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PORSCHE

WERKS/ TEAM

Porsche at
the top
24-hour races

/ Nürburgring
/ Le Mans
/ Daytona







Die Startnummer 1 ist schweißgetränkt,
denn sie gehört dem amtierenden Weltmeister.
Der Testträger des 2016er Porsche 919 Hybrid
wartet in der Box.



START YOUR ENGINES

»

Races are essentially a state of war for the constructors, and this pressurized context accelerates development.

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Ferry Porsche







2016 darf sich der Porsche 919 Hybrid als Titelverteidiger erstmals mit der Nummer 1 präsentieren. Die Vier-Augen-Optik der Scheinwerfer weist ihn als Mitglied der Porsche-Turbofamilie aus.



A thunderstorm is on the horizon. The calm before the storm is as eroticizing as it is threatening. What will follow? Ruin or relief? No one can say.

One year of arduous preparations. At the very least. A budget whose only responsibility is to maximize success with respect to an overall victory. Complete unpredictability. Only one chance each year. Any sensible management consultant would advise against it. What's that? Le Mans! THE endurance race that captures the world's attention. Unless you've been there, you won't understand its spell. If you have experienced Le Mans in all its facets, you'll never forget it. Even the most thick-skinned cannot resist the dramatic effect.

Four weeks before the race, the first set-up squad arrives. Two weeks later, everything is ready in anticipation of the official test on Sunday. The steel hall behind the LMP1 pit box is now standing, the garage has been equipped, and in the hospitality area the al dente pasta is being strained. The pre-test is not a significant battle because everyone bluffs, but it is important in order to drive the Porsche 919 Hybrid for the first time in its current configuration

on this track. Of the 13.6 kilometers of the Circuit des 24 Heures, 9.2 of them cover what are normally public roads. This precludes test drives, and none of the racetracks used for testing are as poor as this rural road to Mulsanne. Following the official testing on Sunday, the cars are dismantled and then reassembled. This is followed by a function test on Tuesday, held on the Circuit Bugatti, a small permanent racetrack in the inner section. After this, some team members are allowed to return home for two to three days. Others stay. Then, on the second weekend, the acceptance process takes place in the downtown area of Le Mans. This is a procedure for checking the drivers' licenses for Le Mans and the legality of their cars, and it typically takes place behind closed doors. But not in Le Mans. Here, the acceptance procedure is a public spectacle held in the market square, complete with stands for the fans. And there's still a week to go.

From this point on, the excitement mounts daily, then hourly,

and finally with every passing minute. This town in northwestern France, home to around 140,000 residents, begins to inflate, its pulse racing ever faster. Little by little, a quarter of a million spectators and around 1,500 accredited journalists flow into town. The TV cameras are moved into position for broadcasting the event to around 200 countries. The top teams are well aware that the world is keeping a close eye on them and they posture accordingly. The arc of suspense, which has been escalating for weeks, never fails to achieve its effect. The pressure and risk of cabin fever grow more intense as the final days disappear.

Qualifying takes place until midnight on Wednesday and Thursday. The teams then work on into the small hours of the morning. Press conferences are held during the day on Friday, followed by the Drivers' Parade through the center of town in the evening. Shrill but respectful at the same time. The drivers are celebrated as the gladiators of our day.

Anyone who isn't careful might find themselves running on empty by the day of the race. Warm-up at nine, followed by meetings and briefings. The procedure used for the starting line-up has been painstakingly planned, and not just as an occasion for stars and politicians to put in an appearance. Reverential rituals take place. And this is also the time when rivals embrace and earnestly wish each other the best of luck in this grueling contest. At last, the doors close and the drivers are alone with their machines. Goosebumps. When the field returns from the warm-up lap accompanied by drumming and fanfare, the teams experience an unparalleled balancing act: relief that it's finally starting and a tension that borders on physical pain. Over 5,000 kilometers await the teams - roughly equivalent to an entire Formula One season carried out in a single day.

This June night in Le Mans is one of the shortest of the year. The sun only sinks out of sight around 10 p.m. Brendon Hart-

ley recalls his first evening laps. "Until then, I had thought of myself as a driver who could intuitively drive a stretch of road without having to make much use of visual markers. That was something that others needed, not I. Was I ever wrong! All those seemingly meaningless reference points such as buildings in the distance, guard rails, trees, lines on the asphalt - they were suddenly gone. That's when I first realized the extent to which my brain orients itself to specific markers. I had to relearn the stretch all over again.

»YOU CAN'T
WIN LE MANS.
LE MANS LETS
YOU WIN.«

There were other visual reference points that played a role, but they only appeared like a flash in the darkness.

Then, of course, there were reflections and lights that didn't occur during the day. And in the tunnel created by the headlights, I perceived speed quite differently. Objects flitted into my field of vision and then vanished - I felt as though I were traveling at warp speed, and braked too sharply at every curve. After the initial shock, I enjoyed that extra shot of adrenaline and let my senses adapt naturally. It was a fantastic feeling!"

At night, the 919 drivers are at the wheel for three and a half hours on one go. At an average speed of 220 km/h, reaching a maximum of 340 km/h. Lap after lap, the prototypes plow through the heavy traffic of the slower classes. They pass their Porsche colleagues in the 911 RSR around fifty times over the course of the twenty-four hours. The Ferris wheel turns without ceasing, as though in solidarity with the drivers. No slacking off, please! What the drivers and teams do because they must, the fans do out

of passion. It's not until the early hours that some of them lose the battle against fatigue and catch a few winks of sleep on their camping mat while the roar of the race continues. The sun rises at 6 a.m. The sky is awash with a delicate blue shimmer above the Dunlop curve rising up to the first warming rays. You squint and look around. Who's still there and who didn't make it? Nine long hours still separate you from the finish line.

"In Le Mans, battling the competition is your second priority," says Mark Webber. "Your primary opponent is the race itself." From 2014 to 2016 the speedy Australian was at the starting line in the 919, and has never emerged victorious from this battle. Jackie Ickx, a six-time Le Mans winner, has learned humility: "You can't win Le Mans. Le Mans lets you win."





Der 3-fache Le Mans Champion Andre Lottere beim technical briefing.

Lap
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BATTLE SCARS







Durchhalten! Mit fortschreitender Renndauer werden die Kampfspuren bei Mensch und Material sichtbar.