



## Spa 6-Hour Recap

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Timo Bernhard, Mark Webber and Brendon Hartley had two punctures in the Spa 6-Hours on 7 May 2016, which put paid to their chances of a strong finish in the #1 Porsche 919 Hybrid

Well, we all know who won the Spa 6-Hours last weekend, but looking a little deeper, one can see the progress or otherwise that the 2016 cars have made over the previous year's model. Our Spa 6-Hour Recap will show more than just a comparison as mentioned, useful though this is. But we will even go so far as to stick our necks out and try to predict a Le Mans winner!



Lucas di Grassi, Loic Duval and Oliver Jarvis drove a steady race to take the chequered flag in the 6-Hours of Spa on 7 May 2016



Although Anthony Davidson, Sebastien Buemi and Kazuki Nakajima drove impressively and led for a good deal of the race early on, the #5 Toyota TS050 Hybrid retired with mechanical trouble in the Spa 6-Hours on 7 May 2016

In 2015, Bernhard/Webber/Hartley qualified their #17 Porsche 919 on pole with a time of 1:54.767, while this year, a time of 1:55.793 secured pole place for the same trio in their #1 car. That is a full second slower this year, while the quickest Audi this year was more than two seconds off their time from last year. Toyota, it seems, made the most progress here being just two tenths slower than their 2015 time. Even the G-Drive car was a fraction slower this year in the LMP2 class. It seems as though the FIA/ACO officials had their calculators out when they were allocating the Balance of Performance (BoP) specs in the GTE PRO class, as most teams were also a second a lap slower in that class too this year, compared with last year.



The #1 Porsche 919 Hybrid of Timo Bernhard, Mark Webber and Brendon Hartley was the fastest car over the race weekend at the 6-Hours of Spa 2016

So at the sharp end of the grid this year it was the two Porsches (last year three Porsches) followed by a Toyota which no doubt produced a few smiles and raised a few eyebrows in equal measure. From fourth place on the grid, the #8 Audi ran a reliable race while the pole-sitting #1 Porsche succumbed to two punctures which effectively ruled it out of the race due to associated damage caused. The Audi #7 sister car also had its fair share of problems, not caused by any mechanical malfunction like the #1 Porsche, but damage caused in the course of racing resulted in it dropping down the field.



The #8 Audi R18 e-tron quattro of Lucas di Grassi, Loic Duval and Oliver Jarvis during the WEC Spa 6-Hours on 7 May 2016

At various times during the 6-hour race, each of the three manufacturers in the LMP1 class led with a clear advantage, and at one point, the #5 Toyota looked to have a firm grip on the lead. The #5 car of Davidson/Buemi/Nakajima led comfortably after four hours with a one-minute margin and looked set to take victory, but racing can be cruel and after 114 laps a mechanical fault halted its progress. The #6 Toyota of Sarrazin/Conway/Kobayashi, which had finished second at Silverstone, had in the meanwhile retired from the race with just 77 laps completed.



The #13 Rebellion R-One AER driven by Dominik Kraihamer, Matheo Tuscher and Alexandre Imperatori was the surprise of the weekend, finishing third overall in the WEC Spa 6-Hours on 7 May 2016

The #2 Porsche in the meantime was experiencing its own problems. And as the final laps unfolded, one could see that its lap times were slower than the lead Audi, and at times even slower than the #13 Rebellion and the #7 Audi behind it. In the end, the #2 Porsche had done enough to finish second, adding to its win from Silverstone. But perhaps the surprise of the race was the third place finish by the #13 Rebellion of Tuscher/Kraihamer/Imperatori. Driven to the flag by Imperatori, the Swiss driver showed impressive consistency, giving the Rebellion team its second third place finish of the year.



After several problems in the race, the #7 Audi R18 e-tron quattro of Marcel Fassler, Andre Lotterer and Benoit Treluyer recovered to finish fifth overall in the WEC 6-hour at Spa on 7 May 2016

Although the #8 Audi took the chequered flag, did they have the speed of the others when they were at their best? The Audi's best race lap was 1:59.952, while the #2 Porsche posted a best race lap of 1:59.140, but the quickest race lap went to the #1 Porsche with Brendon Hartley behind the wheel with a time of 1:58.431 recorded on the third lap. The #5 Toyota put in a best race lap of 1:59.740 which was quicker than that of the Audi, and compares with their best time in 2015 of 1:59.528 by the same drivers.



Despite a disappointing race, the #6 Toyota TS050 Hybrid driven by Stephane Sarrazin, Mike Conway and Kamui Kobayashi put in some encouraging laps before being forced to retire from the Spa 6-Hours on 7 May 2016

So what can one make of this situation? Well, the Porsche was the quickest by a comfortable margin, but the Toyota put in the second quickest time followed by the Audi. The Toyota ran impressively until mechanical gremlins intervened. But the Audi proved to be the most reliable, and after all, to be first across the line you must first finish, as someone wise once said.





The victors! Lucas di Grassi and Loic Duval hitch a ride on the #8 Audi R18 e-tron quattro while team mate Oliver Jarvis brings the winning car into parc ferme after the trio won the WEC 6-Hours of Spa on 7 May 2016

Can we predict a winner out of the three manufacturers? All three manufacturers have completely new cars, so each is faced with a question mark over reliability, but Porsche is the fastest of the lot. Both the Audis and the Toyotas are reliable, and Porsche will sort out their hybrid issues before the Battle of La Sarthe...so we at VMP are going to say that Porsche will take the flag at Le Mans again!



Although the #2 Porsche 919 Hybrid of Romain Dumas, Neel Jani and Marc Lieb experienced some hybrid drive problems during the race, they did enough to bring the car home in second place in the WEC 6-Hours of Spa on 7 May 2016

I hope you have your tickets for the race weekend of 18/19 June, because this is going to be one mighty battle.

*Written by: Glen Smale*

*Images by: Virtual Motorpix/Glen Smale and Virtual Motorpix/John Mountney*

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