

**FIA World Endurance Championship 2019/2020  
Total 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps – Round 6**

***The MICHELIN Pilot Sport Endurance range delivers in  
Total 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps mixed-bag weather***

The Total 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps – Round 6 of the 2019/2020 FIA World Endurance Championship – saw FIA WEC action resume at last after the long interruption caused by the Covid-19 outbreak. The drivers were clearly pleased to be back at the ever-popular seven-kilometre circuit but it turned out to be a particularly busy week for the teams and Michelin Motorsport alike, with all the players setting themselves ambitious objectives ahead of the fast-approaching Le Mans 24 Hours in September.

Although strict sanitary measures made everyone's work more complex than usual, Saturday's changing weather conditions provided the Michelin's development specialists with an opportunity to run and evaluate all the different types of tyre that were available for the Belgian classic.

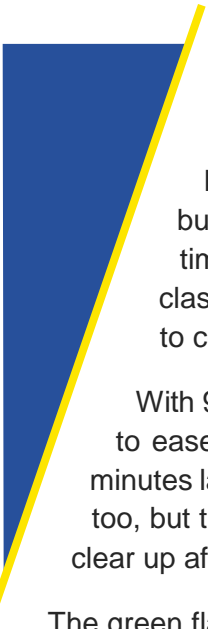
"I think we can be pleased with the job we did at Spa-Francorchamps," commented **Pierre Alves**, the manager of Michelin's endurance racing programmes. "The conditions were perfectly dry for the week's three free practice sessions on Thursday, and then for qualifying on Friday, but the grip levels were surprisingly low. This had a big effect on lap times and we saw differences as big as four seconds compared with the times posted at the same fixture in 2019. The long break from racing clearly had an influence on the surface of the track which is situated in the middle of a pine forest, and we will take this into account when we analyse all the data we collected at Spa."

The race itself took place in particularly fickle weather and heavy rain forced the organisers to delay the start by several minutes for safety reasons. After lights-out, the poor visibility resulting from the spray thrown up by the cars led to the first three laps taking place behind the Safety Car. When the pack was eventually unleashed, Toyota Gazoo Racing and AF Corse Ferrari adapted swiftly to the slippery conditions to emerge as the early front-runners in LMP1 and LMGTE Pro, aided by the ability of Michelin's rain tyres to clear up to 120 litres of water per second.

With the first half-hour completed, the thick cloud cover began to make way for a little sunshine which allowed the racing line to dry out quite quickly. Toyota Gazoo Racing was the first team to switch one of its cars – the N°7 TS050 Hybrid (Conway/Kobayashi/Lopez) – to slicks as the field pitted for the first wave of refuelling stops, an hour into the race. Mike Conway was immediately faster, so the N°8 prototype was similarly equipped with slicks shortly afterwards and, before long, the entire field had followed suit.

At around the two-hour mark, however, another shower prompted a return to wet-weather rubber for the third stint when an increasingly heavier downpour led to the Safety Car being despatched again.





The racing was interrupted for the next 30 minutes and only resumed at the Total 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps' halfway point, prompting some exciting battles in the bunched-up pack. Very soon, all the cars were lapping on slick tyres once more as lap times began to tumble on the now-dry track. First place traded hands in both LMGTE classes, but Toyota Gazoo Racing (LMP1) and Racing Team Nederland (LMP2) managed to consolidate their respective leads.

With 90 minutes to go, though, Paul Di Resta's pace allowed the United Autosports prototype to ease past the Racing Team Nederland car (Fris Van Eerd) to take control in LMP2. Ten minutes later, Thomas Laurent (Alpine A470-Gibson) began to put the Dutchman under pressure, too, but the Frenchman ended up making a mistake and left the track. To allow the marshals to clear up afterwards, Race Control decided to send out the Safety Car briefly for a third time.

The green flag reappeared with 45 minutes to go and Kazuki Nakajima (N°8 Toyota) found himself in a position to challenge for the day's win, but his attempt was thwarted by the need to make one last pit stop and it was the N°7 Toyota that took the chequered flag in first place. The two Toyotas were joined on the Total 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps podium by the N°1 Rebellion R13-Gibson (Senna/Menezes/Nato).

In LMP2, United Autosports went on to claim an assertive victory, while Cool Racing and Racing Team Nederland made it an all-Michelin top-three in this class which allows open competition between tyre firms.

The LMGTE Pro win went to the N°92 Porsche 911 RSR (Christensen/Estre), chased by the N°97 (Lynn/Martin) and N°95 (Sorensen/Thiim) Aston Martin Vantages. The LMGTE Am spoils went to the N°83 AF Corse Ferrari 488 GTE, ahead of the N°77 Dempsey-Proton Racing-tended Porsche 911 RSR and TF Sport's N°90 Aston Martin Vantage.

"I would like to congratulate our partners in all four classes for the huge efforts they made in what proved to be extremely difficult working conditions," underlined **Pierre Alves**. "We are proud to have provided them with effective support, and at the same time we managed to achieve all the technical objectives we set ourselves in Belgium. A big bravo to everyone at Michelin Motorsport for their untiring work at the two back-to-back races [ELMS and FIA WEC] at Spa-Francorchamps."

