



PRESS RELEASE

MOTORSPORT

Austin (Texas, USA) – September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024

## ***Lone Star Le Mans*** **The MICHELIN Pilot Sport endurance-racing range combines speed and consistency in Texan heat**

- Clear skies meant particularly high air and track temperatures for the 2024 Lone Star Le Mans.
- Changing grip levels as the race progressed kept drivers on their toes.
- Antonio Giovinazzi (Ferrari AF Corse) posted the Hypercar era's fastest lap at Austin (1m50.390s).

The storms that can be a feature of the Texan climate at this time of year failed to materialise. Instead, the teams contesting Round 6 of the 2024 FIA World Endurance Championship (FIA WEC) at Circuit of The Americas (CoTA), near Austin, were treated to clear skies, with just a little cloud cover on Sunday morning. This dissipated prior to the start, however, and the sun shone throughout the six-hour race.

The heat remained globally stable over the three days, with the air and track temperatures standing at around 36°C and up to 50°C respectively. Sunday turned out to be the hottest day as grip levels evolved as the weekend progressed.

The drivers had difficulty finding their marks during Friday's two free practice sessions due to recent resurfacing work undertaken to iron out the circuit's characteristic bumps. Oils seeping from the fresh asphalt in the hot weather made the going particularly slippery, and lap-times were some two seconds down on the fastest efforts posted during a private test at the same venue in July.

Grip improved the next day when times started to tumble down, with Antonio Giovinazzi (#51 Ferrari 499P) concluding Saturday's Free Practice 3 and Qualifying with an FIA WEC Hypercar-era benchmark for Austin in the Hyperpole session (1m50.390s). All the prototypes that made it through to the pole-deciding shoot-out contested it on medium MICHELIN Pilot Sports.

The 2024 Lone Star Le Mans got under way at 1pm Sunday in bright sunshine, with the majority of the Hypercar field on medium tyres. The exceptions were Alpine Endurance Team (hard-compound rears), as well as Peugeot TotalEnergies and the #83 AF Corse Ferrari which preferred the hard alternative for the right-rear which faces the biggest constraints at CoTA.

The first two hours saw Ferrari and AF Corse monopolise the top three places, chased by Team WRT's two BMW Ms.



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Aided by the consistency of their medium-compound Michelins, Toyota Gazoo Racing's #7 GR010-Hybrid and the #2 Cadillac Racing V-Series.R began to close the gap, however. By the halfway point, they had closed to within some 10 seconds of the race-leading #83 AF Corse Ferrari which was running on hard-compound Michelin slicks at this stage.

With two hours remaining, the #7 Toyota benefited from its strategy of staying on mediums slicks (simply swapping its left-hand tyres for part-worn replacements during its final stop) as Dutchman Nyck de Vries bridged the gap to the race-leader. Now in the hands of Yifei Ye, the #83 Ferrari was on its second stint on the hard compound.

The two prototypes traded positions during the fourth round of pit stops when Kamui Kobayashi climbed into the Toyota fitted with four fresh medium Michelins, while Robert Shwartzman took over the Ferrari on a combination of three mediums and a hard rear-right tyre.

Race Control handed a drive-through penalty to the Japanese driver for a yellow-flag infraction, however, a decision that enabled the #83 Ferrari to recover first place with 45 minutes to go. The Italian car went on to win the 2024 Lone Star Le Mans, ahead of the #7 Toyota, #50 Ferrari 499P (Fuoco/Molina/Nielsen) and #2 Cadillac.

*"The race was fought at a consistently fast pace, but both the medium- and hard-compound MICHELIN Pilot Sport slicks stood up to the heat exceptionally well," reports **Pierre Alves**, the manager of Michelin's endurance racing programmes. "Circuit of The Americas is a track that puts considerable into tyres, and the temperature of the asphalt remained extremely high throughout, ranging from 42°C to 50°C. Even so, all the teams successfully double-stinted as planned and the leading cars lapped consistently all the way to the end of their respective second stints with no tyre degradation. The fact that they were able to do so speaks volumes for the MICHELIN Pilot Sport slick's longevity. We were very pleased with their performance which was boosted by the work accomplished with our partners during our private test at Austin at the end of July."*

The seventh and penultimate round of the 2024 FIA WEC will take place in a fortnight's time at Fuji Speedway, Japan. The circuit is owned by Toyota Gazoo Racing who will be looking to repeat their win there in 2023 despite increasingly fierce opposition. The mid-September weather is likely to be milder in the mountains of Shizuoka Prefecture, with a higher risk of rain and a bigger probability that the MICHELIN Pilot Sport Wet will be seen in action.



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