Porsche Penske Motorsport gains important insights

04/06/2023 Porsche Penske Motorsport used the so-called pre-test at the 24 Hours of Le Mans for intensive work on the set-up of the three Porsche 963. On the 13.626-kilometre Circuit des 24 Heures in France, the hybrid prototypes in special livery completed many consistent laps. The LMDh customer squad Hertz Team Jota also impressed during the total six hours of driving at Le Mans. In the GTE Am class, the eight Porsche 911 RSR cars from five customer teams reeled off an extensive programme.

At the official test day in Le Mans, the Porsche Penske Motorsport factory team intensively adapted to the special features of the 13.626-kilometer Circuit des 24 Heures. In the two three-hour sessions, the three Porsche 963 completed a total of 142 laps (1,934.9 kilometres) in bright sunshine and temperatures of up to 27 degrees Celsius. In addition to set-up work, tyre testing was the focus of the only testing opportunity at La Sarthe. The #75 car was in the pits for around two hours in the afternoon because a component of the braking system had to be replaced. Meanwhile, Belgian Laurens Vanthoor at the wheel of the No. 6 Porsche 963 set the second fastest lap time of the entire test day in 3:29.648 minutes. The identical over 500 kW (680 PS) strong hybrid prototype of the customer squad Hertz Team Jota circled the legendary circuit in western France 55 times. In the GTE Am category, the eight

Porsche 911 RSRs fielded by five privateer teams covered a total distance of 6,213 kilometres.

"Our lap times may look good, but the results from the test don't mean too much," sums up Urs Kuratle, Director Factory Motorsport LMDh. "The most important thing is that all the cars, including the customer car from Hertz Team Jota, are in one piece. We were able to reel off plenty of laps and learned a lot about the special track at Le Mans, on which we are otherwise never able to test. We generated important data. I'm also very pleased with how smoothly the processes worked in our big team with three cars. It was a successful day for us overall."

"It was very important that we were able to put our team structure, all the tools and all the equipment to the test during this day," summarises Jonathan Diuguid. The Managing Director Porsche Penske Motorsport adds: "We have a third car on the grid here in addition to our two cars from the FIA WEC. The effort is enormous. Our No. 75 was in the pits for some time to replace a component but, overall, we still completed a lot of laps. It was a productive day in which we gained important knowledge, especially in the afternoon in higher temperatures."

There will be no driving at all at Le Mans on Monday (June 6). On Tuesday, too, the 62 cars entered in total will remain in the garages. However, the drivers will be available to fans both at the track and in the city centre as part of autograph sessions. The Circuit des 24 Heures, which consists of around 70 percent public roads, will not be reopened for the first practice sessions until Wednesday.

“In Le Mans, our three Porsche 963 will be truly eye-catching at the 75th anniversary of our brand and the 100th anniversary of the 24-hour race. I do not doubt that this design will immediately win the hearts of fans,” says a delighted Thomas Laudenbach. “We embraced the vehicle designs from Porsche’s rich and illustrious history at Le Mans,” adds the Vice President of Porsche Motorsport. “The 917 as a pink “pig” and the “hippie car” from 1970 – these liveries have made racing history and are still popular today. With our special design on the three Porsche 963, we’re continuing this great tradition at Le Mans."

Drivers' comments after the test day

Dane Cameron (Porsche 963 #5): “It was an important and good test day for the entire team and for our No. 5 crew. I've been looking forward to this moment for months: finally driving the Porsche 963 at Le Mans. I enjoyed it very much. In the morning the track offered little grip, but that improved noticeably as the day went on. We completed our planned programme without mayor interruptions. Now it's time for analysis. The basis is already very good. We're now building on that."

André Lotterer (Porsche 963 #6): “In the first few laps we weren't entirely happy with the balance of the car. But we subsequently made noticeable progress. The drivability got better and better. We're at Le Mans with the Porsche 963 for the very first time. Now we've generated important data that we'll analyse intensively in the coming days. It was nice that our car worked without any technical issues

throughout the day. It was also important to get to know the current condition of the track. I have the impression that the bumps have become more extreme in some places - for example in the Indianapolis area."

Felipe Nasr (Porsche 963 #75): "Unfortunately, an issue with the braking system cost us some time. We found a solution and ended up with good lap times. For me as a driver, it was a great feeling to be back at Le Mans and behind the wheel of the Porsche 963. It really is a unique experience to drive such a car on this great track. We may not have been able to complete our entire programme with our starting number 75, but we're still satisfied with the day."

Yifei Ye (Porsche 963 #38): "Our car is running really well on this very special track. Our main aim today was to collect important data. We succeeded in doing that very well. The focus of our work wasn't on achieving the fastest possible lap times. We're learning all the time. Now we have to analyse the findings from today and translate this into further progress. For me, driving on the Le Mans track is always associated with great emotions because I lived in this city for some time as a teenager."

Ben Barker (Porsche 911 RSR #86): "It was good that we were able to experience the changes to the track today. The curbs in the Tertre Rouge area are new, and there's also new tarmac in some sections. Le Mans is so different from other tracks, so every driver always needs a few laps to get back into the rhythm. That's exactly what we did today. So far, our car feels really good, it was a perfect test day."

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