



## Countdown to Le Mans 24 Hours

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Official 2013 Le Mans 24H poster

As the countdown to the jewel of the motorsport calendar rolls relentlessly on, we look at the fall-outs and the fall-ins for the Le Mans 24 Hours race in June.

With the date of the 24 Hour race having moved forward one week at the request of the FIA to accommodate the Formula 1 Grand Prix of Jersey (USA), there have been many new developments on the racing scene. But before we talk about the race to beat all races, the *24 Heures du Mans*, there is the small matter of a six hour race at Silverstone (14 April) in a little more than two weeks time, to be closely followed by the 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps just three weeks later, on 4 May, and the Le Mans Test Day which is on 9 June.

Porsche tell us that the testing of their new Manthey Racing prepared 991 RSR is now complete and this will make its debut at the Silverstone WEC round in a little more than two weeks. Although some spy shots are doing the rounds, both Porsche and that wily and experienced racing warrior, Olaf Manthey, are giving nothing away ahead of the car's launch next month.



Just revealed (!!), the 2013 Porsche 911 RSR: (l-r) Jörg Bergmeister, Patrick Pilet, Timo Bernhard, Romain Dumas, Richard Lietz, Marc Lieb

You can expect fireworks come race day as Manthey has declared that he is excited and encouraged by the progress that the Weissach engineers have made. Up until this point, Manthey Racing has always enjoyed support from the factory, but as a full works team, this



opens up all sorts of possibilities. Manthey has had a number of his top technicians embedded in the depths of the Weissach bunkers where they have had a direct hand in the development of the new car. Raeder brothers Nicolas (Race Engineer) and Martin (Organisation) are part of the works team as is Jacques Hendrikse who has long-term experience in GT motorsport specifically with Schnitzer-BMW and previously the Opel DTM Program. Joining them at Weissach are ex-Formula 1 engineer Mike Krack as well as BMW DTM man Andreas Seidl.

Driving the #92 Porsche 911 RSR are well-known Porsche works drivers Marc Lieb and Richard Lietz. At the first three rounds of the season, these being Silverstone, Spa and the Le Mans 24 hour race, they will be accompanied by fellow works driver Romain Dumas. The works team behind the wheel of the #91 car will be Joerg Bergmeister and Patrick Pilet who will be joined by Timo Bernhard. For the remainder of the season, Dumas and Bernhard will not be driving these two cars.



The 2013 LMP2 #36 Alpine-Renault

The Renault-Nissan Alliance, established in March 1999, has proved useful in the resurrection of the Alpine brand which makes a welcome return to the French 24-Hour race after a 35-year absence. For its return to Le Mans, Alpine has joined forces with Signatech. The Philippe Sinault-run team will enter a LM P2 prototype with an Alpine chassis powered by a 500hp Nissan engine with six-speed sequential X-Trac gearbox, in the five rounds of the ELMS, but the highlight of the season will obviously be the Le Mans 24 Hours. The drivers will be Pierre Ragues, Nelson Panciatici and Tristan Gommendy. During the four hour morning session on the second day of the Le Castellet Tests, the Signatech Alpine Nissan setting the fastest time for the two-day pre-season tests...the sign of things to come?



The #97 Aston Martin Racing Vantage V8 GTE Pro

The first withdrawal from the Le Mans 24 Hour is the Extreme Speed Motorsports Ferrari



GTE Am. The Scott Sharp-owned team has switched to P2 in the American Le Mans Series. The move makes way for the first reserve car in the GTE ranks, the #98 Aston Martin Racing Vantage V8, to be entered in the GTE Pro class bringing to five the number of Aston Martins in this, the 90<sup>th</sup> running of the 24-hour race...a fitting tribute in the British manufacturer's centenary year.



The 2012 #40 Oreca 03-Judd Race Performance here with drivers: Frey, Hirschi, Meichtry in the Le Mans 24H

The Sébastien Loeb Racing entered Oreca 03-Nissan was the second withdrawal from this year's Le Mans 24 Hours. The 9-time World Rally Champion was to be entered in the LM P2 class, but this slot will now be taken by the Race Performance Oreca 03-Judd.



The #2 Audi R18 e-tron quattro (Audi Sport Team Joest) finished second in the 2013 12-Hours of Sebring with drivers: Lucas di Grassi/Tom Kristensen/Allan McNish

Up at the sharp end of the grid, Audi fired the first shots at Sebring (16 March) when the Audi factory #1 R18 e-tron quattro (Marcel Fassler/Benoit Treluyer/Oliver Jarvis) and #2 R18 e-tron quattro (Tom Kristensen/Allan McNish/Lucas di Grassi) took the first two places.

The Toyota TS030 Hybrid is yet to turn a wheel in anger this year and the Cologne-based team have been ominously quiet so far this season, and as they say, 'still waters run deep', so expect the #7 and #8 Toyotas to come out fighting.



Toyota Hybrid Racing TS030 undergoing tests at the Paul Ricard circuit in France, 19-22 February 2013

2013 WEC Calendar



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DATE	RACE	COUNTRY
14 April	6 Hours of Silverstone	England (GBR)
4 May	6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps	Belgium (BEL)
22-23 June	24 Heures du Mans	France (FRA)
1 Sept.	6 Hours of Sao Paulo	Brazil (BRA)
22 Sept.	6 Hours of Circuit of the Americas	United States (USA)
20 Oct.	6 Hours of Fuji	Japan (JPN)
10 Nov.	6 Hours of Shanghai	China (CHN)
30 Nov.	6 Hours of Bahrain	Bahrain (BHR)

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