

**2018/2019 FIA World Endurance Championship
Round 1: 6 Hours of Spa**

***Saturday's 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps to kick off the
FIA WEC's 2018/2019 Super Season***

After early April's collective Prologue test in the south of France, the FIA World Endurance Championship kicks off in earnest this weekend with a trip to Spa-Francorchamps. For the teams and Michelin alike, the seven-kilometre roller-coaster ride through the Belgian Ardennes will serve as an invaluable outing to prepare for June's Le Mans 24 Hours. The celebrated venue will even feature twice in the course of the FIA WEC's 2018/2019 Super Season, since it will be visited again as part of the calendar in May 2019! It will consequently be a key race for Michelin to validate its latest-generation endurance racing tyres, given that their specification – with possible rare exceptions – will need to cover the entire campaign, all the way through to the 2019 trip to Le Mans.

“After our winter busy testing programme and the recent Prologue test at Le Castellet in France, we are really looking forward to the season beginning at Spa-Francorchamps,” says **Jérôme Mondain**, the manager of Michelin's endurance racing programmes. “The fact that the Prologue test took place on a recently resurfaced track didn't help our engineers because the granular composition of the new asphalt wasn't representative of the circuits we will travel to this season. That said, we still managed to collect some good data.”


Michelin is effectively keen for competitive action to resume after the long winter break because its range of world endurance racing tyres has evolved significantly since the 2017 season.

“This season, we will be working with four new LMP1 partners who are running non-hybrid prototypes. While the constraints faced by their rear tyres are similar to those of the hybrid LMP1 cars, the picture is different with the fronts. The non-hybrid LMP1s don't have electric motors. Their front tyres function differently therefore, and this necessitated a specific solution,” notes **Jérôme Mondain**.

Over the winter break, Michelin carried out a series tests with its partners as the development of their new cars progressed, but signing off the solutions that were selected after that work in a competitive context remains a vital part of the process.

The 2018/2019 FIA WEC will also see Michelin return to LMP2 with a new range of tyres for its new partners in the class, namely Racing Team Nederland, DragonSpeed and Larbre Compétition. “We have completely overhauled our LMP2 range,” underlines **Jérôme Mondain**. “Our aim was to improve their performance without detracting from their outstanding level of consistency which was their chief strength last season. Our Technical Department seems to have pulled off this feat, because the initial results have been highly positive.”





Last but by no means least, the entire LM GTE field will be running on Michelin rubber this season, including two additional partners compared with 2017, namely Aston Martin Racing and BMW Team Mtek, who have both brought out brand new cars. Although this added to Michelin's off-season workload, the bottom line is that all its partners in the class will have tyres that are perfectly suited to the characteristics of their respective cars.

“Michelin's LM GTE range has changed in depth,” concludes **Jérôme Mondain**. “In addition to the fact that we are working with two new partners this season, we have taken the entire range a step forward.”

It is important to recall that teams will be authorised to change tyres while their cars are being refuelled this season. However, their quotas for the six-hour races is now 18 tyres (26 in the LMGTE Am class) for qualifying and the race. In all four classes, Michelin's range of slicks will consist of 'SOFT', 'MEDIUM' and 'HARD' options, in keeping with the descriptions it reintroduced two years ago to facilitate the spectators' and television viewers' understanding of race strategies.

