



Porsche – where to now after Le Mans?

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At the ready, Porsche 919 Hybrid #18, #17 and #19 lined up against the wall prior to the start of the formation lap at the 2015 Le Mans 24H

Porsche's win in the [Le Mans 24-Hour race](#) on 14 June 2015 was like a dream come true for the team, but to have dared to imagine occupying the top two positions was almost a dream too far. But sometimes dreams do come true, and for the Stuttgart manufacturer that is exactly what happened, with the third Porsche 919 Hybrid finishing in fifth place.



Earl Bamber, Nico Hulkenberg and Nick Tandy were placed third on the grid in the #19 Porsche 919 Hybrid for the start of the 2015 Le Mans 24H. Little did they know that 24 hours later they would make history

After the first three races of the 2015 season, this result places them at the top of the leaderboard in the championship standings with 140 points to Audi's 124 points, and well ahead of Toyota's 71 points. Although Audi won the first two races, Le Mans counts for double points, and with Porsche finishing second in the first two races their Le Mans result enabled them to overtake Audi on points.



Mechanic at the ready in the #18 Porsche garage at Le Mans 24H 2015

But if one looks back at Le Mans' victors, after eight wins by Audi, Peugeot gate crashed the party in 2008 and wrestled the crown away from Audi, only for the Ingolstadt team to bounce back and take the title another five times on the trot. So don't expect Audi to take this year's defeat lying down, they will certainly take the fight to Porsche at the next race at the Nürburgring on 30 August.



The #19 Porsche 919 Hybrid of Bamber/Hulkenberg/Tandy leads the #8 Audi through the Esses during the 2015 Le Mans 24H

So the question now is, will Porsche be able to stand up to the Audi juggernaut? The answer to this question may lie in the regulations governing the sport. In an effort to bring the LMP1 Hybrid cars and the LMP1 private entries closer together in terms of performance, they have reduced fuel tank capacity for petrol cars by almost a full litre (from 68.3 to 67.4 litres). The fuel capacity of the diesel cars has been reduced by a half a litre (from 54.2 to 53.7 litres). The result of this fiddling would favour Audi over the petrol-engined Porsches and Toyotas, as the latter two would need to refuel more often over the full race distance than they had done in the past. While the Hybrid cars all have the same minimum weight, the Porsches and Toyotas must carry a heavier fuel load in order to generate their maximum power output, placing them at a slight disadvantage relative to the Audis.



Here the #17 Porsche 919 Hybrid driven by Timo Bernhard, Mark Webber, Brendon Hartley, negotiates the Dunlop Chicane during FP1 on Wednesday afternoon



Neel Jani set the fastest qualifying time in the #18 Porsche 919 Hybrid that he shared with Romain Dumas and Marc Lieb. Here the car waits to be allowed out on track during on the Wednesday evening qualifying when Jani set that record lap time

Finally, the FIA Endurance Committee has seen that the Porsche 911 RSRs have been penalised for long enough. Back in 2014, the RSRs finished first and second in the first race of the season at Silverstone, only for them to receive a 25kg weight penalty for the remainder of the season. What one must remember is that the two Porsches are good in the wet, and through the dry spells of that race, Aston Martin and Ferrari moved ahead of the Porsches. As soon as the rain came, the Porsches went into the lead and it was at that point that the race was stopped due to the standing water on the circuit, which meant that the Porsches finished one-two in the GTE PRO class.

Following Le Mans, the Porsches have now had their weight penalty removed and their



weight comes in at 30kg less than the rest of the class at 1215kg, while the Aston Martin is 20kg down on the 1245kg base weight for the class at 1225kg. The Porsches have had their air restrictor size increased 0.7mm from 28.6mm to 29.3mm, the biggest in the class, but they are still running with a 25mm gurney to Aston's 15mm. The height of the rear wing for the Porsche is 100mm below roof height, which is the class base line, however the Aston Martins have a +100mm adjustment making their wing level with the roof. The Corvettes similarly have a +75mm adjustment, giving both the Aston Martins and Corvettes higher downforce. Dial all of these numbers into an equation, and taking into account that the Porsches have the smallest engine capacity at 4-litres, and one can see how much of a disadvantage they have had over the last two seasons.



The #91 Porsche 911 RSR pits for a driver change at around 8:45 pm. Christensen exits and Bergmeister climbs in for his stint

The FIA/ACO tries to level the playing field with GTE cars by means of the Balance of



Performance mechanism, while in the LMP1 class it is called Equivalence of Technology. You can call it what you want, but it all amounts to the same thing, increasing or reducing the performance of one competitor to be equal to the rest of the class. The result is that as engineers seek to beat the system, so the authorities have to keep moving the goal posts to make sure everyone is more or less the same. I am not sure there is any sense in that, because the whole aim of racing is to produce a race car that beats the competition because you have implemented some new innovation, or found a way of doing something to make your car go faster...only for the regulators to bring you back to square one.



Pit lane markers for the #17, #18 and #19 Porsche 919 Hybrid team at the 2015 Le Mans 24H

Just so that you don't think your eyes are deceiving you, there will only be two Porsche 919 Hybrids at all the remaining WEC races this year. Both cars will again be in white, the coloured versions were only planned for Le Mans. The drivers at the Nürburgring will once



again be Mark Webber/Brendon Hartley/Timo Bernhard in the #17 car, with Neel Jani/Marc Lieb/Romain Dumas in the #18 car.



The # 91 Team Manthey Porsche 911 RSR driven by Jörg Bergmeister, Michael Christensen and Richard Lietz speeds down the Mulsanne Straight during practice

However, looking ahead to Round 4 at the Nürburgring at the end of the month, the Porsches in the GTE PRO class might just be in with a fighting chance, while the Le Mans-winning 919 Hybrids have been pegged back a notch in the LMP1 class. Our man, John Mountney, will be trackside at this race, so we'll be able to bring you up to the minute reports on the race. Be sure to tune in and watch the 6 Hours of the Nürburgring on 30 August, it is sure to be a fascinating contest.



The #91 Team Manthey Porsche 911 RSR of Bergmeister/Christensen/Lietz is fully prepared and ready on the Friday evening before the race

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