 times in the GTE-Pro category. In 2018, the predecessor model achieved a sensational one-two result at Le Mans.

"We've seen how strong our cars are at the previous FIA WEC races. We've learned a lot at Le Mans over the last two years. Now we want to implement these findings and bring home the long-awaited class win," explains Alexander Stehlig, Director Factory Motorsport FIA WEC. "At the tests in Aragon, we prepared well for the highlight of the year. Plus, we have very experienced trios in our two works cars. They're very familiar with the quirks of this special racetrack and the challenges of the endurance classic. Still, the pre-test in the week prior to the race is hugely important again this year: During these tests, we'll confirm the direction that we've taken in our preparations. There's one thing I'm particularly looking forward to: The fans are back and the great events like the public vehicle inspections and drivers' parade are on the programme again. It'll be a wonderful celebration for spectators, teams and drivers."

The event on the 13.626-kilometre Circuit des 24 Heures at Le Mans is extremely popular with motor racing fans and marks the highlight of the FIA World Endurance Championship. The storied circuit south of the city with its 150,000 inhabitants consists mainly of public roads. Normally, hundreds of trucks and cars drive over the legendary Mulsanne straight every day on their way from Le Mans to Tours. Treacherous ruts present special challenges, especially in the rain.

After extensive restrictions due to the coronavirus pandemic, the 90th edition of the Le Mans 24-hour race will be contested in front of a large crowd. Up to 250,000 fans are expected at the Sarthe on the second weekend in June. For the first time since 2019, spectators will once again be treated to special events such the public technical scrutineering, the drivers' parade and the pit-lane tour with concerts and other highlights. Sunday 5 June is reserved for the so-called pre-tests on the Circuit des 24 Heures – the only chance for teams and drivers to familiarise themselves with the special characteristics of the circuit before the race week kicks off.

The Porsche GT Team drivers

Austrian Richard Lietz and Gianmaria Bruni from Italy share the No. 91 Porsche and, like last year, will receive support from Frenchman Frédéric Makowiecki. The No. 92 sister car is crewed by the GTE-Pro World Championship leaders Kévin Estre (France) and Michael Christensen (Denmark) as well as Belgium's Laurens Vanthoor. At the 2018 Le Mans race, the trio clinched a class victory with the 911 decked out in the historic "Pink Pig" livery. Ahead of the most important and longest race of the year, Porsche currently leads the manufacturers' classification.

The customer teams

The German customer squad Dempsey-Proton Racing fields a pair of Porsche 911 RSR vehicles. The outfit based in Baden-Württemberg will run two identical vehicles entered under the names WeatherTech Racing and Proton Competition. At his Le Mans debut, Hollywood star Michael Fassbender shares the car with works driver Matt Campbell from Australia and the reigning IMSA GTD champion from Canada Zacharie Robichon, who also tackles the endurance classic for the first time. The Project 1 customer team campaigns two 911, with Hardpoint and GR Racing each bringing one RSR to the highlight of the year.

Overview of teams and drivers

GTE-Pro class

Porsche GT Team #91 – Lietz (A) / Bruni (I) / Makowiecki (F)
 Porsche GT Team #92 – Estre (F) / Christensen (DK) / Vanthoor (B)

GTE-Am class

Team Project 1 #46 – Cairoli (I) / Pedersen (DK) / Leutwiler (CH)
 Team Project 1 #56 – Iribe (USA) / Millroy (GB) / Barnicoat (GB)
 Dempsey-Proton Racing #77 – Ried (D) / Tincknell (GB) / Priaux (GB)
 WeatherTech Racing #79 – MacNeil (USA) / Andlauer (F) / Merrill (USA)
 GR Racing #86 – Wainwright (GB) / Pera (I) / Barker (GB)
 Dempsey-Proton Racing #88 – Poordad (USA) / Root (USA) / Heylen (B)
 Proton Competition #93 – Fassbender (IRL) / Campbell (AUS) / Robichon (CDN)
 Hardpoint Motorsport #99 – Picariello (B) / Haryanto (RI) / Rump (EST)

Drivers' comments before the race

Richard Lietz (Porsche 911 RSR #91): "The biggest race of the year is finally here once again. It'll be the last factory outing for the Porsche 911 RSR at Le Mans. I very much hope that, unlike in the past two years, we'll have close competition that gives us realistic chances of winning. Unfortunately, we're not alone in that hope. One thing is always guaranteed in this race – it's never easy. But of course, we're more than willing to accept this challenge."

Gianmaria Bruni (Porsche 911 RSR #91): "After the disappointments of the past two years, we finally want to get back to the top. We have everything it takes to make that happen. Motivation is at an all-time high because everyone wants to crown the final outing of our factory RSR in Le Mans with a class win. I'm looking forward to driving the first laps, but I'm just as excited for the huge crowds that are

expected. The event thrives on big spectator numbers. The return to normality after the peak of the coronavirus pandemic is good for everyone: fans, drivers, teams, manufacturers and last but certainly not least, the sport as a whole.”

Frédéric Makowiecki (Porsche 911 RSR #91): “Absolutely every racing driver associates a home race with a range of emotions – that is especially true for a Frenchman at Le Mans. Friends and family are there, so there’s a lot of support. This gives us an enormous boost and a lot of motivation. At the 24-hour classic, the atmosphere continues to build as the race week progresses. The tension and anticipation can be felt everywhere just before the start. It all comes to a culmination when we cross the finish line on Sunday. I really want to win my home race and I’ll keep trying until it finally happens.”

Kévin Estre (Porsche 911 RSR #92): “Le Mans is always the biggest race of the season. In the past two years, we haven’t achieved the results that do our 911 RSR justice. We are highly motivated to change this at the car’s final Le Mans start in the GTE-pro class. The first two races of this year’s FIA WEC season went well for us: we’re leading the championship. We’re bringing everything we have to the table to achieve a class victory. But at Le Mans, you always have to be prepared for anything, because the track has its own special characteristics.”

Michael Christensen (Porsche 911 RSR #92): “The track has a unique character. Top speed on the long straights is crucial for overall performance. There are five such passages at Le Mans. On the famous Mulsanne straight, we drivers put our foot to the floor for a very long time, only to brake at the very last moment for the chicanes and the Mulsanne corner – these situations determine whether the lap time is good or bad. However, for us drivers, the Porsche corners are more challenging and exciting: It’s great fun driving through them in the 911 RSR every year.”

Laurens Vanthoor (Porsche 911 RSR #92): “For me, Le Mans is the most important race of the year. It’s terrific to be a part of the No. 92 crew again. I get along very well with Kevin and Michael; we won the class together in 2018. I’ve also known our engineers for a very long time. We make a great team. I have a good feeling about this race. We will definitely have a chance to be up the front but there is still a long way to go with a lot of work ahead of us. I’m ready and I’m really looking forward to it.”

The schedule (all times CEST)

Friday, 3 June

10:00 am – 7:00 pm: Technical scrutineering (city centre)

Saturday, 4 June

10:00 am – 3:00 pm: Technical scrutineering (city centre)

2:00 pm – 3:00 pm: Technical scrutineering 911 RSR #91 and #92

Sunday, 5 June

09:00 am – 1:00 pm: Pre-test session 1

2:00 pm – 6:00 pm: Pre-test session 2

Tuesday, 7 June

2:00 pm – 5:00 pm: Pit walk

Wednesday, 8 June

2:00 pm – 5:00 pm: Free practice 1

7:00 pm – 8:00 pm: Qualifying

10:00 pm – midnight: Free practice 2

Thursday, 9 June

3:00 pm – 6:00 pm: Free practice 3

8:00 pm – 8:30 pm: Hyperpole

10:00 pm – midnight: Free practice 4

Friday, 10 June

5:00 pm – 7:00 pm: Drivers' parade (city centre)

Saturday, 11 June

10:30 am – 10:45 am: Warm-up

4:00 pm: Start 90th running of the 24 Hours of Le Mans

Sunday, 12 June

4:00 pm: Finish 90th running of the 24 Hours of Le Mans

MEDIA ENQUIRIES



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Video

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