



PRESS RELEASE

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Michelin's partners enjoy successful first outing of the new LMH era on their latest-generation tyres

- The 2021 Total 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps was won by the N°8 Toyota GR010 HYBRID of Buemi/Nakajima/Hartley, ahead of the N°36 Alpine A480 - Gibson (Negrao/Lapierre/Vaxivière) and N°7 Toyota GR010 HYBRID (Conway/Kobayashi/Lopez).
- The LM GTE Pro battle was won by Porsche GT Team's N°92 911 RSR - 19 (Estre/Jani) which was joined on the podium by the AF Corse-run Ferrari 488 GTE Evos.
- AF Corse topped the order in LM GTE Am, ahead of the TF Sport Aston Martin Vantage AMR and Cetilar Racing's Ferrari 488 GTE Evo.

The first round of the FIA World Endurance Championship's Season 9 got underway at 1:30pm sharp today (May 1) at Spa-Francorchamps in the Belgian Ardennes.

The teams and Michelin's staff had spent the entire week in Belgium, however, since the championship's organisers chose the same venue for their traditional pre-season prologue which served as the only collective test ahead of this year's campaign. The action on Monday and Tuesday was followed by the start of official free practice for the 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps on Thursday, with qualifying on Friday and the race itself on May Day.

Following a change to the technical regulations for world endurance racing's headlining category compared with 2020, the Belgian clash saw the new LMH cars make their first competitive appearance, and Michelin's tyres for these latest-generation prototypes were also used in anger for the first time at Spa-Francorchamps.

As the week progressed, lap times tumbled as the crews of the 34 cars entered for the six-hour race finetuned their respective set-ups and grew in confidence. All Michelin's partners – not just in the LMH class but also in LM GTE Pro and LM GTE Am – benefited from the advice and support of the French firm's technical experts at the circuit.

"Today marked the start of a new age for endurance racing and we are proud to have played an active part in the transition," says **Pierre Alves**, the manager of Michelin's FIA WEC programme.



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"After all the work carried out upstream at our base in Clermont-Ferrand [France], and also here in Belgium since the start the week with our partners, I think we can be pleased with how the year's opening round went. The ongoing pandemic situation forced us to revise our working methods at the track, but we wanted to continue working as closely as possible with our partners to help them make the very most of our tyres. The fact that our technical advisors formed part of their respective teams' own sanitary bubbles led us to change our methods and hold our briefings via video, but that took didn't detract from our efficiency."

World-class performance

Michelin's new tyres for the LMH cars were a major talking point all week in Belgium and they stepped up to deliver when it counted by contributing to the pole-winning lap of the N°7 Toyota GR010 HYBRID. The car topped qualifying with an effort of 2m00.747s, an improvement of almost two seconds over the best time posted during the last free practice session which remained unbeaten until the end of the week. "Everything about the new LMH class is new but everything went perfectly smoothly from our point of view," adds **Pierre Alves**. "I think that's a sign that our development engineers and operational staff at Spa got everything just right. When you look at the race pace of the two Toyota GR010 HYBRID and the Alpine A480 - Gibson, there was a great deal to be pleased about."

The difference of 2.9 seconds between the fastest LM GTE Pro times in free practice and qualifying is also worth highlighting... "The situation in LM GTE Pro and LM GTE Am is a little different because the regulations mean we have to supply the same spec tyres as last season," explains **Pierre Alves**. "As the track got rubbered in, however, the combination of the improvements made to the cars and their set-ups since last season brought out the best in our tyres and the lap times kept coming down. That's an eloquent sign of the valuable role our technicians play at races. We leave Spa-Francorchamps with lots of good data which we will now analyse carefully to prepare for the next rounds."

Round two of the 2021 FIA World Endurance Championship will take teams to Portimão, for an eight-hour race on June 13.

The MICHELIN Pilot Sport range for the new LMH prototypes

The new range of endurance racing tyres developed by Michelin for the LMH prototypes is tailored to the technical characteristics, weight and performance of the new class's different cars. It is the first range to have been designed exclusively using simulator technology, both with and without input from the drivers, but in the absence of either an actual or digital car. Thanks to the might of Michelin's development and simulation tools and systems, as well as to the experience of its engineers, design work progressed quickly and in the right direction from the outset.



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This feat was all the more remarkable in that the sizes of the LMH tyres are new. Michelin consequently switched from an iterative process based on experience, simulators, machines and track testing to an all-virtual approach.

New rain tyres

Following changes to the regulations, the range of wet-weather tyres for 2021 comprises just two options compared with three in 2020. The new DRYING WET covers a broader temperature window in damp or drying conditions, while a FULL WET is available for heavier rain or standing water.

Hypercar tyre sizes

Of the new Le Mans Hypercar machinery, only the Toyota GR010 HYBRID run 31/71-18 tyres front and rear. The category's other contenders have opted for what is a new combination for endurance racing: 29/71-18 at the front and 34/71-18 at the rear. This divergence is due to the differing front/rear weight-splits of the different prototypes, with only the Toyota GR010 HYBRID running an electrified system in addition to its internal combustion engine.

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+33 (0) 1 45 66 22 22

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27 cours de l'Ile Seguin, 92100 Boulogne-Billancourt