



WEC Round 5 Mexico

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1990 Sauber Mercedes C11, 2012 Le Mans 24H Group C race

Welcome to the land of hot chillies, cacti, sombreros and of course..., Speedy Gonzales. Endurance racing hasn't taken place in Mexico on a World Championship platform for twenty-five years. The last Group C races here were won by Jean-Louis Schlesser/Jochen Mass in 1989 (Sauber Mercedes), Jochen Mass/Michael Schumacher in 1990 (Sauber Mercedes), and Keke Rosberg/Yannick Dalmas in 1991 (Peugeot Talbot).

Located within the public park of the Magdalena Mixhuca Sports City in southeast Mexico City, the Autódromo Hermanos Rodríguez is a 2.674-mile (4.304km) 17-turn race track



named after Mexican racing brothers, Ricardo and Pedro Rodríguez. The circuit has an elevation of 7500 foot (2285m), and as a result the air is between 25-30 per cent thinner than at sea level, creating significantly less downforce for the cars.



Porsche 550 Spyder, 1954 Carrera Panamericana (Porsche-Werkfoto)

With the first four races of the 2016 WEC season having taken place between April and July, the remaining five 'fly-away' races will be squeezed into just three months. This Mexican race is the new one on the calendar, and will be a big test for all teams, from the top contender to the last car on the grid. Porsche regard Mexico as their patch as they cut their international racing teeth in the Carrera Panamericana with an official works entry way back in 1953. In 1954, the last year the Carrera Panamericana was run, the Porsche 550 Spyder of Hans Herrmann crossed the line in third place overall powered by the now legendary 1.5-litre twin-cam Carrera engine.



As things stand in the Drivers' Championship, the Porsche LMP1 trio of Lieb/Dumas/Jani head the table with 106 points apiece, with the Audi trio of Duval/Di Grassi/Jarvis in second place on 73 points each. The Toyota team of Kobayashi/Conway/Sarrazin are close behind the Audi drivers on 62 points each. In the Manufacturers' Championship, Porsche lead (164) followed by Audi (129) Toyota (97). In LMP2, Menezes/Lapierre/Richelmi in the #36 Signatech Alpine are leading the table on 112 points with Senna/Albuquerque/Gonzalez, #43 RGR Sport By Morand second on 71 points each. Rast (65 points), Rusinov (65 points) and Cumming (59 points) lie in third place.

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The GTE PRO class is a much closer run affair, with Pla/Mücke in the #66 Ford lead the class on 72 points, with Rigon/Bird in the #71 Ferrari hot on their heels with 70 points. In third place is the pairing of Sørensen/Thiim in the #95 Aston Martin. The table in the GTE AM class Collard/Perrodo/Aguiar lead in the #83 Ferrari with 111 points each, with the #98 Aston Martin trio of Lauda/Dalla Lana/Lamy in second place on 70 points. The #88 Porsche RSR of Heinemeier Hansson/Al Qubaisi is in third place with 68 points.

In summary, the LMP1, LMP2 and GTE AM classes seem to have clear leaders at this point, with the GTE PRO class being very close together. But this is not yet the halfway mark in the season, and Mexico will throw a curved ball at every team on the track. The cars will behave differently, the drivers will be under greater physical pressure, and there is everything to play for, in fact the whole event is a big unknown. Although the forecasted temperatures do not look too high, thunderstorms are expected each day up to and including Sunday.



#66 Ford GT, 2016 Nurburgring 6-Hour

With the races after Mexico being on familiar circuits, the teams know to some degree what to expect there. But Mexico will be different and it will be crucial, and those who are prepared for any and every eventuality, will take a big step forward in the championship. So look to those teams who are the best prepared teams, and you could probably place a wager on the Mexican winner being a strong contender for championship honours on 20 November in Bahrain.



#83 Ferrari F458 Italia, 2016 Nurburgring 6-Hour

So without any further ado, book your favourite armchair for the start at 13h30 local time (19h30 UK time: 6-hour time difference between Mexico & UK) this Saturday. Don't forget to don your sombrero, and order in a good supply of skwinklote, mazapanes de cacahuete and cacahuates Japoneses. I have it on good authority that these are typical Mexican snacks, but you might need to keep a few frosties handy to wash it down with and to put out the fire. Always watch TV responsibly!

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