

**2018/2019 FIA World Endurance Championship
Round 7: TOTAL 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps**

***Cold weather, rain and snow: MICHELIN's endurance
racing tyres deliver at Spa's 'White Hell'!***

Both Spa-Francorchamps and the Nürburgring – familiarly known as the Green Hell – are historically-important circuits that the drivers adore. They are also very close, since they are separated by just 100 kilometres of dense forest that links the Belgian Ardennes with Germany's Eifel Mountains. Their respective geographical locations make them especially prone to poor weather, as illustrated by today's TOTAL 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps! Round 7 of the FIA WEC's 2018/2019 Super Season effectively took place in wintry conditions and sustained spells of snow turned the famous Belgian venue into a White Hell for competitors!

But as the thermometer dipped to as low as 1°C, the performance and safety delivered by Michelin's range of slicks and rain tyres enabled the spectators to enjoy a thrilling show.

When the TOTAL 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps kicked off at 1:30pm local time, the track was practically entirely dry, with the sun shining brightly and the track temperature standing at slightly more than 10°C, which prompted the teams to fit medium-compound slicks. The weather soon took a turn for the worse however and, just five minutes later, the sky was covered in thick cloud and icy rain began to fall, leading the drivers to pit for rain tyres. In the course of the next 20 minutes, the situation worsened as the rain changed to snow and the temperature fell to 1°C...

Shortly before the half-hour mark, the safety car was despatched and discussions took place about whether the race could continue. That said, no cars had gone off, despite the little grip that was available and the copious amounts of water on the track.

The more pessimistic observers were convinced that the action couldn't run but, just a quarter-of-an-hour later, the sun reappeared and racing resumed after a few more laps behind the safety car.

The racing line soon dried and the teams focused on choosing the ideal moment to call in their respective cars to switch back to slicks, and the traffic in the pit lane became more and more intense as the amount of available grip increased.

The clear weather then stabilised for the next two or so hours, causing many of the WEC players and the spectators to believe that the worst was now behind them.

But with two-and-a-half hours remaining, rain and snow showers swept over the Ardennes again, bringing out the safety car several more times. The 2019 TOTAL 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps was eventually halted 11 minutes ahead of schedule due to a particularly heavy snow shower.

Despite the atrocious weather, however, and aided by the ability of Michelin's tyres to deliver in the adverse conditions, the afternoon unfolded without any major incidents. The race was won by the N°8 Toyota TS050-Hybrid (Buemi/Nakajima/Alonso), ahead of the N°3 Rebellion R13-Gibson (Berthon/Laurent/Menezes), while the N°11 BR1-AER (SMP RACING, Aleshin/Petrov/Vandoorne) made it an all Michelin-podium.



The French tyre firm took the spoils in LMP2, too, thanks to DragonSpeed's N°31 Oreca 07-Gibson (Gonzalez/Maldonado/Davidson). The Signatech Alpine Matmut of Lapierre/Negrao/Thiriet came third in the class.

GTE racing in snow!

With five different carmakers involved, the FIA WEC's LMGTE Pro and Am classes are invariably fiercely-contested affairs. The 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps were no exception and the spectators who braved the elements were treated to another superb battle, with the lead changing hands several times as a function of the conditions and the teams' respective pit stop strategies.

The LMGTE Pro class was won by the N°97 Aston Martin Vantage AMR (Lynn/Martin), ahead of the N°51 Ferrari 488 GTE (Pier Guidi/Calado) and the N°92 Porsche 911 RSR (Christensen/Estre).

The LMGTE Am trophy went to Ried/Pera/Campbell whose Porsche 911 RSR was chased over the line by Yoluc/Alers-Hankey/Eastwood (N°90 Aston Martin Vantage) and Perez Companc/Cressoni/Griffin (N°61 Clearwater Racing Ferrari 488 GTE).

The LM GTE Pro and Am fights both ended with all-Michelin podiums.

"We saw a whole year's weather in the space of just six hours at Spa-Francorchamps this afternoon," smiled **Jérôme Mondain**, the manager of Michelin's endurance racing programmes. "The range of conditions was so wide that all the types of tyre we had in Belgium were used during the race, and our technical teams responded impeccably to the constantly changing, unpredictable weather. I believe we can be pleased with our performance and we go back to France all the richer for having done a successful job in such difficult circumstances. Once again, our tyres provided our partners with a combination of safety and performance all the way to the finish line!"

The final round of the 2018/2019 FIA WEC will take teams to Le Mans on June 15-16 for the 2019 Le Mans 24 Hours which will feature a grid of 62 cars.

