

**24H**  
SERIES  **MICHELIN**  
**MIDDLE EAST**

# 24H DUBAI

20TH EDITION



**10-11-12 JANUARY 2025**

### **FIFTY FIVE facts**

19 years of the 24H DUBAI. In list form!

### **UAE's Dragon Racing**

Our BIG interview with team boss Leon Price

### **How to win TWICE**

Axcil Jefferies offers his tips for victory at the 24H DUBAI

 **MICHELIN**

**6H ABU DHABI**  
18-19 JANUARY 2025

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**Faisal Al Sahlawi**

*Dubai Autodrome General Manager*

**W**elcome to the Dubai Autodrome, the heart of Motor City and the UAE's first multipurpose motorsport and entertainment facility.

Since its unveiling in 2004 by Union Properties, the 5.39-kilometre FIA Grade One race circuit has been at the forefront of motorsport in the United Arab Emirates. Now, in this 2024-2025 season, we proudly celebrate two decades of the Dubai Autodrome alongside the 20th edition of the iconic Michelin 24H DUBAI, a fitting tribute to our journey and commitment to motorsport.

Over the years, the Dubai Autodrome has evolved into a premier destination for motorsport and entertainment, boasting a world-renowned karting circuit, a Race and Drive Centre, the Grandstand Retail Plaza, and the expanding Motorsport Business Park, with Phase III of the project currently underway.

The vibrant neighbourhood has equally flourished over the past 20 years, with a tree-lined boulevard hosting shops, cafes and restaurants, complemented by Union Properties' residential communities and landmark developments like First Avenue Mall and the Ribbon Mall. The Park Inn by Radisson, overlooking Turn 16, continues to offer an excellent vantage point for spectators.

We are committed to continuously enhancing the facilities on track to provide an exceptional experience for fans and participants alike. Recent updates include the expanded Apex Garden, now offering even more panoramic views of the circuit. This larger space will host special entertainment as we celebrate our milestone, with exciting entertainment for our fans of all ages.

The Michelin 24H DUBAI has been a cornerstone of our event calendar, and this year's milestone edition promises to be a spectacular celebration of endurance racing, talent, and the vibrant motorsport community that has thrived here over the past 20 years. To all drivers, teams, media, and officials, we extend our heartfelt gratitude and a warm welcome.

Whether it's your first visit or you're a returning fan, we invite you to soak in the electrifying atmosphere of the Michelin 24H DUBAI and join us in celebrating 20 years of speed, passion, and unforgettable memories at the Dubai Autodrome. ■

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# FOLLOW 24H SERIES



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[youtube.com/@creventicmotorsportstv](https://youtube.com/@creventicmotorsportstv)

## 24H DUBAI Live broadcast

*with commentary from Radio Le Mans*

### Friday January 10

14:20 - 18:10 24H SERIES MIDDLE EAST 24H DUBAI Qualifying  
18:20 - 19:15 CLIO CUP MIDDLE EAST Race 1

### Saturday January 11

10:20 - 11:15 CLIO CUP MIDDLE EAST Race 2  
12:15 - 24:00 24H SERIES MIDDLE EAST 24H DUBAI Startgrid and Race

### Sunday January 12

00:00 - 14:00 24H SERIES MIDDLE EAST 24H DUBAI Race and Podium

[24hseries.com](https://24hseries.com)

# Welcome!

19 years. 20 editions. 12 winning GT teams. 66 winning GT drivers. 10,767 race laps. 58,034 kilometres completed.

This weekend, Creventic celebrates the 20th edition of the esteemed 24H DUBAI, and the long, long road travelled.

First held in January 2006, the 24H DUBAI, promoted by newcomer CREVENTIC BV, attempted to put a new spin on 24-hour endurance motorsport with an event promoted for, and by, endurance racing 'gentlemen' enthusiasts. An event that, despite a few hiccups (see page 22), struck a nerve, and would return for not only a second edition the following year, but, in the years to come, would become a motorsport mainstay of every New Year.

In the 19 years since that inaugural edition, the 24H DUBAI grid has featured some of the strongest and most prestigious GT and touring car teams worldwide. Its entry list has boasted the distinguished likes of former FIA World Endurance, World Touring Car, British Touring Car and Formula E champions among so many others, several of whom made event history by clinching victory outright. Formula 1 alumni, including Grand Prix winners, fan favourites and even the greatest technical director of his era, and IndyCar winners alike have made headlines at the 24H DUBAI, as has, in recent years, the greatest MotoGP rider of all time.

Competitors have travelled from across Europe, Scandinavia, North and South America, Asia, Africa and

Australasia to compete for overall and class honours. To say nothing of the racers from Oman, Lebanon, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and, of course, the United Arab Emirates that have battled to take victory 'at home.'

It's an event that has seen three drivers and one team take record-breaking three and five outright wins respectively in the most abnormal circumstances (page 24). Race victory sealed by just half a minute after 24 hours of flat-out racing (page 10). Drivers dig deep with multiple manufacturers to finally get the job done in their adoptive homeland (page 30). Teams take on two 24-hour races SIMULTANEOUSLY (page 72). One Autodrome-based outfit put the UAE on the map with a highly successful event record (page 38). And three, multi-national tyre manufacturers act as the official event partner, with the fourth – Michelin – ready to start a brand-new era in 2025 (page 47).

The 24H DUBAI, and the 24H SERIES it would later begat, has proven an unforgettable journey for everyone at Creventic, one we all dearly hope will continue for years to come. And one for which, you, our much-appreciated fans, supporters, well-wishers and competitors, will continue to be a crucial part.

Thank you. Truly.

Team Creventic



## SUNDAY, 5 JANUARY 2025

10:00 Creventic Track Days Access to Container and Pit Boxes for Monday track day teams  
 16:00 - 18:00 24H SERIES ME-TROPHY Track Walk

## MONDAY, 6 JANUARY 2025

09:00 - 13:00 Creventic Track Days Track Day Session 1  
 10:00 Creventic Track Days Access to Container and Pit Boxes for Tuesday track day teams  
 14:00 - 18:00 Creventic Track Days Track Day Session 2  
 18:15 - 20:00 Michelin 24H SERIES Track Walk

## TUESDAY, 7 JANUARY 2025

09:00 - 13:00 Creventic Track Days Track Day Session 3  
 10:00 Creventic Track Days Access to Container and Pit Boxes for Wednesday track day teams  
 14:00 - 18:00 Creventic Track Days Track Day Session 4  
 18:15 - 20:00 24H SERIES ME-TROPHY Track Walk

## WEDNESDAY, 8 JANUARY 2025

09:00 - 13:00 Creventic Track Days Track Day Session 5  
 10:00 24H SERIES ME-TROPHY Regular Access to Container and Pit Boxes  
 13:00 - 14:00 24H SERIES ME-TROPHY Official mandatory driver photo session  
 14:00 - 16:00 Creventic Track Days Track Day Session 6  
 17:00 24H SERIES ME-TROPHY PARADE 20TH EDITION 24H DUBAI

## THURSDAY, 9 JANUARY 2025

09:00 - 13:00 Creventic Track Days Track Day Session 7  
 13:00 - 14:00 24H SERIES ME-TROPHY Official mandatory driver photo session  
 14:00 - 16:00 Creventic Track Days Track Day Session 8  
 18:00 - 22:00 24H SERIES ME-TROPHY Drivers Briefing / Michelin Culinary Experience - Ritz Carlton Hotel

## FRIDAY, 10 JANUARY 2025

09:00 - 10:30 24H SERIES ME-TROPHY Private Test  
 10:35 - 11:05 Clio Cup Middle East Collective test 1  
 11:15 - 12:45 24H SERIES ME-TROPHY Free Practice  
 13:45 - 14:15 Clio Cup Middle East Collective test 2  
 14:25 - 15:20 24H SERIES ME-TROPHY Qualifying Sessions - Classes TCE, GT4 & GTX  
 15:30 - 15:50 Clio Cup Middle East Qualifying 1  
 16:00 - 16:55 24H SERIES ME-TROPHY Qualifying Sessions - Class 992  
 17:05 - 18:00 24H SERIES ME-TROPHY Qualifying Sessions - Class GT3  
 18:30 - 19:00 Clio Cup Middle East Race 1 (25 min + 1 lap)  
 19:30 - 21:00 24H SERIES ME-TROPHY Night Practice

## SATURDAY, 11 JANUARY 2025

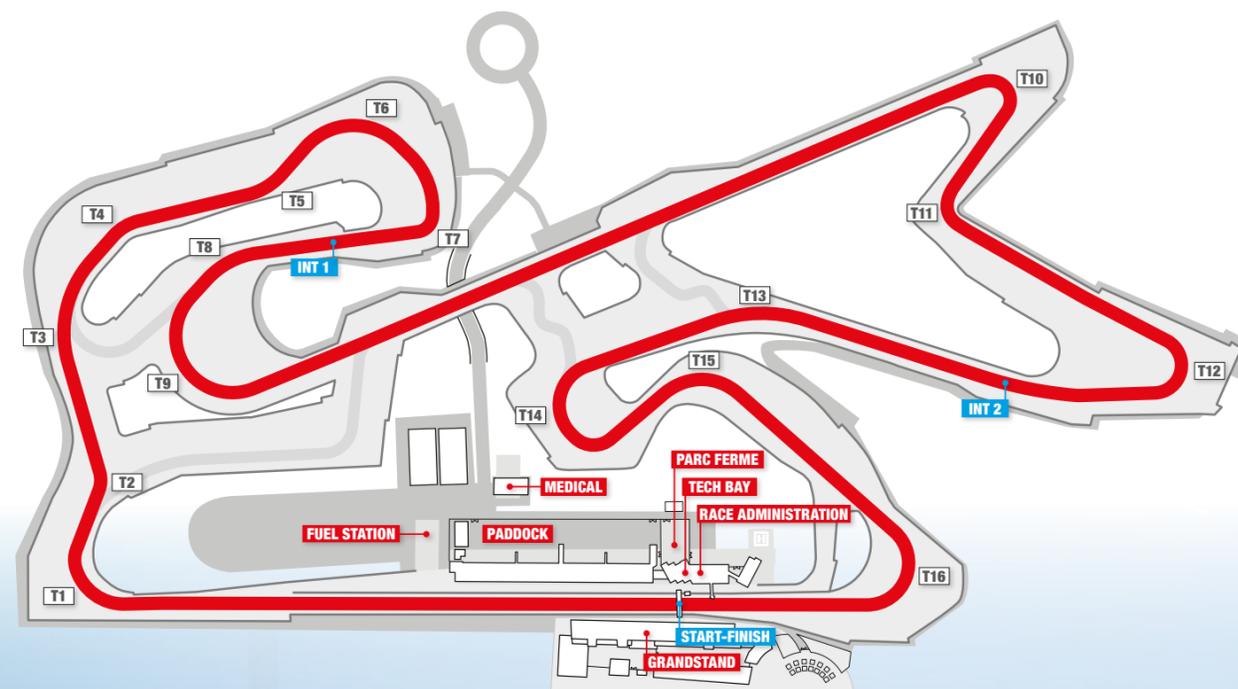
09:00 - 09:20 Clio Cup Middle East Qualifying 2  
 09:40 - 10:10 24H SERIES ME-TROPHY Warming-up  
 10:40 - 11:10 Clio Cup Middle East Race 2 (25 min + 1 lap)  
 11:20 - 11:45 24H SERIES ME-TROPHY Team photo moment in the pit lane  
 12:00 24H SERIES ME-TROPHY Start Grid  
 13:00 24H SERIES ME-TROPHY START Michelin 24H DUBAI 2025

## SUNDAY, 12 JANUARY 2025

13:00 24H SERIES ME-TROPHY FINISH Michelin 24H DUBAI 2025

# THE TRACK

## DUBAI AUTODROME



### GRAND PRIX CIRCUIT

5.390km • 16 Turns • START FINISH to INT1: 1910m • INT1 to INT2: 2048m • INT2 to START-FINISH: 1258m



# 55 things you might not know about the 24H DUBAI

We're celebrating the 20th edition of the 24H DUBAI by unleashing our inner nerds!

Many of you may already know which teams and drivers have the most overall wins at the 24H DUBAI, which year saw the most distance covered, and how many times a German manufacturer has come out on top in the United Arab Emirates every January. But did you also know...?



- » German manufacturers have famously done pretty well at the 24H DUBAI, with Porsche, Mercedes-AMG, Audi and BMW accounting for each overall win. Moreover, since 2006, these four brands have secured 50 of the 57 podium positions awarded so far.
- » And what of the remaining seven? Well, Ferrari accounts for four of them (2011, 2013, 2015 and 2019), while Lamborghini (2018), Aston Martin (2013) and Renault (2008) have taken one apiece.
- » Amazingly, on only two occasions - AF Corse Ferrari's runners-up spots in 2011 and 2013 - has anything other than a German brand finished in the overall top two at the 24H DUBAI!
- » Incidentally, 'Ferrari' debuted at the 24H DUBAI in 2008 courtesy of Khaleji Motorsport's 430 GTC. The team from the UAE even took class victory in SP2. On-board for his maiden 24H DUBAI outing? Adrian Newey. Yes, THAT Adrian Newey!
- » Speaking of AF Corse, did you know that NASCAR legend Michael Waltrip made his 24-hour racing debut with the Italian team at the 24H DUBAI in 2010? The two-time Daytona 500 winner did so alongside two-time Australian V8 Supercar champion Marcos

Ambrose, but sadly, a collision meant the Ferrari F430 GT2 retired before half-distance.

- » The Eastalent Racing Team's victory in 2024 drew Audi level with BMW for overall wins at the 24H DUBAI (four). That's just one behind Mercedes-AMG, and two adrift of outright record holder Porsche.
- » As well as the current record for most overall wins (six), Porsche also holds the record for most overall podium finishes at the 24H DUBAI. Albeit only just, and across a wider timespan. In total, 16 cars representing the Stuttgart brand have finished in the overall top three since 2006, compared with 15 from Mercedes-AMG taken collectively since 'only' 2011.
- » Impressively, teams representing Porsche ALMOST took each of the top 10 positions in 2007 (nine out of the 10 spots), 2009 and 2010 (eight of the 10 spots). On each occasion, BMW was the spoiler.
- » Incidentally, Duller Motorsport, the event's back-to-back winner in 2006 and 2007, accounts for two of those BMW 'spoilings.' The Austrian team was the only non-Porsche in the overall top 10 in 2007, and finished its final 24H DUBAI entry - to-date - 9th overall in 2009.

- » 2023 featured the closest overall finish to-date at the 24H DUBAI, when MS7 by WRT beat Herberth Motorsport by just 31.761 seconds. The previous record had been held by Land Motorsport for 14 years, the German team having finished just 49.676 seconds ahead of Al Faisal Racing in 2009.
- » Moreover, the 2023 race also displaced 2009 for the closest overall podium to-date at the 24H DUBAI. The 4m 47.65s gap splitting outright winner MS7 by WRT and the sister 'Team WRT' in 3rd beat the previous record set in 2009 - 5m 31.070s - by almost 45 seconds.

And speaking of 2009...

### The 2009 race featured several, one-off 24H DUBAI entrants, including Jaguar.

Its long-held record for the closest ever finish may have been usurped, but the fourth edition in 2009 still holds the distinction as the only 24H DUBAI to feature Jaguar and Volvo on the entry list.

Belgium's Motorsport International entered the distinctive Jaguar X-Type Silhouette - a mainstay of, and even an outright champion in, the Belgian Touring Car Series - for its one and only 24H DUBAI in 2009. Ironically, one year on from the budget issues that derailed Thiry Racing International's BTCS season in 2008. The V6 brute, based on the Big Cat's then-flagship X-Type saloon but with a whacking great rear spoiler on the back, was driven to 2nd in-class by Thiry namesake Jerome, Rene Franchi, Jean-Pierre Vannerum and Fabrice Warroquiers on its 24-hour debut.

Sadly, Ebbing Motorsport's Volvo S60 fared less well, and could only manage 19th in the hotly-contested A6 class following a collision during the second hour.

Interestingly, 2009 also featured the 24H DUBAI debuts of Aston Martin, which would go on to take an overall podium in 2013, and Mosler. Ironically, although Gravity Racing International's MT900 GT3 lasted only 153 laps, the Gravity-Mosler combination would go on to take two class podiums and finish its final three outings in '10, '11 and '14 on the SP2-GT4A podium.



- » So far, German teams have won nine of the 19 24H DUBAI editions to-date, including Land Motorsport (2009), Need for Speed by Schubert Motorsport (2011), Black Falcon ('12, '13, '15, '18 and '20), Herberth Motorsport (2017) and Car Collection Motorsport (2019). Amazingly though, a German team didn't appear on the overall podium at all during the first three editions!
- » Only once has one manufacturer monopolized the overall GT podium at the 24H DUBAI. And, interestingly, it wasn't Porsche! In 2012, Abu Dhabi Racing by Black Falcon led home both Heico Motorsport's SLS AMG GT3s for a Mercedes 1-2-3.
- » In contrast, three different manufacturers have finished on the overall podium only five times in the 19 editions to-date: 2011 (BMW, Ferrari and Mercedes); 2013 (Mercedes, Ferrari and Aston Martin); 2018 (Mercedes, Porsche, Lamborghini); 2021 (Porsche, Audi and Mercedes); and the most recent edition in 2024 (Audi, Porsche and BMW).
- » The overall 24H DUBAI winner has crossed the 600-lap mark 10 times since 2006, with IMSA Performance Matmut the first to do so in 2010 (608 laps). Interestingly, Abu Dhabi Racing by Black Falcon and GPX Racing both completed exactly 600 laps en-route to victory in 2013 and 2021 respectively.
- » Abu Dhabi Racing by Black Falcon holds the lap distance record at the 24H DUBAI, the Mercedes SLS AMG GT3 having completed 628 laps in 2012. Granted, MS7 by WRT came close to breaking that record in 2023 when the Belgian team's BMW M4 GT3 completed 621 laps.
- » Unsurprisingly, the rain-affected 2020 race (see page 24) will probably hold the record for the fewest number of laps completed for quite some time: 168 laps, or 26% of the 2012 record. Prior to that, Australia's VIP Pet Foods' 573-lap run to victory in 2008, a race that was also rain-affected, boasted the shortest race distance.
- » Only one team - MS7 by WRT - has taken multiple overall wins with different manufacturers. The Belgian team took back-to-back wins in 2022 and 2023, the first with an Audi R8 LMS GT3, the second with a BMW M4 GT3.
- » Even though three teams have taken back-to-back, overall wins at the 24H DUBAI - Duller Motorsport ('06-'07), Abu Dhabi Racing by Black Falcon ('12-'13), and MS7 by WRT ('22-'23) - there has only been one 1-2 finish, outright, in the 19 editions to-date. That came in 2022, courtesy of Team WRT.

### Let's talk about Black Falcon...

The German team currently holds the record for most outright wins at the 24H DUBAI with five. But did you know that Black Falcon has an additional FIVE category wins to its name in 'A3' (2007), 'SP2' and 'A4' (both in 2010), '997' (2015) and '991' (2017)?

In fact, between 2012 and 2015, at least one Black Falcon car took victory at the 24H DUBAI, a four-race consecutive run that only Schubert Motorsport and the 'Racingdivas' come close to equaling. Schubert took a class win on each of its first three entries in 2006, 2008 and 2011, while the Divas (operated for two races by Schubert, interestingly) took its own hat-trick between 2013 and 2015.

Black Falcon similarly holds the record for most consecutive podium finishes at the 24H DUBAI, having secured EIGHT in succession between 2011 and 2018. Only two separate on-track incidents in 2019 denied the German team a 10-race podium streak from 2011 to 2020!

And lastly, Black Falcon is also one of only three teams to have taken multiple '991'/'992' class wins in Dubai. The German team won '991' in 2015 and 2017, and was later emulated by FACH AUTO TECH (991-PRO in 2018, and 992-PRO in 2023) and NKPP Racing by Bas Koeten Racing (991 in 2021 and 2022).



- » Incidentally, in terms of overall lead changes, the 2022 race, which saw 37 changes at the absolute front, is going to take some beating!
- » There have been plenty of 1-2 finishes in other categories since 2006 though. 15 in fact! Only ONE team however has ever taken a 1-2-3 finish at the 24H DUBAI. And, bizarrely, this happened at the very first edition in 2006, when Team Mirage Australian dominated the 'A1' podium with its trio of Mitsubishi Mirage RS'. The Antipodean team even followed this up with a 1-3 in 2007 and a 1-2 in 2009 on its final two appearances, to-date, at the 24H DUBAI.
- » The vast majority of those 15 1-2 finishes by the way - four of them - were secured in the 997/991/992 class. Black Falcon (obviously!) was the first to do so in 2015, and was followed the next year by Lechner Racing Middle East. Jumping forward six years, Team GP-Elite finished 1-2 in 992-PRO in 2022, with FACH AUTO TECH emulating its Dutch counterpart in the same category in 2023.
- » While we're on the subject of '911' class winners, Lechner Racing, the eponymous outfit of the late great Walter Lechner, is the only team representing Bahrain to have taken a class win at the 24H DUBAI, Lechner Racing Middle East's Porsche 911 GT3 Cups having finished 1-2 in-class in 2016.
- » Since the GT3-Am class was introduced as a sub-category for 2013 (as 'A6-Am'), three different teams have taken repeat category wins. And, bizarrely, all three did so in successive years! The UAE's Dragon Racing won A6-Am in 2014 and 2015; Hofoer Racing conquered A6-Am in 2016 and 2017; and CP Racing took GT3-Am victory in 2022 and 2023.
- » MP Motorsport and Century Motorsport meanwhile are the only teams to take repeat GT3-PRO/AM and GT3-AM victories at the 24H DUBAI, but only the British team did so in the same year. MP Motorsport was GT3-Am victor in 2020 and won GT3-Pro/Am in 2022, while Century Motorsport took both class wins in 2024.
- » Like Leipert Motorsport (see overleaf), Attempto Racing has been a mainstay of the 24H DUBAI for many years. In fact, the German team hasn't missed a round since 2008, and will no doubt hope to secure its first category podium since 2015 this weekend.
- » Optimum Motorsport is set to make its 24H DUBAI return in 2025 after a four-year hiatus, and will do so with a McLaren 720S GT3 EVO. Previous form suggests the British team could be on course for a good result: 'Inception Racing by Optimum' finished 10th overall in 2021 - a first for McLaren at the 24H DUBAI - and Optimum Motorsport is currently the most successful team in SP3/GT4, having won the class three times (2012, 2015, 2017) since 'SP3-GT4A' was introduced for 2010.

# DUBAI AUTODROME DRIVING EXPERIENCES



## BMW M2 460 BHP

The brand new and much anticipated BMW M2 has arrived! Driving this 460HP BMW M2 around our circuit will leave you grinning ear-to-ear!

AED 1,250



## BMW M3 Competition 523 BHP

The all-new BMW M3 Competitions sole reason for existence is to bring out the inner kid in you!

AED 1,500



## BMW M4 Competition 523 BHP

The all-new BMW M4 is ridged, ultra-fast and packs a punch!

AED 1,500



## BMW M5 717 BHP

Unleash the beast under the hood, as the BMW M5 boasts astonishing straight-line performance that challenges the very best supercars on the market.

AED 1,750



## BMW M240i 374 BHP

With its 374 hp BMW M TwinPower inline 6-cylinder engine and a host of performance enhancing features the M240i is a track weapon!

AED 1,050



## FORMULA DXB MAX 180 BHP

Drive a formula single-seater on the Dubai Autodrome Circuit.

AED 1,350



## FERRARI GT Experiences 670 BHP

Experience the race-bred Ferrari 458 & 488 GT Challenge Cars.

AED 3,500 - 4,880



## SUPERCAR Experiences 510 - 630 BHP

The finest selection of supercars for a thrilling track experience.

AED 1,800 - 3,350



## FORMULA 1 Experience 550 BHP

The pinnacle of Driving Experiences - F1. Join the elite inner circle of those who have shared in this experience.

AED 9,995



## HOT HATCH Experiences 200 - 230 BHP

Push performance to the maximum in our pocket-rocket hatches.

AED 2,250

## Passenger Rides



## HOT LAP Experience 200 - 670 BHP

Experience the exhilaration from the passenger seat - strapped in next to a professional instructor.

AED 250 - 1,290



## Arrive & Drive Karting 13 BHP

Race your friends on the world-class Dubai Kartdrome Circuit!

AED 135 - 150

## Leipert Motorsport is on course to start the 24H DUBAI for the 17th time

Long-time Lamborghini customer Leipert Motorsport has entered all but three of the 19 editions of the 24H DUBAI run to-date (the German was absent in 2009, 2013 and 2023) and secured two of its three class wins in Dubai with the raging bull's Huracán Super Trofeo in 2019 and 2020. All the stranger to think that the long-time Lamborghini customer's first category win came in 2008 in its last run with a Ford Fiesta!

But did you also know that, before teaming up with Sant'Agata, Leipert Motorsport entered one 24H DUBAI in 2010 with an Ascari KZ1 R GT3?

The limited-edition sports car – named, incidentally, for 1952 and 1953 Formula 1 World Champion Alberto Ascari, and Ascari Cars owner Klaas Zwart – qualified an impressive 5th overall. All seemed to be going well, and 'rhino's Team Leipert' even climbed to 2nd overall before a collision and gearbox gremlins led to retirement before half-distance.

2010 by the way marked the one and only entry for an Ascari to-date at the 24H DUBAI.



» Three examples of the Vantage AMR GT3 EVO have been provisionally entered for the 24H DUBAI in 2025, meaning Aston Martin could, potentially, secure only its second overall podium at the event, and its first since 2013. Bentley and/or McLaren meanwhile could be on course to take their first.

» There's a way to go though before we match the number of different manufacturers on the grid in 2012. That year, a staggering TWENTY TWO brands were represented, including the likes of Suzuki, Nissan, Mini, Lotus, the event debut of a Dodge Viper, the final entry for a Holden, and even a Saker. Oh, and 2012 also featured the only 24H DUBAI entry to-date for the NASCAR-esque DNRT V8!

» Of all the winning drivers to have contested the 24H DUBAI, Axcil Jefferies has raced with the highest

number of manufacturers (six). You can read more about that on page 30.

» Unsurprisingly, Germany has produced the highest number of overall winning drivers, and by a considerable margin! Fittingly, 19 different German drivers have won at least once, outright, in the 19 editions to-date, 11 more than the next highest placed nation, France (eight). In fact, so comprehensively has Germany monopolized the top step in Dubai, there have been only three races – 2008, 2016 and 2021 – that did not feature a winning German driver.

» Only once though has a winning team featured drivers from completely different nations. Need for Speed by Team Schubert ran four drivers en-route to victory in 2011 – Augusto Farfus, Claudia Hürtgen, Tommy Milner, and Edward Sandström – representing Brazil, Germany, the USA, and Sweden respectively.

» As it happens, those 2011 wins are the only outright victories for America, Brazil and Sweden thus far at the 24H DUBAI. That's on par with Italy (Gabriele Piana, 2018), New Zealand (Brendon Hartley, 2017), Mexico (Diego Menchaca, 2023) China (Mike Zhou Bihuang, 2024), and even Lithuania (Andrzej Dzikovic, 2009).

» In the 19 editions run to-date, only two teams – Black Falcon and the GRT Grasser Racing Team – have started from overall pole position more than once. Black Falcon took pole in 2012 (as 'Abu Dhabi Racing by Black Falcon') and 2017, and GRT took back-to-back top spots in 2018 and 2019.

» Those top spots for GRT Grasser Racing Team in '18 and '19 by the way mark the only time, to-date, that one team has started the 24H DUBAI from absolute pole two years in succession.

» By contrast, NONE of the six pole positions secured by Porsche were done so by the same team: Oktanias (2007); VIP Pet Foods (2008); Autorlando Sport (2009); IMSA Performance Matmut (2010); FACH AUTO TECH (2015); and Herbert Motorsport (2017).

» And yes, Porsche does hold the record for both the highest number of overall poles (six) and the highest number of front row starts (13).

» Twice, the overall winner of the 24H DUBAI has started from outside the top 10 (page 35). 2012 winner Abu Dhabi Racing by Black Falcon started 15th overall – still an event record – and two years later in 2014, Stadler Motorsport took victory from 14th on the grid.

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## A quick maths lesson...

As of 2024, 66 different drivers\* have taken outright victory at the 24H DUBAI across the first 19 editions. But only 13 of them have done so more than once.

*\* Okay, if we're being technical, that should actually be 89 different drivers\*\*, as 24 drivers took overall TCE victory at the 24H DUBAI between 2018 and 2023. Four of whom – Stéphane Perrin (2020 and 2023), Fabian Danz (2019 and 2021), Benjamin Leuchter (2018 and 2021) and Yannick Mettler (2019 and 2023) – did so twice.*

*\*\* Okay, okay, FINE! If you were wondering why that math still doesn't quite add up, Belgium's Gilles Magnus made 24H DUBAI history in 2024 by becoming the first driver to take an overall win in both a GT car and in the 24H SERIES' now-retired TCE division. Four years before his win with the Eastalent Racing Team, Gilles took TCR – and overall TCE – honours with AC Motorsport in 2020, alongside future two-time winner Stéphane Perrin, Matthew Taskinen, British Touring Car legend Vincent Radermecker, and four-time Paris-Roubaix winner, Tom Boonen.*

Interestingly, Magnus took both wins with an Audi.

## Only two drivers from Kuwait have contested the 24H DUBAI.

It's amazing to think, given the proximity of Kuwait to the United Arab Emirates, that only two drivers representing the State have competed at the 24H DUBAI since 2006.

And, prior to 2024, there had only been one!

Khaled Al Mudaf's 24H DUBAI debut with Gulf Racing in 2013, sadly, was stymied by gearbox issues, and didn't go beyond half-distance. The Kuwaiti driver didn't have to wait long for his day of days at the event however, as he would go on to take A6-Am class victory with local boys Dragon Racing (page 38) just one year later, and an SPX win – also with Dragon – in 2019.

Compatriot Haytham Qarajouli meanwhile has just the one 24H DUBAI start to his name so far, one that, sadly, ended in retirement in 2024.



» Since 2014, the overall winner has invariably started among the front two rows. The sole outlier is the Eastalent Racing Team, which took victory in 2024 from 6th on the grid.

» Perhaps unsurprisingly, German manufacturers have monopolized qualifying at the 24H DUBAI as well, with Mercedes-AMG, Porsche, Audi and BMW taking all but five of the 19 absolute pole positions to-date.

» Lamborghini has a surprisingly strong record in qualifying, the Italian marque having secured overall pole position in 2011, 2018 and 2019. Ferrari also banked the top spot in qualifying in 2012, courtesy of AUH Motorsports/FF Corse. But did you know that a Corvette once started the 24H DUBAI from pole as well? V8 Racing, which would go on to win the 12H MUGELLO outright two years later, took pole for the 2014 race with its Chevrolet Corvette C6.R, and while it couldn't quite hold on to a rostrum spot, the Dutch team did eventually round out the overall top five.

» Teams might want to be wary about starting the race from the front row, however. Indeed, of the 19 cars that have started the 24H DUBAI from 2nd on the grid, two – Black Falcon (2015) and Car Collection motorsport (2019) – have gone on to take the win, but TEN have failed to finish. Incredibly, two teams – Race Alliance Motorsport (2007) and Leipert Motorsport (2024) – didn't even make it to the green flag!

» Christopher Mies unfortunately has one of the less enviable driver records at the 24H DUBAI, as the German driver's first overall win, in 2022, came 14 years after his event debut. Christopher finished 2nd in-class first time out in 2008, but wouldn't make his return until 2016.

» Fellow Audi factory driver Markus Winkelhock and UAE resident Frédéric Fatien are right on Mies' coattails, the former having taken his first overall 24H DUBAI win in 2024 – 11 years after his event debut in 2013 – while the latter, who made his first start in 2009, had to wait 12 years before his first overall win in 2021.

» What about the longest gap between outright wins, you might be asking? That 'honour' belongs to the UAE's Khaled Al Qubaisi and The Netherlands' Jeroen Bleekemolen, who, as we discover on page 24, had to wait seven years to take their third outright wins in 2020.

» BMW M Motorsport could probably sympathize, given that the Bavarian team's latest win – in 2023 – came 17

years after its first in 2006, and 12 years after its then-most recent victory in 2011.

» Abdulaziz Al Faisal meanwhile currently holds the record for most overall podiums scored at the 24H DUBAI. The Saudi Arabian driver, who made his event debut in 2007 aboard a Mini Cooper, has finished in the overall top three SEVEN times, including his outright wins in 2015 and 2018. That, somewhat surprisingly, is two more than three-time winners Hubert Haupt and Jeroen Bleekemolen, who've each finished on the overall podium five times.

» Slightly less enviably, Sven Müller and Adam Christodoulou currently have the most overall podium finishes to their names without a win (three). Müller was the overall runner-up in 2017, 2018 and 2024, while Christodoulou finished 2nd in both 2015 and 2016, and 3rd in 2014.

And finally...

## 16 drivers currently have a 100% success rate at the 24H DUBAI.

Each of the following 16 drivers took overall victory at the 24H DUBAI at their first attempt. These include [deep breath]... Current Mercedes F1 team principal Toto Wolff and two-time Le Mans winner Hans-Joachim Stuck (2006), Jonathan Webb (2008), Niclas Kntenich (2009), Patrick Pilet and Marco Holzer (2010), Tommy Milner and long-time BMW works driver Augusto Farfus (2011), Michael Meadows and two-time Spa 24 Hours winner Laurens Vanthoor (2016), Four-time FIA World Endurance Champion Brendon Hartley (2017), Ben Barker (2020), Thomas Neubauer (2022), Diego Menchaca (2023), and Mike Zhou (2024).

Alain Ferté should perhaps receive the biggest plaudits though. The 1980 French Formula 3 champion has entered the 24H DUBAI only twice – with Belgian Club Audi Team WRT in 2016 and GPX Racing in 2021 – and won overall on both occasions!

## Did you know that there is a car named after the 24H DUBAI?!

Founded by Joop Donkervoort, 'Donkervoort Cars' opened its doors in 1978 as the Dutch importer of the classic Lotus 7. Copyright issues though meant the '7' was reborn – and largely rebuilt! – in The Netherlands as the Donkervoort S7 (the 'S,' a reference to the 'Super Seven' Lotus origins, was eventually abandoned when the D10 arrived in 1988).

Though the single-make Donkervoort Cup had already been held across Europe from 1993 to 2001, the Dutch independent's toughest on-track challenge came in 2010 when Dennis Donkervoort (Joop's son and the company's chairman since 2021) led the company's D8 GTO to 5th in-class at the 24H DUBAI, the company's first-ever 24-hour motor race. This was followed in 2011 by a commanding 'SP3' win for Donkervoort Racing, despite a long-range fuel test during qualifying going disastrously wrong and causing a fire in the engine bay!

To honour its 24H DUBAI win, Donkervoort commissioned limited-edition versions of both its D8GT 270 – the first hardtop produced by the company – and the ultra-lightweight D8 270, both of which were showcased at Amsterdam's AutoRAI auto show in April 2011. The '24H of Dubai special edition' featured additional carbon fibre components (specifically the wings and the seats) and featured a '24H' moniker across the dashboard and the driver's digital display.

So limited is the '24H of Dubai special edition,' only 10 examples were ever built for customers.





# 24H DUBAI

# WALK OF FAME



- 2024 GT**
- Eastalent Racing Team**
    - Audi R8 LMS GT3 EVO II
    - Christopher Haase
    - Simon Reicher
    - Markus Winkelhock
    - Mike Zhou
    - Gilles Magnus



- 2024 TCE**
- Simpson Motorsport**
    - Audi RS3 LMS DSG
    - Nadir Zuhour
    - Oliver Webb
    - Andrei Muraveika
    - Ahmed Al Khaja
    - Kavi Jundu

- Proton Huber Competition**
  - Porsche 911 GT3 R (992)
  - Rinat Salikhov
  - Sergei Borisov
  - Victor Shaytar
  - Sven Müller

- CWS Engineering**
  - Ginetta G55
  - Colin White
  - Mark Griffith
  - Daniel Morris
  - Thomas Holland
  - Owen Hizzey

- Century Motorsport**
  - BMW M4 GT3
  - Carl Cavers
  - Lewis Plato
  - Jack Barlow
  - Jacob Rattenbury

- SRS Team Sorg Rennsport**
  - Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 CS
  - Benito Tagle
  - José Garcia
  - Christoph Krombach
  - Gero Bauknecht
  - Patrick Kolb



- 2023 GT**
- Team WRT**
    - BMW M4 GT3
    - Mohammed Saud Fahad Al Saud
    - Diego Menchaca
    - Jean-Baptiste Simmenauer
    - Jens Klingmann
    - Dries Vanthoor



- 2023 TCE**
- AC Motorsport**
    - Audi RS3 LMS TCR
    - Stephane Perrin
    - Yannick Mettler
    - Miklas Born
    - Sam Dejonghe



- 2022 GT**
- MS7 by WRT**
    - Audi R8 LMS GT3
    - Mohammed Saud Fahad Al Saud
    - Axcil Jefferies
    - Dries Vanthoor
    - Christopher Mies
    - Thomas Neubauer



- 2022 TCE**
- BBR**
    - Cupra TCR DSG
    - Kantadhee Kusiri
    - Kantasak Kusiri
    - Anusorn Asiralertsiri
    - Tanart Sathienthirakul
    - Pasarit Promsombat



- 2021 GT**
- GPX Racing**
    - Porsche 911 GT3 R (991 II)
    - Axcil Jefferies
    - Frederic Fatien
    - Mathieu Jaminet
    - Julien Andlauer
    - Alain Ferté



- 2021 TCE**
- TOP CAR Sport**
    - Cupra TCR DSG
    - Fabian Danz
    - Adrian Spescha
    - Patrick Sing
    - Ronny Jost
    - Benjamin Leuchter



- 2020 GT**
- Black Falcon**
    - MERCEDES-AMG GT3
    - Khaled Al Qubaisi
    - Hubert Haupt
    - Ben Barker
    - Manuel Metzger
    - Jeroen Bleekemolen



- 2020 TCE**
- AC Motorsport**
    - Audi RS3 LMS DSG
    - Stephane Perrin
    - Vincent Radermecker
    - Tom Boonen
    - Gilles Magnus
    - Matthew Taskinen

- Herberth Motorsport**
  - Porsche 911 GT3 R
  - Ralf Bohn
  - Daniel Allemann
  - Robert Renauer
  - Alfred Renauer

- Wolf-Power Racing**
  - Audi RS3 LMS TCR
  - Marcus Menden
  - Marlon Menden
  - Rob Huff
  - Peter Posavac

- WRT**
  - Audi R8 LMS GT3
  - Benjamin Goethe
  - Arnold Robin
  - Maxime Robin
  - Jean-Baptiste Simmenauer
  - Frédéric Vervisch

- AC Motorsport**
  - Audi RS3 LMS DSG
  - Stephane Perrin
  - Mathieu Detryr
  - Miklas Born
  - Yannick Mettler

- WRT**
  - Audi R8 LMS GT3 Evo 2019
  - Dries Vanthoor
  - Kelvin van der Linde
  - Louis Machiels
  - Benjamin Goethe
  - Frank Bird

- Autorama Motorsport** by Wolf-Power Racing
  - Volkswagen Golf GTI TCR DSG
  - Kari-Pekka Laaksonen
  - Gustavo Xavier
  - Jasmin Preisig
  - Miklas Born
  - Yannick Mettler

- Car Collection Motorsport**
  - Audi R8 LMS GT3 EVO 2019
  - Rik Breukers
  - Christopher Haase
  - Mike-David Ortmann
  - Dimitri Parhofer
  - Markus Winkelhock

- Lestrup Racing Team**
  - Volkswagen Golf GTI TCR DSG
  - Hannes Morin
  - Martin Öhlin
  - Oliver Söderström
  - Marcus Fluch

- Team WRT**
  - BMW M4 GT3
  - Tim Whale
  - Valentino Rossi
  - Sean Gelael
  - Max Hesse
  - Maxime Martin

- Team Sorg Rennsport**
  - Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 CS
  - Benito Tagle
  - Christoph Krombach
  - Daniel Gregor
  - Patrik Grütter

- SunEnergy1** by SPS automotive performance
  - Mercedes-AMG GT3
  - Kenny Habul
  - Mikaël Grenier
  - Maro Engel
  - Jules Gounon

- Les Deux Arbres**
  - Ligier JS2 R
  - Steve Zacchia
  - Patrick Zacchia
  - Jack Leconte
  - Antoine Lepesqueux
  - Christophe Bouchut

- HRT Bilstein**
  - Mercedes-AMG GT3 Evo 2020
  - Hubert Haupt
  - Maro Engel, GER
  - Patrick Assenheimer, GER
  - Ryan Ratcliffe, ENG
  - Khaled Al Qubaisi

- Autorama Motorsport** by Wolf-Power Racing
  - Volkswagen Golf GTI TCR DSG
  - Emil Heyerdahl
  - Marlon Menden
  - Jérôme Ogayl
  - Constantin Kletzer
  - Yannick Mettler

- MS7 by WRT**
  - Audi R8 LMS GT3 EVO 2019
  - Mohammed Saud Fahad Al Saud
  - Michael Vergers
  - Dries Vanthoor
  - Christopher Mies
  - Rik Breukers

- Autorama Motorsport** by Wolf-Power Racing
  - Volkswagen Golf GTI TCR DSG
  - Alberto Vescovi
  - Roberto Ferri
  - Miklas Born
  - Constantin Kletzer
  - Yannick Mettler



- 1. Car Collection motorsport**  
 Audi R8 LMS Evo 2019
- Dimirtri Parhofer
  - Christopher Haase
  - Frédéric Vervish
  - Rik Breukers



- 1. Autorama Motorsport** by Wolf-Power Racing  
 Volkswagen Golf GTI TCR DSG
- Marlon Menden
  - Fabian Danz
  - Yannick Mettler
  - Stefan Tanner
  - Jérôme Ogay



- 1. Black Falcon**  
 Mercedes-AMG GT3
- Abdulaziz Al Faisal
  - Hubert Haupt
  - Yelmer Buurman
  - Gabriele Piana



- 1. Liqui Moly Team Engstler**  
 Volkswagen Golf GTI TCR SEG (2017)
- Luca Engstler
  - Florian Thoma
  - Benjamin Leuchter
  - Jean Karl Vernay



- 1. Herberth Motorsport**  
 Porsche 991 GT3 R
- Daniel Allemann
  - Ralf Bohn
  - Robert Renauer
  - Alfred Renauer
  - Brendon Hartley



- 1. Belgian Audi Club Team WRT**  
 Audi R8 LMS
- Alain Ferté
  - Michael Meadows
  - Stuart Leonard
  - Laurens Vanthoor



- 1. Black Falcon 2**  
 Mercedes SLS AMG GT3
- Abdulaziz Al Faisal
  - Hubert Haupt
  - Yelmer Buurman
  - Oliver Webb



- 1. Stadler Motorsport**  
 Porsche GT3 R
- Mark Ineichen
  - Rolf Ineichen
  - Marcel Matter
  - Adrian Amstutz
  - Christian Engelhart

- 2. MS7 by WRT**  
 Audi R8 LMS Evo 2019
- Mohammed Saud Fahad Al Saud
  - Michael Vergers
  - Chrisopher Mies
  - Dries Vanthoor

- 2. Bas Koeten Racing**  
 Cupra TCR DSG
- Ronny Jost
  - Julien Apotheloz
  - Loek Hartog
  - Oscar Graeper

- 2. Manthey Racing**  
 Porsche 991 GT3 R
- Lars Kern
  - Sven Müller
  - Mathieu Jaminet
  - Otto Klohs

- 2. LMS Racing by Bas Koeten Racing**  
 Seat LCR TC R V 3 DSG
- Olli Kangas
  - Kari-Pekka Laaksonen
  - Anti Buri
  - Willem Meijer

- 2. Manthey Racing**  
 Porsche 991 GT3 R
- Otto Klohs
  - Sven Müller
  - Matteo Cairoli
  - Jochen Krumbach

- 2. Black Falcon**  
 Mercedes SLS AMG GT3
- Abdulaziz al Faisal
  - Oliver Webb
  - Adam Christodoulou
  - Oliver Morley
  - Frank Montecalvo

- 2. Ram Racing**  
 Mercedes SLS AMG GT3
- Cheerag Arya
  - Thomas Jaeger
  - Tom Onslow-Cole
  - Adam Christodoulo

- 2. ALL-INKL.COM Münnich Motorsport**  
 Mercedes SLS AMG GT3
- Rene Münnich
  - Marc Basseng
  - Rob Huff

- 3. Bohemia Energy** racing with Scuderia Praha  
 Ferrari 488 GT3
- Jiří Písařík
  - Josef Král
  - Matteo Malucelli

- 3. Red Camel-Jordans .nl**  
 Cupra TCR DSG
- Ivo Breukers
  - Henry Littig
  - Cody Hill
  - Klaus Kresnik

- 3. GRT Grasser Racing Team**  
 Lamborghini Huracán GT3
- Mark Ineichen
  - Rolf Ineichen
  - Christian Engelhart
  - Mirko Bortolotti

- 3. Bonk Motorsport**  
 Audi RS3 LMS DSG
- Hermann Bock
  - Max Partl
  - Rainer Partl
  - Volker Piepmeyer
  - Michael Bonk

- 3. Black Falcon**  
 Mercedes-AMG GT3
- Abdulaziz Al Faisal
  - Hubert Haupt
  - Yelmer Buurman
  - Michal Broniszewski
  - Maro Engel

- 3. C.ABT Racing**  
 Audi R8 LMS
- Christer Jöns
  - Andreas Weishaupt
  - Isaac Tutumlu Lopez
  - Matias Henkola
  - Daniel Abt

- 3. Dragon Racing 1**  
 Ferrari 458 Italia GT3
- Mohammed Jawa
  - Jordan Grogor
  - Matt Griffin
  - Rob Barff

- 3. Black Falcon 2**  
 Mercedes SLS AMG GT3
- Khaled Al Qubaisi
  - Jeroen Bleekemolen
  - Abdulaziz Bin Turki Al Faisal
  - Hupert Haupt
  - Adam Christodoulou



- 1. Team Abu Dhabi by Black Falcon 1**  
 Mercedes SLS AMG GT3
- Khaled Al Qubaisi
  - Sean Edwards
  - Jeroen Bleekemolen
  - Bernd Schneider



- 1. Team Abu Dhabi by Black Falcon**  
 Mercedes SLS AMG GT3
- Khaled Al Qubaisi
  - Sean Edwards
  - Jeroen Bleekemolen
  - Thomas Jäger



- 1. Need for Speed Schubert 1**  
 BMW Z4 GT3
- Augusto Farfus
  - Edward Sandström
  - Tommy Milner
  - Claudia Hürtgen



- 1. IMSA Performance MATMUT 1**  
 Porsche 997 GT3 RSR
- Raymond Narac
  - Patrick Pilet
  - Marco Holzer



- 1. Land Motorsport 2**  
 Porsche 997 GT3 Cup
- Carsten Tilke
  - Gabriel Abergel
  - Niclas Kantenich
  - Andzej Dzikevic



- 1. VIP Pet foods 1**  
 Porsche RSR
- Tony Quinn
  - Klark Quinn
  - Craig Baird
  - Jonathan Webb



- 1. Duller Motorsport**  
 BMW Z4 Coupé
- Dieter Qvester
  - Dirk Werner
  - Jamie Campbell-Walter
  - Philipp Peter



- 1. Duller Motorsport 1**  
 BMW M3 E46 GTR
- Dieter Qvester
  - Hans Joachim Stuck
  - Philipp Peter
  - Toto Wolff

- 2. AF Corse SRL 2**  
 Ferrari 458 Italia GT3
- Lorenzo Carvalho
  - Lorenzo Case
  - Marco Cioci
  - Mika Salo

- 2. Heico Motorsport GmbH 1**  
 Mercedes SLS AMG GT3
- Bernd Schneider
  - Maximilian Buhk
  - Christiaan Frankenhou
  - Max Nilsson
  - Andreas Zuber

- 2. AF Corse SRL 1**  
 Ferrari F430 GT2
- Eppe Perazzini
  - Michal Broniszewski
  - Lorenzo Case
  - Marco Cioci

- 2. Petronas Syntium Team 1**  
 BMW Z4M Coupé
- Nobuteru Taniguchi
  - Masataka Yanagida
  - Fariqe Hairuman
  - Johannes Stuck
  - Hiroki Yoshida

- 2. Al Faisal Racing 1**  
 BMW Z4 M Coupé
- Abdulaziz Al Faisal
  - Paul Spooner
  - Claudia Hürtgen
  - Stian Sorlie

- 2. Bleekemolen 1 Race Planet**  
 Porsche 997 GT3 Cup
- Michael Bleekemolen
  - Sebastiaan Bleekemolen
  - Jeroen Bleekemolen
  - Jan Lammers

- 2. Konrad Lechner Motorsport**  
 Porsche GT3 RSR
- Franz Konrad
  - Wolfgang Kaufmann
  - Luciano Da Silva
  - Stephan Rosina
  - Michael Schrey

- 2. Hubert Bergh Motorsport**  
 Porsche 996 GT3
- Hubert Bergh
  - Sven Isakson
  - Manfred Gottschich
  - Kenneth Hedberg
  - Djon Clausen

- 3. Craft Racing AMR**  
 Aston Martin Vantage GT3
- Frank Yu
  - Tomonobu Fujii
  - Darren Turner
  - Darryl O'Young
  - Stefan Mücke

- 3. Heico Motorsport GmbH 2**  
 Mercedes SLS AMG GT3
- Bernd Schneider
  - Kenneth Heyer
  - Andreas Simonsen
  - Rodolfo Gonzalez

- 3. Black Falcon #7**  
 Mercedes Benz SLS AMG GT3
- Thomas Jäger
  - Kenneth Heyer
  - Jan Seyffarth
  - Sean Paul Breslin

- 3. Al Faisal Racing 1**  
 BMW Z4 M Coupé
- Abdulaziz Al Faisal
  - Claudia Hürtgen
  - Marko Hartung
  - Khaled Al Faisal

- 3. Besaplast Racing Team**  
 Porsche 997 GT3 Cup
- Martin Tschornia
  - Franjo Kovac
  - Roland Asch
  - Sebastian Asch
  - Kurt Thiim

- 3. Delahaye Renault** United for Belgium 2  
 Renault Megane Trophy
- Bas Leinders
  - Stéphane Lémeret
  - Grégory Franchi
  - Vincent Vosse
  - Frédéric Bouvy

- 3. Pro Speed Competition 1**  
 Porsche GT3-RS
- Rudi Penders
  - Franz Lamot
  - Alexandra v/d Velde
  - Stephan Schrauwen

- 3. AC Bratislava**  
 Porsche GT3
- Miro Konopka
  - Gene Sigal
  - Matthew Alhadeff
  - Mauro Casadei

Remember when...

# Creventic hosted an endurance race for the very first time?



Images - Petr Fryba

On 12 January 2006, the newly-founded 'CREVENTIC BV' - the passion project of long-time friends and teammates Gerrie Willems and Ivo Breukers - hosted the 24H DUBAI for the very first time.

Aimed primarily at 'gentlemen' drivers, and advertised heavily as such at the previous year's Nürburgring 24 Hours, the '24HDUBAI.com' was the first endurance event to be held at the then-new Dubai Autodrome. The venue had hosted its first international event, the penultimate round of the 2004 FIA GT Championship, less than 15 months earlier.

Buoyed by both the new circuit and the prospect of 'gentlemanly' competition during Europe's winter off-season, an impressive 56 teams and 67 cars were entered for the first 24H DUBAI, way above Creventic's predictions. A grid bolstered further by a two-time 24 Hours of Le Mans winner, a four-time European Touring Car Champion, and the DTM's first race winner.

Worryingly, the Dutch promoter's first event was almost over before it had even started when, on 4 January 2006, the tragic passing of Dubai's ruler Sheikh Maktoum bin Rashid Al Maktoum sparked an Emirate-wide week of mourning and the cancellation of all major live events. Special dispensation was eventually given to the 24H DUBAI (not considered a 'major' event at the time), and both the post-race champagne / 'fizzy grape juice' celebration and Wednesday's Free Practice session were cancelled as a mark of respect to the UAE's fallen leader. Many drivers' first laps 'in anger' at the Autodrome consequently came at the wheel of their rental

cars on the Thursday morning at less than 60kph.

Duller Motorsport ultimately secured the first overall win at the 24H DUBAI in commanding fashion (the Austrian team's 10-lap winning margin may never be broken). In a touching moment, Le Mans legend Hans Joachim-Stuck collected the chequered flag alongside his son Johannes, the latter taking his first 24-hour class win in the 'D1' class aboard Schubert Motorsport's BMW 120D. The German team would go on to win the event overall in 2011.

What had looked to be an easy 1-2 for Duller's duo of BMW E46 M3s however was derailed by a loss of drive that eventually eliminated the sister entry at half-distance. Ironically, this was just the first of several tales of woe for the would-be runners-up: perennial podium contender Drexler Motorsport was felled by engine failure after nine hours; electrical gremlins ground early leader CM-Creativ-Marketing to a halt during the night; even eventual 2nd-placed Hubert Bergh Motorsport, which also won the 'A6' class ahead of 3rd-placed AC Bratislava, only did so after suffering gearbox and clutch issues.

Motors Television, on-site to film an extended video highlights package of the inaugural event, fittingly took the 'A4' class win, while Team Mirage Australian and Maeder Motorsport GMBH took commanding wins in 'A1' and 'A2.' Just behind the latter in 'A2' meanwhile was a little-known outfit called Team German Wheels.com, which, in the years to come, would go on to win the 24H DUBAI overall FIVE times as 'Black Falcon' ■

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For a good time scan here!



ULTRA PREMIUM  
WATER BASED  
PERSONAL LUBRICANT



# Rain dance

It will forever be remembered as one of, if not the, most famous editions of the 24H DUBAI. At the 15th edition of the 24H DUBAI, Jeroen Bleekemolen, Hubert Haupt, and the UAE's Khaled Al Qubaisi secured their third overall win at the 24H DUBAI. This though was not the only record set that weekend...

Five years on, Jeroen joins Creventic to recall Black Falcon's historic accomplishment that day, the scintillating start to the event, and its ignominious end.

Images – Nico Mombaerts / Petr Frýba / Mercedes-Benz Media

Coming into the 15th edition, Black Falcon was among many pundits' pre-race favourites to win the 24H DUBAI in 2020. Two months earlier, the German team had signed off 2019 with class championships in both the VLN and the Porsche Carrera Cup Germany. It had taken a commanding 24-hour win at the Circuit of the Americas. And, during the summer, had also finished on the overall podium at both the Nürburgring 24 Hours and Spa 24 Hours.

That Black Falcon, then a 14-year veteran at the 24H DUBAI, had already won the event four times overall at a time when no other team had won more than twice was similarly ominous.

Its driver line-up for the 2020 24H DUBAI wasn't lacking endurance racing experience either. Alongside two-time event winners Jeroen Bleekemolen, Khaled Al Qubaisi and Hubert Haupt, Black Falcon ran future four-time Bathurst 12 Hours class winner Ben Barker and 2016 Nürburgring 24 Hours winner Manuel Metzger.

Expectations, perhaps unsurprisingly, were high...

"There was a bit of pressure, yes, because I had already won [the 24H DUBAI] twice. So had my teammates," explains Jeroen, who entered the event for the 12th time in 2020. "But we hadn't won for quite a while. For several years, we were absolutely one of the teams to beat and a team that could win. But you've got to bring it home. And we'd had a few years of bad luck.

"And Dubai is a tough race. It's probably one of the toughest 24-hour races there is, with all the traffic and the amount of dark running. And the competition had been growing. So, yeah, we really needed another good finish, and just had to hope that was good enough for the win."

In spite of Jeroen's understandable wariness (though he won back-to-back in 2012 and 2013, and took an overall podium in 2014, he had failed to finish the following five editions!), Black Falcon's 2020 weekend got off to a strong start. The #4 Mercedes-AMG GT3 was 2nd overall in Free Practice, Qualifying and Night Practice. 'Beaten,' at worse, by two-tenths

of a second, and, at best, by a scant 0.047s. And never by the same car twice.

Indeed, matters only started going awry on race day...

"We had all driven in Night Practice," Jeroen continues, "but two of our drivers hadn't done their two laps during the night, which is a mandatory thing. So we got a three-place grid penalty, and that dropped us off the front row."

The demoted Black Falcon was replaced on the front row by former series champion, and the 24H DUBAI's overall winner in 2017, Herberth Motorsport. Driven by Porsche factory driver Sven Müller, the #91 Porsche made an electric start to the race, capitalising on a poor getaway by Maro Engel in the pole sitting Toksport WRT AMG GT3 (a rare error by the Mercedes factory driver) to lead the 65-car field into turn one. Engel dutifully slotted into 2nd, just ahead of Christopher Mies, who had made a similarly strong start from 4th in the MS7 by WRT Audi R8 LMS.

Thus began, arguably, one of the most thrilling opening battles for the lead in 24H DUBAI history.

Halfway round the opening lap, Müller (Herberth, #91) was being harried by a recovering Engel (Toksport, #777), while, just a few car lengths further back, Mies (MS7 by WRT, #7) was fending off HTP Winward Motorsport's Maximilian Buhk. One lap later, Engel was already back in front of the Herberth Porsche after a decisive, late-braking manoeuvre down the inside of turn seven.

Müller however was having none of that, and after crawling all over the #777 Mercedes' gearbox down the back straight – at 250+ kph(!) – the pair were side-by-side heading into the hairpin at turn 10. The Toksport Mercedes only just managed to retain the lead.

Both Engel and Müller were seemingly oblivious however to Mies, who was now right on their coattails through turn 10, and who almost went THREE-wide into turn 12 to try and snatch the lead. Once again, Engel held on.



"This is mag-NIF-icent stuff! They've all had their Weetabix this morning!" an animated John Hindhaugh remarked from the commentary box. In an ironic moment of foreshadowing, the voice of radiolemans.com went on to ask, "does everybody think we're going to stop in five laps time?!"

By lap three, the GT leaders had already caught the TCE tail-enders. Indeed, heading out of turn 10, Mies came millimetrically close to tapping Sorg Rennsport's TC-entered BMW M240i Racing Cup as he continued his pursuit of 2nd-placed Müller in the Herberth Porsche. With Mies momentarily forced to lift, the pendulum effect brought Buhk up onto the Audi's gearbox, and the HTP Winwards Mercedes was up into 3rd a few corners later.

Only six car lengths back, Jeroen in the #4 Mercedes continued to hold 5th, the disappointment of qualifying already forgotten.

"If you look at the end result, [qualifying] usually doesn't mean a lot. Yes, if you start on the front row, it can help because, straightaway, you can start to attack for the lead. If you start 5th, you have to fight your way forward again and you could be stuck for an hour behind a car that is a little slower than you, but quick enough that you can't pass it.

"But Dubai is a flat-out sprint race. I always say every second you gain is in the pocket, and someone else needs to make it up, either by being quicker than you or smarter on strategy with the Code 60s. Starting on the front row doesn't mean you'll be quicker over 24 hours."

Heading into turn one for the fourth time, Engel (Toksport, #777) and Müller (Herberth, #91), side-by-side once again, were 'Zonta'-ing the NKPP Racing by Bas Koeten CUPRA when they came upon a gaggle of TCE backmarkers. Both were momentarily penned in as they entered turn two.

By contrast, 3rd-placed Buhk (HTP Winward, #84) had a straight shot through turns one and two, and, with momentum on his side, opted for a wide slingshot around the outside of turn three.

In one breath-taking move, Buhk passed not only the Toksport Mercedes and the Herberth Porsche to take the overall lead, but the Nordschleife Racing Ligier JS2 R AND the Zengö Motorsport CUPRA TCR the pair had been trying to lap!

"Round the outsiiiiide.... what a MANOEUVRE, for the lead!"

That is just EXTR-aordinary stuff!" The effervescent John Hindhaugh once again.

Sadly, just a few seconds behind the fight for the lead, another potential contender for victory – local boys GPX Racing – had just eliminated itself from the race.

On the approach to turn one, and having slipstreamed his way (almost) alongside the #88 Car Collection Motorsport Audi R8 LMS, GPX Racing's Dirk Werner lost the back end under braking. The #24 Porsche GT3 R slued across the front of the #88 Audi – the latter survived with only a glancing blow – before burying its nose heavily in the wall.

Werner fortunately emerged unscathed, but the Porsche was a write-off. A bold move that hadn't paid off...

"You have to be aware of where it's tricky to pass and so on. But I think you can always get unlucky. You can always make a mistake and it doesn't always mean you're going to have the perfect race. You just try to do your best.

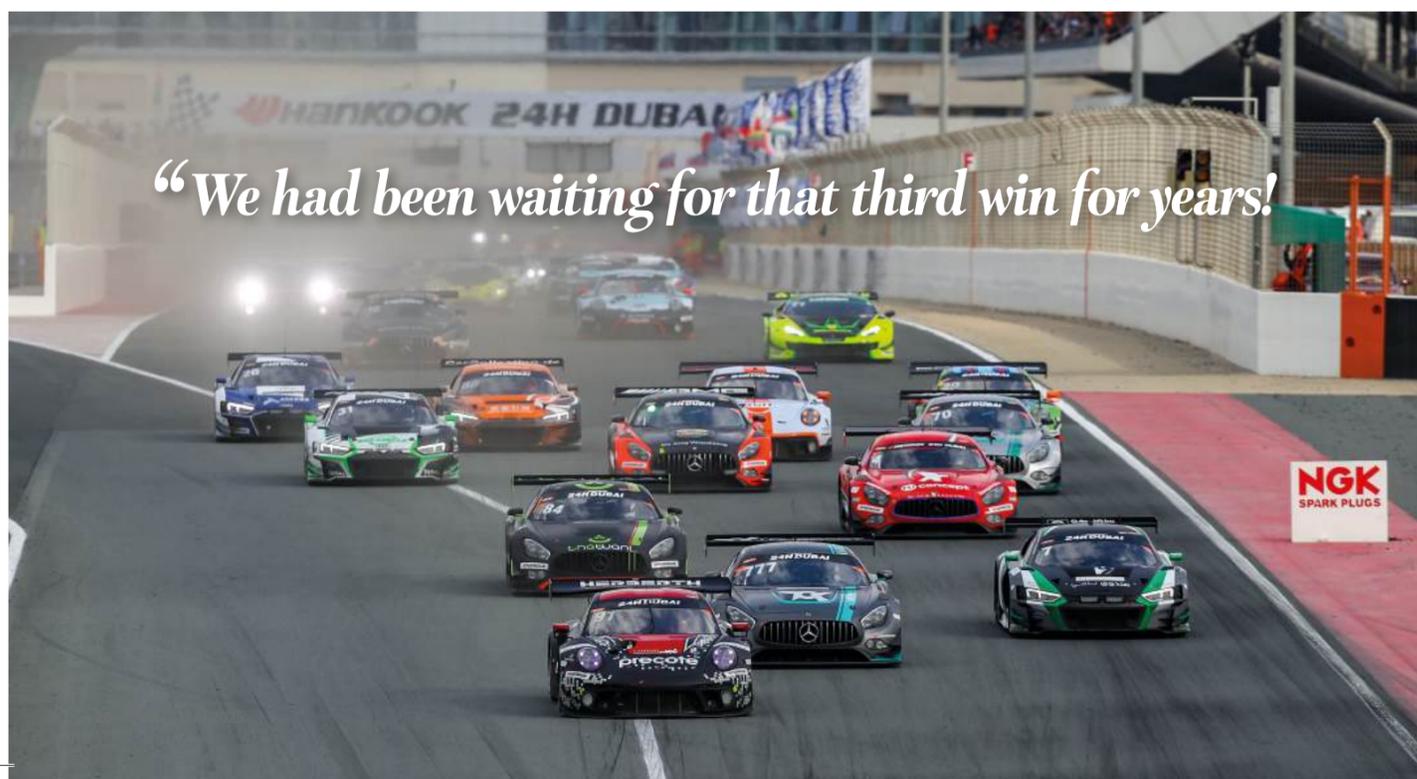
"It's always a matter of risk calculation: do I go for the pass, yes or no? Is it worth it, or do I wait for another corner? There's risk calculation all the time in Dubai."

Back under green after the opening Code 60, the HTP Winward Mercedes held the lead for most of the remaining first hour before finally yielding to the Herberth Motorsport Porsche once again (the pole-sitting Toksport WRT Mercedes, having been swallowed up by the pack during the restart, was now running 7th). After an incredibly close opening hour, just 54 seconds covered the top 11, while the top two were split by only eight-tenths of a second.

Jeroen, passed just moments before the end of the first hour by the Barwell Motorsport Lamborghini, completed the opening hour in 4th.

"We were very close to the leaders after one hour. And I think that's the main thing. Then you can pick your own destiny in terms of strategy and go from there.

"Like I say, Dubai is flat-out from the word 'go,' which makes the race very special. In many other 24-hour races, you have safety cars, so, at a race like Daytona, you can make up times and even several laps. But this race, especially, you have to push from the beginning."





An early-stopping, and thus off-strategy, Barwell Motorsport held the lead during the second and third hours, but consistent pace by Jeroen and Manuel Metzger, as well as metronomic pit work from the Black Falcon mechanics, meant the #4 Mercedes eventually hit the front at the end of the fifth hour, albeit with 2016 event winner WRT and reigning 24H DUBAI champion Car Collection Motorsport still nipping at the red Mercedes' fetlocks.

What many assumed would be a straight fight to the flag however, while technically accurate, proved to be anything but. Shortly after 8pm local time (five hours, plus change, completed), rain started falling over Dubai Motor City.

With the Dubai Autodrome offering only limited drainage (not an unreasonable concept for a circuit in the Middle East...), standing water started pooling around the circuit, sending most of the GT frontrunners to the pits for wet weather tyres. So packed was the pitlane, many of the pit callers were forced to take on wets at a 45-degree angle to their pitboxes!

In a bold move meanwhile, Black Falcon chose to ride out, what turned out to be, a brief initial rain shower. Having brimmed its tank, the German team opted to leave Hubert Haupt out, in the wet conditions, on slick tyres.

"I mean, no-one can exactly predict what is going to happen, but I think I've always been pretty good at choosing the right strategy in terms of tyres. And as a team, we made that decision to stay out on slicks, which was the right call.

"A lot of teams pitted for wets, and then had to pit again. And we know, a pit stop can cost you a lot of time. So that was our idea. We knew it was not going to rain that hard, and we knew there was a lot more to come. And I think this is where we were smart. We tried to see what weather was coming, and play to that.

"But this was a tricky moment. When do you pit for wets? It was touch-and-go, to be honest."

When Hubert Haupt finally brought the #4 Mercedes in, from the lead, for wets just under 45 minutes later, the gamble looked to have paid off. Black Falcon had pulled out a 25-second advantage over an off-strategy MS7 by WRT in 2nd, and, more crucially, a full lap clear of Car Collection Motorsport in 3rd.

Even the normally bullet-proof Herberth Motorsport had misread the changeable weather, pitting in quick succession from

slicks to wets to slicks again, and falling two laps behind in 6th!

Just as the sixth hour ticked by however, heavy rain landed with a vengeance. "Torrenting down" came the call from radiolemans.com's Joe Bradley on pitroad. Grip, even on wet rubber, was soon very limited, and visibility, already low 90 minutes after sunset, was almost non-existent.

"We knew that rain might come during the race: I almost won the 2008 edition – in the [Porsche] Cup car, not even the fastest class! – because we had a lot of rain that year too. So we knew it was possible to get rain in Dubai. And we knew it was going to be bad. But nobody knew it was going to be that bad!"

An incident was inevitable, and a little under 15 minutes after the rain arrived, Leipert Motorsport's Lamborghini Huracán Super Trofeo, an early leader in GTX, aquaplaned off the track and into the barriers at turn two. Cue a Code 60.

In the intervening 18 minutes, the rain began falling even harder. Soon the track's white lines had all but disappeared, and drivers were obliged to shortcut the 'lakes' emerging at turns two, six and 14. Only the most courageous among the touring car field attempted to wade their way through.

Another Code 60 was called shortly after hour seven. Fruitlessly, as it turns out, as few of the GT3 frontrunners could even reach 60kph on the saturated asphalt!

"If the water is that high, and you get rivers over the track, the front will just start 'floating' over the track, particularly in a race car. And you cannot do anything. You can try to turn, you can try to brake, or do whatever you want, but if the car's really starting to aquaplane – or 'hydroplane,' as they call it in the States – then you really can't do anything to stop it."

The rain refused to abate, and with thunder and lightning now striking the neighbouring Dubai Motor City, race control finally brought out the red flag at 22.17pm local time. After only seven hours and 17 minutes of the planned 24-hour race had elapsed, it was the #4 Mercedes that led the field to a makeshift parc fermé on the main straight.

**A**t 7am the following morning, news broke that the 2020 24H DUBAI would not be continued. Few could argue with Creventic's decision. Standing water now covered

most of the circuit, despite the efforts of emergency crews to clear it. The pitlane and most of the garages were flooded, and since many of the electrical outlets in the Autodrome's pitboxes were mounted in the floor, all power to the circuit had been shut off on safety grounds. Even the tunnel linking the paddock with the main grandstand was underwater.

To restart the race would have been madness.

Just like that, and after completing only 168 laps, Black Falcon had secured its fifth overall win at the 24H DUBAI, and its ninth podium since 2011. A slightly baffled, though very well-rested(!), Jeroen Bleekemolen, Khaled Al Qubaisi and Hubert Haupt dutifully climbed to the top step of a hastily-organized podium for a record-breaking third time, and were joined by first-time victors, Manuel Metzger and Ben Barker, the latter on his first race at Dubai and, incredibly, his first race with the Mercedes-AMG GT3.

An 'easy win'? Not at all. For Jeroen Bleekemolen, that third win, regardless of Mother Nature's intervention, had been a long time coming...

"We had been waiting for that win for years! Early on, we won

two in a row in '12 and '13, which was fantastic. I've had a lot of other close finishes. I was 2nd in 2008. I finished 3rd as well in 2014. And I've had some class wins and podiums as well. So I've had a lot of success [at the 24H DUBAI], which is great. And we were always in the hunt to win a third one, but it didn't come until 2020. That just proves how tough it is to win the 24H DUBAI!" ■



## What else happened at the 15th 24H DUBAI?

**B**ehind the victorious Black Falcon, 2019 event winner Car Collection Motorsport was quick to praise "a flawless race" that secured the #88 Audi R8 LMS GT3 2nd overall.

2016 24H DUBAI winner, and 2019 event runner-up, MS7 by WRT had come into the 2020 edition aiming for the overall win, with Christopher Mies – PRO on the #7 Audi R8 LMS – confident that, without the "strategic pit stop" completed during the final Code 60 as the rain became torrential, the Belgian team might well have leapfrogged the Black Falcon Mercedes.

Ironically, an incident in the sodden closing stages almost eliminated both Audis: contact between WRT's Michael Vergers and Car Collection's Markus Winkelhock on the approach to turn 10 sent the #88 Audi spinning while the pair were battling for 2nd, though both cars were able to recover and continue.

Sandwiched between Herberth Motorsport in 4th and the Barwell Motorsport Lamborghini in 6th, WRT's sister entry – the #31 Audi R8 LMS, driven by 2014 24H DUBAI winners Rolf and Mark Ineichen, and Italy's Mirko Bortolotti in his first race as an Audi factory driver – rounded out the top five. This, despite early contact with PB Racing's Lotus Exige Cup V6 R.

Although Black Falcon had run Mercedes' new 'EVO' package at the Nordschleife just a couple of months earlier, only two teams – SPS automotive performance, and America's CP Racing – ran the 2020-spec AMG GT3 in Dubai. SPS completed a solid run to 7th, just ahead of GT3-AM class winner MP Motorsport, but a heavy collision with Saintéloc Racing during the fifth hour – one that left the Audi R8 with significant front end damage – dropped CP Racing to 15th.

Polesitter Toksport WRT, which had already lost considerable time earlier in the weekend with a shunt in Free Practice, had been running 10th overall, but opted to box the #777 Mercedes

when the rain grew heavier. The AMG was replaced, ironically, by the sister #70 Mercedes in 10th place at the flag.

Early leader HTP Winward Motorsport meanwhile lost its front left wheel on-track during the fourth hour. 20 minutes were lost repairing the damaged wheel bearing, and the #84 Mercedes eventually finished 16th.

Leipert Motorsport's early retirement left the way clear for Dragon Racing to pick up the win in GTX, despite suffering two rear-left punctures. Across in 991, MRS GT-Racing took a long-awaited class win in Dubai ahead of category polesitter race:pro motorsport. Atlas BX Motorsport, which would go on to take the Overall GT Teams' title in 2023, took victory in GT4 on its event debut, even though the South Korean team started from the back of the GT grid!

TCE polesitter CWS Engineering endured a character-building run to a classified 2nd in TCX behind America's Team ACP - Tangerine Associates. Having already lost time to a broken rear light (a problem CWS mechanics remedied by 'simply' replacing the Ginetta's entire rear end), the British team lost further time when the front right steering arm wheel broke. A resourceful Colin White had to resort to turning only left to get the Ginetta back to the pits!

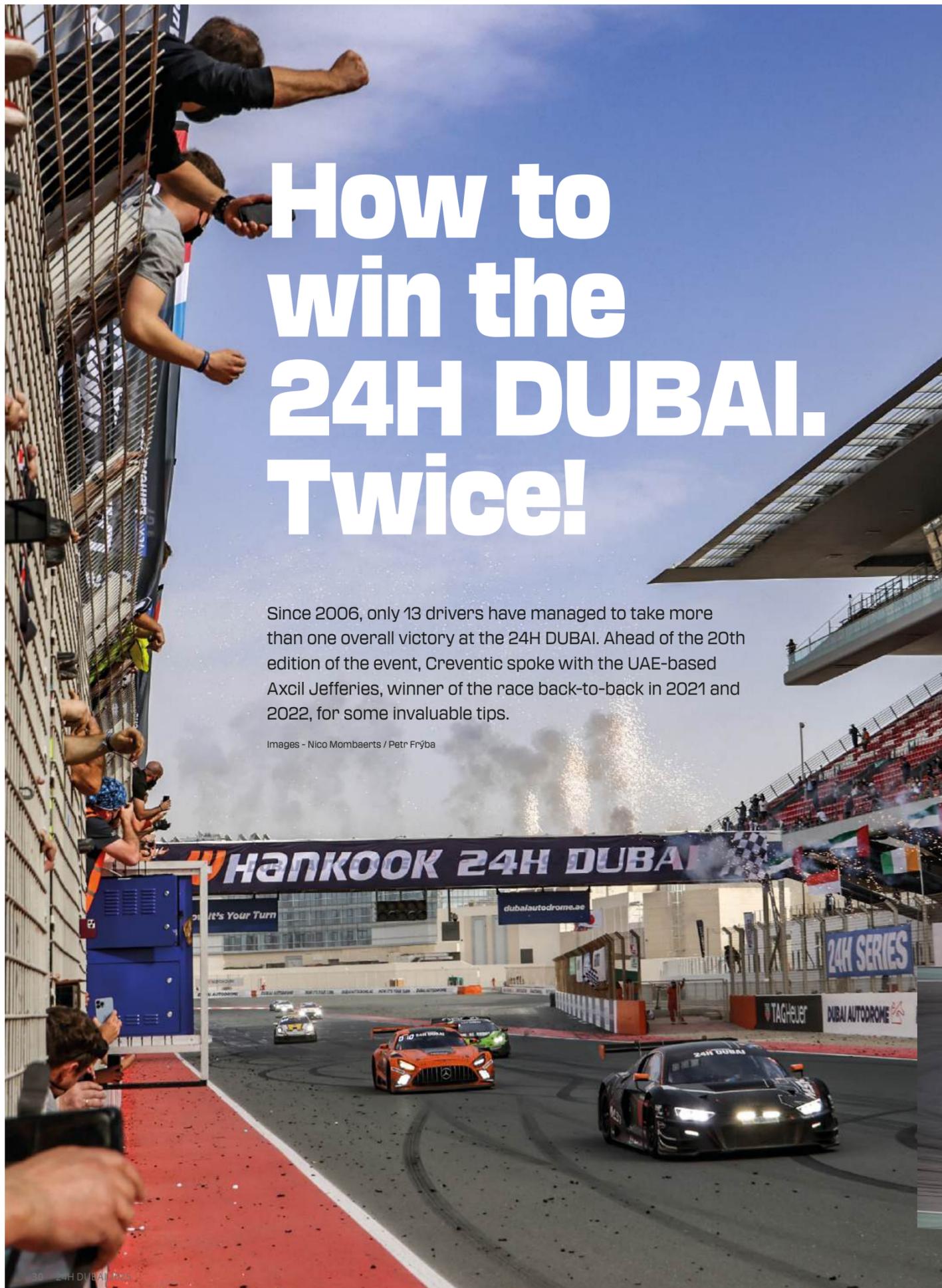
AC Motorsport took the TCR plaudits, the Belgian team securing its first, of an eventual two, overall TCE wins at the 24H DUBAI. A well-earned result, as the two-time TCE polesitter in Dubai had lost a near-certain win in 2019 to a small fire in the Audi's cockpit. It also marked the first motor racing success for Tour de France stage winner, Tom Boonen.

Zengö Motorsport's Gabor Kismarty-Lechner stole most of the event's TCE headlines however when he proposed to his long-time girlfriend Hanna on the 24H DUBAI grid. Don't worry. She said yes! ■

# How to win the 24H DUBAI. Twice!

Since 2006, only 13 drivers have managed to take more than one overall victory at the 24H DUBAI. Ahead of the 20th edition of the event, Creventic spoke with the UAE-based Axcil Jefferies, winner of the race back-to-back in 2021 and 2022, for some invaluable tips.

Images - Nico Mombaerts / Petr Fryba



**O**n 15 January 2022, Axcil Jefferies joined an elite group when he won the 24H DUBAI overall for the second time. This, after all, was only the 10th time in 16 years that a driver had won Creventic's flagship event more than once.

For the Zimbabwe-born Axcil, a long-time resident of the UAE, that day in 2022 remains a cherished moment.

"That's a great memory, to be part of such a small group of people that has done that," Axcil explains to Creventic. "Those wins feel pretty special because Dubai is home for me now. To have success at home, and have family and friends there, celebrating with you, you can't ask for more than that."

Gentleman and PRO that he is, Axcil is also quick to praise the teams and various teammates he competed with en-route to both wins. Though it borders dangerously close to being a motorsport cliché, few, admittedly, will deny that having a strong team and reliable teammates around you is pivotal to any successful endurance race...

"You really do need a great team behind you: the car needs to be prepared well, because it's a grueling race," Axcil continues. "And you need a strong driver line-up too. To have safe teammates, that's crucially important."

"A lot of the time, people look at the PROs in the race and give them most of the credit. But if you have a good 'bronze' in the car, that can drive a consistent pace and can work with your silver or gold driver, that's going to make your race."

The first secret to multiple victories at the 24H DUBAI? Make sure you work as a team.

**O**f course, as strong as the team around them might be, motor racing is a two-way street, and a driver taking on the 24H DUBAI needs to be both physically, and – arguably, more importantly – mentally, prepared to go the



distance. Indeed, for Axcil, like many of his peers, adapting to the endurance racing mindset after several years in single seaters took some time.

Secret to victory, number two. Get your head right.

"The approach to an endurance race is completely different. In sprint racing you take chances, and sometimes big risks, because you know you only have one or two opportunities to make up positions."

"But in a 24-hour race, losing a position during the first hour means absolutely nothing. The most important thing is to survive: trying to stay out of trouble; staying clean; making sure that after every stint you bring back the car with no damage. When I first started endurance racing, it was a completely different approach to what I was used to, and it took a while to adapt."

Indeed, ahead of his first 24H DUBAI in 2018, Axcil had only two, 24-hour race starts to his name. Prior to that, Axcil's focus on the single seater career ladder had included sojourns in Formula BMW Pacific in 2009, the short-lived FIA Formula Two championship (not that one...) in 2012, and fleeting appearances in Indy Lights and GP2 in 2013 and 2014. Switching to GTs for 2017 quickly produced back-to-back 'Pro' titles in the Lamborghini Super Trofeo Middle East, two wins during a part-campaign in the Squadra Corse's European one-make series, and even a runners-up spot at the 2017 Super Trofeo World Final at Imola.



And yet, none of his races during that time were longer than 90 minutes.

Axcil would eventually make his endurance racing bow midway through 2017, first at the 24H CIRCUIT PAUL RICARD in May and, four months later, at Creventic's European season finale in Portimão, both with newly-acquired patron, GP Extreme. Despite the learning curve, Axcil's endurance racing career got off to an encouraging start with two, top 10 finishes aboard GP Extreme's Renaultsport RS01 GT3.

Conversely, Axcil's first go at the race he would go on to win outright just four years later lasted just 19 laps...

"It was a bit of a weird feeling, because obviously the Renault RS01 was designed mainly for sprint racing. It wasn't really an endurance car. Unfortunately, at Dubai in 2018, we kept having one particular issue with the gearbox, with a part that kept breaking. We changed it multiple times until we were out of spares. We basically used everything that we had!

"The team tried their best to fix it, but going into that race, we knew we were going in with a problem. You always hope for the best, but at some point, we knew we would have to retire."

After a brief sojourn in the VLN and a crushing debut at the Nürburgring 24 Hours in 2019 (a late blow-out damaged the Konrad Motorsport Lamborghini beyond repair just three hours from home), Axcil made his 24H DUBAI return in 2020, now peddling for Toksport WRT. Tellingly, the German team, entering only its second 24H SERIES event, had been impressed with Axcil's pace at Creventic's 24-hour event at the Circuit of the Americas two months earlier: as well as helping to secure 3rd in A6-Pro and 5th overall at COTA, the Zimbabwe star had been second only to teammate, and Mercedes PRO, Luca Stolz in terms of raw speed.

A still-troubled, though far smoother run in Dubai brought Axcil both his first finish and first podium in 2020 (10th overall, and 2nd in GT3-AM). Thanks in no small part to, yes, the strong



team around him, but also his years of experience racing in the UAE's unforgiving climate.

Secret to victory, number three. Prepare for the heat.

And the traffic.

"Every 24-hour race is hard on the car. And then on top of that, obviously, Dubai can get pretty hot. That means it's very physical for the drivers. Which is bad enough, but this is multi-class racing. It's not easy to manage the traffic and it can be really difficult to avoid contact, especially if you're not physically prepared.

"It's so important to remember that this is a 24-hour race. There are a lot of things that are out of your control that can impact the car's performance, so you can't take any unnecessary risks. If that means we lose two or three seconds on a lap, but by doing so you avoid contact, that's way more important."

One would also expect that Axcil, as a former race instructor at the Dubai Autodrome, would consider 'circuit knowledge' to be equally as important. Bizarrely though, the man himself believes that may not be as fundamental as you might think...

"I have quite a lot of track knowledge, and 100%, that can only be a benefit. But at the same time, do I think it's a massive advantage compared with the other drivers who come to compete at the 24H [DUBAI]? Not really. There are so many experienced PROs who have done this race multiple times that they know what they're doing, very well."

**W**ith a full 'Sprint Cup' campaign in GT World Challenge Europe under his belt – including a double duty weekend in which he took on his second Nürburgring 24 Hours and a GTWC round at Zandvoort simultaneously – Axcil returned to the 24H DUBAI in 2021 with GP Extreme (now GPX Racing) for, what would turn out to be, one of the most commanding victories to-date at the 24H DUBAI.

Driven by Axcil, GPX Racing owner Frédéric Fatien, 2016 event



winner Alain Ferté, and Porsche-contracted drivers Mathieu Jaminet and Julien Andlauer, the #26 Porsche 911 GT3 R led 522 of the 600 completed laps, and finished one lap clear of Team WRT to secure the UAE its first overall win at the 24H DUBAI since 'Abu Dhabi Racing by Black Falcon' flew the Pan-Arab colours in 2013.

The win also put to bed a dire home race for GPX Racing in 2020, one that ended heavily against the wall after just three laps.

"For sure, for the team and for team owner Fred, it was extremely sweet to have that kind of turnaround in a year. I mean, we did a lot of preparation for '21. There was A LOT of hard work and effort put in behind the scenes, so it was a really great feeling at the end of it to know that everything had been worth it.

"I would probably say, the time I enjoyed the most was with GPX. It was a great group of people. I mean, every year I've worked with great people, but I worked with close friends at GPX, which is always really nice. Myself and Julien [Andlauer] for example, we live in the same building! So it's nice to be teammates with someone you get on with."

(Psst, secret number one. Build a strong, reliable team around you.)

Unsurprisingly, when reigning winner Axcil returned to the 24H DUBAI for 2022, now with Team WRT – the 2021 runner-up and a former event winner in its own right – expectations were high for a second win on the bounce.

Secrets to victory, number four. Don't let the pressure get to you.

"For me, that opportunity was a real privilege. WRT is one of the best teams in the world and I'd always wanted to work with them. So when I got the call up, I was extremely excited. I actually missed practice because it was such a late decision!

"And again, the driver line-up we had was amazing. Yes, I'd won the race the year before, but the guys I was sharing with had won things that I could only dream of." – In 2022, Axcil and 'MS7' benefactor Mohammed Bin Saud Al Saud competed with Audi factory driver Christopher Mies, Dries Vanthoor (like Mies, a multi-time Nürburgring 24 Hours winner), and future GT World Challenge Europe class champion, Thomas Neubauer. – "And it was a really nice working relationship. Chris and Dries helped me get to grips with the Audi [R8 LMS GT3 EVO] because I'd never driven it before. And, again, everyone did a faultless job.

"For sure, there wasn't really pressure because I don't think the expectation to be quicker than them was there. It was my first time in the car and they are naturally some of the best drivers in the world. So for me, the goal was 'just' to get as close as possible on pace and support the team in any way I could. It all worked out quite well!"

Quite incredibly, Axcil's history-making win with 'MS7 by WRT' proved almost as dominant as the year before: the #7 Audi R8 LMS GT3, finished one lap ahead of WRT's sister #31 Audi R8, with the German team collectively leading all but 85 of the 596 completed laps.

Secret number five. Always be prepared.

"Of course as drivers, we need to do our job. But to lead that much of the race, that comes down to the team. It's down to the prep they've done beforehand, so we're never spending unnecessary time in the pits with mechanical failures. It comes from having a great strategy and making sure we're not missing the chance to box during Code 60s.

"I think, to be that dominant in a race, you need to put the work in early."

Signing off a phenomenal start to 2022, Axcil also won the 6H ABU DHABI outright onboard Baron Motorsport's Ferrari 488 GT3 the following weekend.

**T**here is another side to Axcil's 24H DUBAI career we haven't touched upon yet. Yes, he is one of only 13 drivers, to-date, to win the event more than once. But, interestingly, in 2022, he also became only the sixth driver to do so consecutively (fittingly, fellow '22 winners Mohammed Bin Saud Al Saud and Dries Vanthoor would become the seventh and eighth drivers to do so just one year later).

More impressive even than that, as of 2024, Axcil Jefferies is one of only two drivers to have won the 24H DUBAI overall with two different teams (GPX Racing and Team WRT) AND two different manufacturers (Porsche and Audi), emulating 2016 and 2021 winner, and former teammate(!), Alain Ferté.

Which brings us to 2023.

If expectations coming into 2022 were high, the following year, they were astronomical. Now running an 'Al Manar Racing' Mercedes-AMG GT3 entered by the Haupt Racing Team (owned





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## The faces behind the 24H SERIES live stream

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Stay safe!



by three-time event winner Hubert Haupt, incidentally), double winner Axcil stood to make history in 2023 by becoming the first driver ever to win the 24H DUBAI outright three times in succession, with THREE different teams, representing THREE different manufacturers.

These already lofty expectations were not helped by Axcil's Al Manar Racing Mercedes-AMG securing overall pole position for the 2023 race.

Secret to victory, number four...  
 ... no, seriously. DO NOT let the pressure get to you!



Unphased – so he says anyway, with a cheeky smile – by an event record within his grasp, one that might well have gone unmatched, Axcil's focus that weekend nevertheless stayed rooted to the job at-hand. Indeed, as one of Al Manar's SEMI-PROs alongside Fabian Schiller, and thus there to support the returning Luca Stolz and AM driver Martin Konrad, Axcil could ill-afford to let his mind wander.

Feedback from a driver after all, and a two-time winner to boot, can prove crucial to a team's chances of success in Dubai.

Secret to victory number six. Strategy, strategy, strategy!  
 "Pace is important in Dubai, because we have Code 60s, not safety cars. So if there's any time lost, the only way you can gain it back is through outright performance or with the correct strategy. So any time lost can be stressful.

"Obviously we have different strategy meetings before the race to decide when we should pit for fuel and tyres, who might run double stints, or when to come in if we have a Code 60, for example. If we see a crash, do we come in before we see the purple flags? What's the cut-off point for that? You really need to plan these scenarios beforehand, so there's usually a lot of meetings before the race! We're never just working on the spur of the moment.

"And bear in mind, we're usually thinking about these little things while going through traffic!"

Sadly, an historic third consecutive win in Dubai was not meant to be for Axcil in 2023, as terminal suspension failure eliminated the Al Manar Racing Mercedes after only five hours. His run aboard the 7TSIX McLaren 720S GT3 EVO in 2024 (that's four different manufacturers in six entries, just FYI) wasn't much better, as gearbox failure put the British team out before half-distance.

Looks like a third overall win at the 24H DUBAI for Axcil, now an LMGT3 champion in the European Le Mans Series, will have to wait for at least one more year.

Secret to victory, number seven. Never give up.  
 "There is a lot I would love to do in motor racing before I retire, and, for sure, a third win in Dubai would be really special. But, as we've seen with the last few races, we're not always in charge of that. You just have to keep working hard, and, with a bit of luck, you'll be rewarded for it in the end." ■

## Just how important is pole position for the 24H DUBAI?



"I think, as drivers, we always want to be on pole. It's always a good feeling, it's nice for the team, and it lifts everybody's spirits. But it means very little for a 24-hour race. You can be by far the quickest car in qualifying, and if you have a mechanical failure after three hours, it's game over."

Ironically, Axcil Jefferies took his second overall win at the 24H DUBAI from pole in 2022. And since 2006, SIX polesitters have gone on to take overall victory, the highest of any grid position thus far. Valid point notwithstanding, Axcil may be doing 24H DUBAI qualifying a disservice with that statement...

Certainly Duller Motorsport (winner of the inaugural edition in 2006), Australia's VIP Pet Foods (winner in 2008) and IMSA Performance Matmut (2010) would argue that pole offers a decisive advantage at the 24H DUBAI. Each after all took their respective wins from the top spot on the grid, and did so multiple laps ahead of their nearest rivals.

Throw in Abu Dhabi Racing by Black Falcon, which won from pole position in 2013 by two laps, and HALF of the first eight editions of the 24H DUBAI were won outright by the polesitter. One could reasonably argue that securing pole is, in fact, vital to a strong run in Dubai.

Admittedly, this argument gets turned dramatically on its head when we look at the eight most recent editions of the 24H DUBAI.

Between 2017 and 2024, only TWO polesitters - Black Falcon (2018) and MS7 by WRT (2022) - went on to take victory. More damning than that, FIVE of the last eight polesitters - Black Falcon (2017), Toksport WRT (2020), Herberth Motorsport (2021), Abu Dhabi Racing by HRT (2023) and the Saintéloc Junior Team (2024) - didn't reach the chequered flag at all. You can also add 2012 and 2015 polesitters - AUH Motorsports / FF Corse and FACH AUTO TECH - to that ignominious list.

2014 and 2016 meanwhile make for particularly interesting reading: not only did the winners of these two events not start from the front row, they didn't even start in the top 10!

Abu Dhabi Racing by Black Falcon took its first 24H DUBAI win in 2012 from 15th on the grid (still an event record to this day), while Stadler Motorsport came close to repeating that in 2014 when the Swiss team won from 14th on the grid.

So, just how important is securing outright pole for the 24H DUBAI? While it's true that a team is more likely to win the 24H DUBAI from the very front, more polesitters (seven) have actually retired from the event than gone on to win (six). Also, since 2011, more teams have secured victory from 4th on the grid (four) than those that have started from pole (three).

Victory? Or game over? Our 2025 polesitter may well yield the answer...

Remember when...

# Black Falcon broke an event record at the 10th 24H DUBAI?



**T**hat Black Falcon would make history at the 10th edition of the 24H DUBAI seemed fitting. The German team had competed at each event since 2006 after all, and was one of only two teams to have won overall more than once. That four drivers, including Saudi Arabia's Abdulaziz Al-Faisal, would secure their first outright wins that year, and be joined on the podium by the UAE's own Dragon Racing, was the icing on the cake.

Ironically, it was actually FACH AUTO TECH for whom the weekend had started strongly. The Swiss team banked the fastest time in second Free Practice and the top spot in qualifying. The #12 Porsche 997 GT3 R even led most of the opening hour.

All to no avail, as it turned out, as undertray damage and a broken radiator eliminated FACH AUTO TECH by half-distance. Compatriot, and the 2014 24H DUBAI winner, Stadler Motorsport was similarly unfortunate, and was felled prematurely by suspension failure.

Among the biggest scalps in a surprisingly high-attrition A6 class in 2015 however was Abu Dhabi Racing by Black Falcon. The two-time winning entry (one of 12 Mercedes SLS AMG GT3s on the record strong 89-car grid) was out after just four hours when an on-track collision caused irreparable damage to the chassis. The gullwing door was dutifully left open for Ram Racing to eventually claim 2nd overall with its brand-new SLS AMG, two years on from its motorsport debut at the same event, and one-year on from a heavy shunt that had eliminated the British team early.

KPM Racing, which repeatedly swapped the lead with Black Falcon during the night, looked on course for the final rostrum spot only for wheel hub failure to strike, ultimately pushing the

Aston Martin four laps adrift of the UAE's own Dragon Racing on the run to the flag. At a time when A6-AM runners were permitted to run no faster than 2m 04s across the full 24 hours, bar 10 'joker' laps, an overall podium and A6-Am class victory cemented a flawless weekend for the Emirati team. 2015 remains among its proudest accomplishments to this day (page 38).

Further back in the pack, Lebanon's Mamac Ogilvy Duel Racing was similarly chuffed with victory in A3T. After five grueling attempts, UAE-based brothers Sami, Ramzi and Nabil Moutran, together with Phil Quaife, could finally celebrate their first home win. The quartet would even end 2015 as the Overall Drivers' champions in the now-FIA-accredited 24H SERIES.

The day however belonged to Black Falcon, Abdulaziz Al-Faisal, Oliver Webb, Yelmer Buurman, and future three-time 24H DUBAI winner Hubert Haupt. The team finished four laps clear of the field and led unchallenged from the 11th hour onwards to secure a record-breaking third overall win in Dubai in commanding fashion.

Though his place on Creventic's traditional camel ride to the podium was taken by teammate Buurman, a jubilant Al-Faisal, a veteran of the 24H DUBAI since 2007 who would go on to take a second win in 2018, could finally alight the top step he'd chased for so long.

"It's my ninth year here," he explained to radiolemans.com's Nick Daman. "I've finished 2nd, 3rd, 4th. We've fought so hard to win this race. And this time we are 1st. This is a really great feeling!" ■

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The **BIG** interview.

# Dragon Racing's Leon Price

Founded in 2011, Dragon Racing has quickly established itself as one of, if not THE, most successful motor racing outfits in the GCC. At the helm is Leon Price, the former CEO of South Africa's Macsteel and a gentleman racer in his own right, who, fired by a genuine passion for motorsport, took his first racing steps in 2008 prior to campaigns in the Blancpain Endurance Series and the Le Mans Classic. Under his guidance, Dragon Racing has secured multiple regional championships at its Dubai Autodrome home circuit, and has fast become one of the 24H DUBAI's most successful teams yet, with five class wins already to its name from only 10 starts. And, surprise, surprise! As we run through each of Dragon Racing's years at the 24H DUBAI, Leon, as much as he enjoys celebrating his team's success, says the '88' will always have one eye on that next win...

Images – Nico Mombaerts / Petr Fryba / Eric Teeken



Leon, first things first, could you tell us a little about how Dragon Racing was introduced in 2011 and how your own racing career began...

"When I first started racing, I was living in Hong Kong. And to facilitate easy payment of bills, I formed a company called 'Dragon Racing Inc.' That's the name that's always been on our cars and was the name I used for my first-ever race in Monza [in 2008].

"It was really a Ferrari owner's club day that I entered in a 430 Challenge. That was basically the start of my career.

"Then, in the middle of 2012, we decided to graduate from a 430 Challenge car to a 458 GT3, so we entered a championship called the GT Trophy in the UK. They were four, 3-hour endurance races, and together with my PRO, Rob Barff, we entered and won all four races.

"By the end of September, I was busy restructuring Macsteel operations in Europe to be centred in Dubai, so we brought the Ferrari to Dubai and entered it in the local championship. A year later, we entered the [24H DUBAI] for the first time."

'88' has been a key part of Dragon Racing since its introduction. We're guessing that's a significant part of the team's identity...

"It very definitely is! '88', in China, is affiliated with 'wealth,' 'long life' and 'prosperity.' And that's what we want our cars to reflect, as often as we can get that race number."

The dragon motif is a key part of the livery too...

"It's like our Nike 'tick,' or Ferrari's prancing horse. Whenever we have a car on-track, no matter who's renting it, if it's our car, it has a dragon on it. Even if it's a little bit hidden.

"I lived in Hong Kong for more than 30 years, and I wanted to pay tribute to that. In the west, we know our star signs as 'Pisces' and 'Sagittarius,' but in the Chinese [Zodiac], the 'dragon' is the only mythical creature. So that's where 'Dragon' came from."

Let's skip ahead to Dragon Racing's 24H DUBAI debut in 2013, which, interestingly, was the only time you have personally raced at the event. What are your memories of that experience?

"For us, that was a very disappointing race. We were doing extremely well at the time" – after 11 hours, Dragon Racing was running 2nd in A6-Am and 7th overall. – "but then our power steering collapsed. And it was the one part we never thought to keep in stock. The PROs tried to drive the car without power steering [Rob Barff and Ferrari GT driver Matt Griffin], but after three or four laps, even they found it impossible.

"From that point on, I thought, 'maybe I'm an unlucky omen in the car!' So that was my last 24H [DUBAI], and from that point on, we started to win a few of them!" [Laughs]

Do you think you'd be tempted to come back for one last run in Dubai in the '88'?

"Every year, over the last few years, I've done one endurance race with my son. Mostly in [Ferrari] Challenge cars because he has no experience in GT3s. And maybe, before I turn 75, I'll do one more 24H [DUBAI]. In a year or two, if I think the [Ferrari 296 GT3] is up to having me in it(!) as opposed to needing a PRO in it, then I may give it one last go.

"Certainly I'm going to do one last big race before I turn 75. That's the target."

Dragon Racing was back for its second 24H DUBAI in 2014, and won the A6-Am class. Given its strong run in 2013, was the team hoping to challenge for victory?

"Did we expect it? No. But we did expect to be on the podium.

"I think the second last, or third last, stint sealed it for us. One of our AM drivers, who we thought was not as quick as he was earlier in the weekend, was just pounding out 2m 05s, 2m 06s, 2m 05s laptimes. And that crept us 17, 18 seconds ahead of the car that we were expecting to be behind [Leipert Motorsport's Lamborghini Gallardo GT3]. And then, of course, Jordan Grogor finished it off with a superb stint and brought it home. We enjoyed that race!"

Given that Dragon Racing is based at the Dubai Autodrome, how crucial do you think that track knowledge was to the 2014 win?

"We had people who knew the track backwards: all of our drivers had been in the car the whole year before, so they

didn't make any mistakes. And with any endurance race, as good as you are, you also need a little bit of luck. And I think luck was on our side for that particular race."

As the team owner, how did you deal with that win getting closer and closer that day?

"I'm a great believer in, until that car crosses the line, don't get excited about anything. And, trust me, I was shouting with joy when that car crossed the line first!

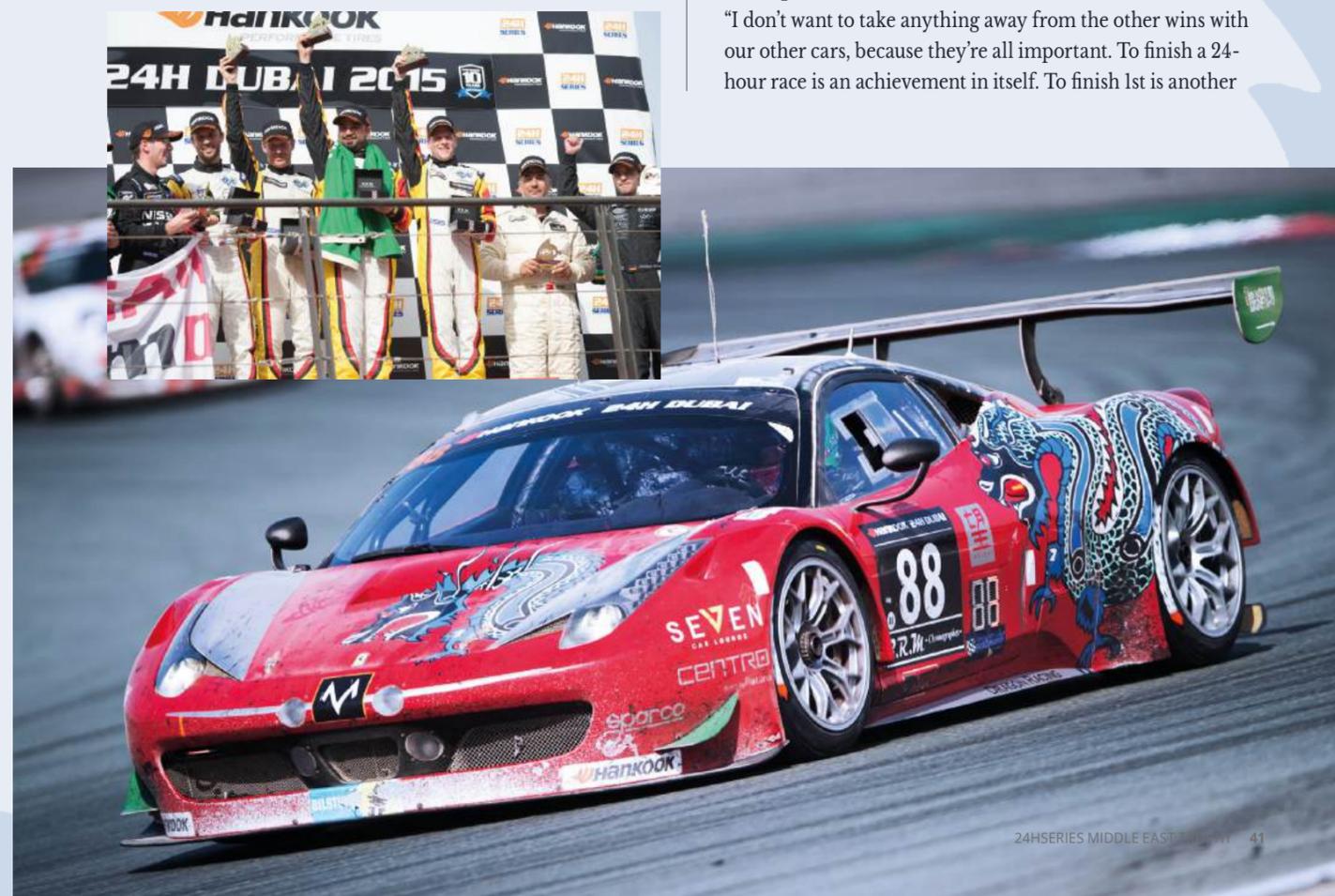
"I'm not a micro-manager. I see things in the pits that, possibly, I would do differently, just based on my own experiences. But I have nothing to fear because I have tasked everyone with doing their jobs, and it was a great team effort that day. We just didn't put a foot wrong, and the car was absolutely faultless."

Presumably, that sealed the '88's position on the car...?!

"Absolutely, 100 per cent! And the following year [2015], we went one better, because not only did we get the class win, we finished 3rd overall too. Which could very easily have been 2nd, but on that occasion, Lady Luck was not on our side. We had a small incident which cost us 25, maybe 26 seconds," – a fused wheel nut meant Dragon's mechanics were unable to replace the right rear wheel for the final four hours – "and that cost us a position. But we were still delighted with 3rd overall, because the GT3 field that year was very big and very strong."

Would you say that overall podium is the team's best 24H DUBAI performance to-date?

"I don't want to take anything away from the other wins with our other cars, because they're all important. To finish a 24-hour race is an achievement in itself. To finish 1st is another



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step up. And to do that with the Mercedes, for example, in the GT4 class, twice in a row [in 2022 and 2023], that's another achievement.

"Clearly the GT3 class is the biggest class, and usually has the best drivers in the best cars, from an overall speed point of view. In that regard, the GT3 wins were very important, because we did it in the best company. But equally the GT4s, even though the GT4 class is smaller, still has its own trials, and I don't want to degrade those wins."

A lot of people tend to forget that, to get the A6-Am win in 2015, you also had to beat, effectively, a 'works' entry from the Nissan GT Academy...

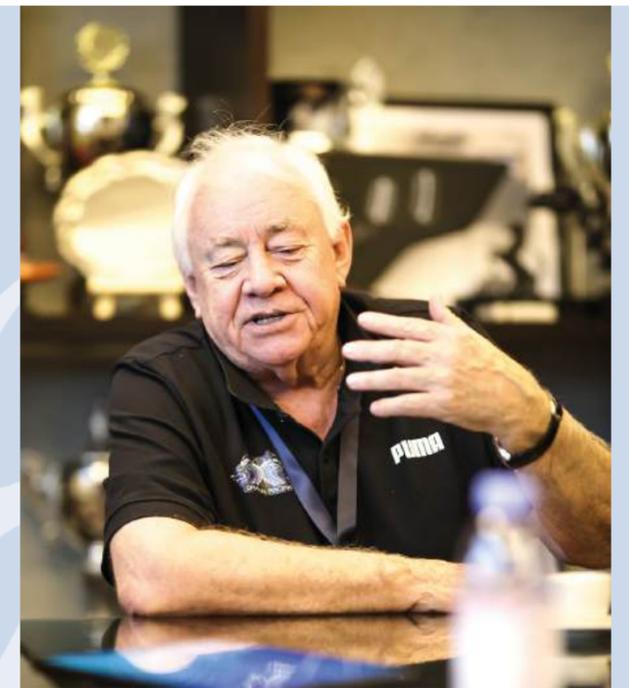
"I think there was a bit of incredulousness about that, actually: 'how did they do it?!' But then again, that's probably from people who don't understand what it takes to win a 24-hour race, or even finish a 24-hour race.

"Preparation of your car has got to be absolutely immaculate. Your spares package has got to be complete. And you have to have the right people running the car for you. If you look in our garage, you'll see a team of 12, whereas other teams will have maybe five or six. And every person has got a specific task: to the two refuelers; to the two tyre people; to the mechanics; to one engineer on strategy, one on the car, and another one overall making sure it all gets glued together!

"All of that takes money, and that takes profit sacrifice, but we'd rather spend a little bit more money and overdo it. That approach has proven to be successful because we've won in-class five times now. Not many teams have done that."

After two wins in a row, in 2016, one of your cars retired, and the other struggled to 19th overall. How mentally wearing was that for the team?

"That was the year we deviated from our plan of having the right people in the car. Nowadays, before we enter a car for a race, the drivers have to know each other and they have to have raced with each other at some point. That makes car setup a lot easier, and I think, when you're in a car and know you have to hand over to someone you know well and respect, you don't do stupid things during your stint. Today, if we can't



fill a car with drivers that we know, or know each other, we won't do it.

"In 2016, we had a mixture of drivers in both cars. That meant we had to take 'this pair,' and 'this pair,' plus an odd man out. That meant, across both cars, we had a very widespread set of drivers who didn't know each other.

"We stopped that [approach] afterwards because of that poor result. It didn't work. Yes, we earned good money from that race because we entered two cars and their driver line-ups were both full. But at the end of the day, reputationally, that race did us a lot of harm."

Dragon Racing missed the 2017 and 2018 races...

"For that reason, by the way! We couldn't fill our cars with a complete team that we wanted, and... that wasn't an easy walk away, because, when you've been participating for a number of years and all of a sudden you're not there, people assume, 'oh, there's something wrong at Dragon.' There was nothing wrong with us. We were just sticking to our game plan. But sadly, that also meant, for two years, we literally couldn't do anything."

You came back to the 24H DUBAI in 2019, only now the team was competing in the GT4 class with a Mercedes-AMG. Why the switch for GT3?

"Well, we'd always had GT4s in our fleet, and we'd just bought two Mercedes-AMG GT4s that were new on the block. Plus, the Ferrari 488 was very, very expensive to run: not a lot of people knew the car, so, again, we couldn't put a decent team together. But we could do it with the GT4s. The costs were lower, and it's a very good car. Virtually bullet-proof.\* It sold itself."

*\*Ironically, alternator belt issues, and later gearbox actuator failure, cost the #488 Mercedes-AMG GT4 the class lead early on at the 24H DUBAI in 2019, and Dragon Racing would retire altogether after a collision with a GT3 competitor five hours from home.*





The 2019 race was also the last 24H DUBAI, to-date, that you entered with Rob Barff. Given how involved Rob was with the team, has it been difficult racing without him since then?

“Rob was with us from the start. Rob was with me when I got in my first race car, ever, at Silverstone. And from that moment onwards, he was my PRO at races. He was employed as the race director at Dragon Racing, and, sadly, had we not had Covid, he would probably still be with us.

“He got locked into the UK, and we weren’t able to access his skills in the UAE when we needed them because, at that time, we were still an open market. None of us knew how long Covid would take and how long it would last, so by then, Rob, understandably, had to plan his life and his career down another path.

“I would prefer to have him than not have him! But we understood the reasons why he wanted to leave, and he’s been sorely missed.”

**Fast-forward to 2020, and the only 24H DUBAI to-date that Dragon Racing has entered with a Lamborghini. Again, why the switch from the Mercedes?**

“A very good client of ours – Jim Geddie, a crazy Scotsman and a good AM driver! – had raced in our Ferraris and loved it. And then, for some reason, he came to us to say he was going to buy this Lamborghini and could we run him in the [24H DUBAI]? ‘Of course we can, we can run anything.’ ‘And I want to enter the Gulf 12 Hours too.’

“So, we ran the 12 hour, and, unfortunately, with the limited time we had to familiarize ourselves with the car and test its components, we didn’t fully understand the brake pad degradation. We ended up running a type of pad that wasn’t optimal for endurance stints.

“Fortunately we had a very good AM in the car. He kept the Lamborghini alive until we could change the brakes, and we ended up coming 2nd. When we knew what the problem was, we had proper endurance pads made for the car in England, flew them out, and in the [24H DUBAI], we only needed two pad changes, not four.

“Of course, that year we won, but we won by default. We were leading, and leading clearly after seven hours when the rain stopped play. Fortunately while we were in 1st place. And we would have stayed there because the car was absolutely bullet-proof.”

**Is a ‘default win’ one you can still be proud of?**

“Oh yes. First of all, we had plenty of wets, because Creventic provides a superb tyre service, and we had four drivers that had raced in Europe their whole lives [Jim and Glynn Geddie, Adam Balon, and Phil Keen]. So rain, for them, was an everyday thing. The pace was probably 15, 16 seconds slower



than in the dry – maybe 18 seconds, on some laps – but it was consistent. So while the rain was medium, we were able to run. The minute it started to downpour, nobody could drive, but we were already comfortably in 1st place anyway.

“Secondly, a lot of that result had to do with our pit stops. At the end of the day, after seven pit stops, we worked out, we were 19 seconds quicker, per pit stop, than our competition! That really adds up when you have six or seven pit stops. That’s, what... two minutes? It’s hard to catch that back up on-track when cars are equally paced.”

**So far then, you’ve raced with Ferrari, with Mercedes and with Lamborghini. You’ve been successful with all of them. And now you’re back with Ferrari with the new 296 GT3...**

[Slight pause] “It’s important I get this right!

“Dragon is a Ferrari house. We always have been. I’ve never driven anything but a Ferrari on-track. Yeah, I’ve bought Porsches and I’ve had a couple of laps, and I’ve bought Mercs and I’ve had a couple of laps. I’ve had McLarens, etc etc. But at the end of the day, we are a Ferrari house. And we will always be a Ferrari house.”

**Jordan Grogor raced with you from 2013 to 2016, and he returned to the team in 2022. Does it take long for a driver to get back up to speed with Dragon after a few years away?**

“He’s always been part of our family. Jordi was with us when we raced in Blancpain in 2012 and 2013, when I stopped doing the [24H DUBAI] personally... he’s always been part of Dragon. So him coming back to us was quite natural.

“In 2017, Jordi went and did a whole lot of racing with Fréd [Fatien] and he was doing regular endurance races with GPX Extreme in the Renault [RS01], and more recently in the Porsche. Plus he did a few local races with us. So he really kept his eye in and was totally up to speed.”

**Stuart Hall raced with you in 2014 and has been back with Dragon since 2022. As a former World Endurance Champion, how significant was Stuart’s input to a team?**

“He was already great value. He’s a consummate professional. He’s also a great PRO for our two youngsters” – Benjamin and Oliver Goethe – “and that’s not an easy job, because both are highly talented and have to be kept in check sometimes. You can’t just let them loose and say, ‘go as fast as you can all the time.’ And Stuart, being the professional he is, achieves all of that. He brings the glue into every driver line-up. He’s also been Roald [Goethe’s] PRO for many, many years, and as you correctly say, he’s very very experienced in all types of cars.”

**On that note, Roald and Oliver raced with Dragon at the 24H DUBAI since 2022, and Benjamin joined them for 2023 and 2024. Would you say racing for 24 hours with family members easier or more difficult?**

“I try not to interfere with all of that. That’s up to our team principal, Brad Fincham. But, y’know, they all work together



to get the best result, and they’re all very capable as well. They won the race two years in a row [2022 and 2023], and Benjamin’s finished 2nd overall, twice [with Team WRT]. That takes some doing.

“Honestly, it’s more than just a ‘team’ that’s in our car. Roald and I are personal friends, and his boys have become part of us. They’re almost like a family inside Dragon.”

**Dragon Racing took its fifth class win in 2023, making your team one of the most successful in 24H DUBAI history. Is that an important accomplishment for you, or are you always focused on the next race?**

“As we sit here today, we’re totally focused on tomorrow. On the Monday morning, whatever happened during a race weekend, we’ll be totally focused on the next race.

“We almost have to draw a line in the sand after every weekend. If we have a weekend where we didn’t do well, we will sit down, analyse, and have a detailed post-mortem. And we’ve had a few of them, because not every weekend has been successful. Fortunately for us, most of them are in minor local events. But we would still need to understand what happens.

“But basically, today is the focus. Tomorrow is the focus. And, on Monday, the focus will be the Asian Le Mans Series. I think the difference being, if this weekend goes well, we’ll start Monday with a huge hangover!” ■



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**MICHELIN**

## Michelin and Creventic forge strategic partnership to drive innovation and sustainability in motorsport

**W**e at Michelin are proud to announce a groundbreaking partnership that unites two powerhouses in motorsport. This collaboration is built on shared values of performance, endurance, environmental stewardship, and technological innovation.

The partnership leverages Michelin's unparalleled expertise in tyre performance and durability, perfectly aligning with Creventic's reputation for hosting endurance racing events that push the limits of human and machine. Together, they aim to elevate the racing experience, delivering cutting-edge solutions to teams, drivers, and fans worldwide.

Performance is at the core of this partnership. Michelin's extensive research and development have set benchmarks in tyre performance under extreme conditions. Combined with Creventic's commitment to organizing demanding, competitive events, the collaboration promises to redefine excellence in endurance racing. Racers and teams can look forward to a superior level of grip, stability, and longevity on-track.

Endurance racing is not just a sport; it's a test of resilience, strategy, and innovation. Michelin's high-performance tyres are engineered to withstand prolonged challenges, complementing

Creventic's vision of showcasing motorsport at its finest. Together, the duo will enhance the endurance format, ensuring thrilling, reliable races for participants and fans alike.

This partnership also emphasizes a shared commitment to the planet. Both Michelin and Creventic recognize the importance of sustainability in motorsport. Michelin's drive to create environmentally-friendly tyre technologies, including using renewable materials, aligns with Creventic's efforts to promote greener racing practices. Through joint initiatives, they aim to reduce the environmental impact of motorsport without compromising performance.

Technology is the backbone of this collaboration. Michelin's innovations, from digital tyre solutions to advanced simulation tools, will seamlessly integrate with Creventic's cutting-edge racing platforms. This synergy promises to foster a new era of data-driven racing, empowering teams to achieve peak performance while maintaining safety and efficiency.

This partnership marks a significant milestone in motorsport, symbolizing the fusion of tradition and innovation. Together, Michelin and Creventic are paving the way for a more exciting, sustainable, and technologically advanced future in racing. ■



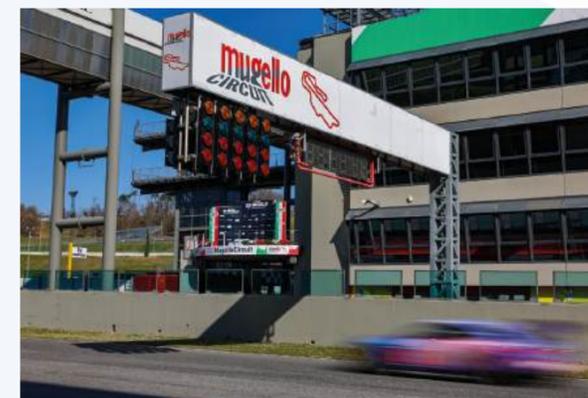
# **FIVE** *European rounds confirmed for 2025*

The 24H SERIES makes its return to Le Castellet this season, as well as old favourites in Mugello and Barcelona, as part of a five-round European program for the 24H SERIES in 2025.

The Michelin 24H SERIES will be hosted at five Grand Prix-calibre circuits across four different countries in 2025, with series mainstays Mugello and Barcelona bookending the European season and Circuit Paul Ricard making a welcome return.

The Michelin 12H MUGELLO was hosted for a 10th time in 2024, and kicks off CREVENTIC's European season in 2025 on 21-22-23 March. The Michelin 24H BARCELONA meanwhile, which celebrated its 25th edition earlier this month, is scheduled to bring the curtain down on Creventic's 2025 European season on 26-27-28 September. In-between, the 24H SERIES is set to visit the Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps for the increasingly popular Michelin 12H SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS in April, the Misano World Circuit Marco Simoncelli for only the third time for the Michelin 12H MISANO in May, and Circuit Paul Ricard in July, the latter of which brings the Michelin 12H PAUL RICARD back to the 24H SERIES for the first time since 2021.

The Michelin 12H MISANO, the Michelin 12H PAUL RICARD and the Michelin 24H BARCELONA will run uninterrupted for their full 12-hour and 24-hour durations respectively, while both the Michelin 12H MUGELLO and the Michelin 12H SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS will run as split-events with the traditional mid-race overnight 'intervention.'



 **12H MUGELLO**  
21-22-23 March

First hosted in 2014, and held every year bar one since then, the Michelin 12H MUGELLO is an established part of the 24H SERIES' annual program. Since 2014, the 12-hour event has been Creventic's European season opener nine times, and was even the Dutch promoter's European season finale during a Covid-affected 2020.

Among the more popular 24H SERIES events, the Michelin 12H MUGELLO has featured an impressive number of first-time winners through the years, including AF Corse, V8 Racing, Samantha Tan Racing, Team GP-Elite, and Haas RT, the latter, remarkably, in only its third-ever race start. 2017 Overall GT Teams' 'Continents' champion Herberth Motorsport also sealed its first series win in Mugello in 2015, and would go on to take a record third event win in 2021.

For almost 10 years, the inaugural 12H MUGELLO in 2014 boasted the closest-ever finish to a 24H SERIES endurance event, with overall winner AF Corse beating runner-up Stadler Motorsport by just 5.417 seconds. A record that would only be broken at the 12H KUWAIT in December 2023.



## 12H SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS 18-19-20 April

Set to be held for the seventh time in 2025, the Michelin 12H SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS made its first appearance on the 24H SERIES calendar as a TCE-only event in 2017.

Hosted as an uninterrupted 12-hour race in 2018 (which also welcomed GT competitors for the first time), the Michelin 12H SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS was moved to its now-traditional April date in 2019. Fittingly, the event featured its most barnstorming finish that year when the overall lead swapped hands from Herberth Motorsport to champion-elect Scuderia Praha on the penultimate lap.

Back on the 24H SERIES calendar in 2022 after a Covid-related hiatus, the Michelin 12H SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS bade farewell to series mainstays CP Racing with a "fairy-tale" win in 2024, celebrated a first victory for the Saintéloc Junior Team in 2023, and has routinely featured some of the most exciting on-track action as grid sizes have continued to grow beyond 50-plus.



## 12H MISANO 23-24 May

Named in honour of the MotoGP frontrunner and 250cc world champion who tragically passed away at the venue in 2011, the Misano World Circuit Marco Simoncelli featured on the 24H SERIES calendar for the first time in 2017.

Memorably, the TCE-only '24H MISANO' - as it then was - marked the competitive debut for Hyundai's brand-new i30 TCR car, the 24H SERIES return of 1988 24 Hours of Le Mans winner Jan Lammers, and the 24H SERIES debuts of five-time overall Le Mans winner Emanuele Pirro and World Touring Car Championship legend Gabriele Tarquini.

Hosted as a 12-hour event upon its return to the calendar in 2024, the Michelin 12H MISANO saw the Saintéloc Junior Team secure a controlled win. In a nod to the competitiveness of the latest generation Porsche 911 GT3 Cup, the top three in the 992 class even finished inside the overall top five, including an overall podium for Fulgenzi Racing!



## 12H PAUL RICARD 4-5 July



Back on the calendar for the first time since 2021, the Michelin 12H PAUL RICARD has featured some of the more eclectic grids in the 24H SERIES' tenured history since the inaugural edition - as the '24H CIRCUIT PAUL RICARD' - in 2015. Five different manufacturers for example were in contention for overall victory at a very wet race in 2017.

Australian independent MARC Cars meanwhile took a fourth consecutive win with its bespoke Focus V8 at Paul Ricard in 2015, a race that also featured Lotus' Evora GT4 and even Maserati's Gran Turismo.

While Herberth Motorsport has routinely been the team to beat at Paul Ricard with victories in 2016, 2017 and 2021, Britain's Ram Racing breaks the Bavarian team's monopoly with its first series win at Le Castellet in 2015.



## 24H BARCELONA Trofeo Fermí Véllez 26-27-28 September

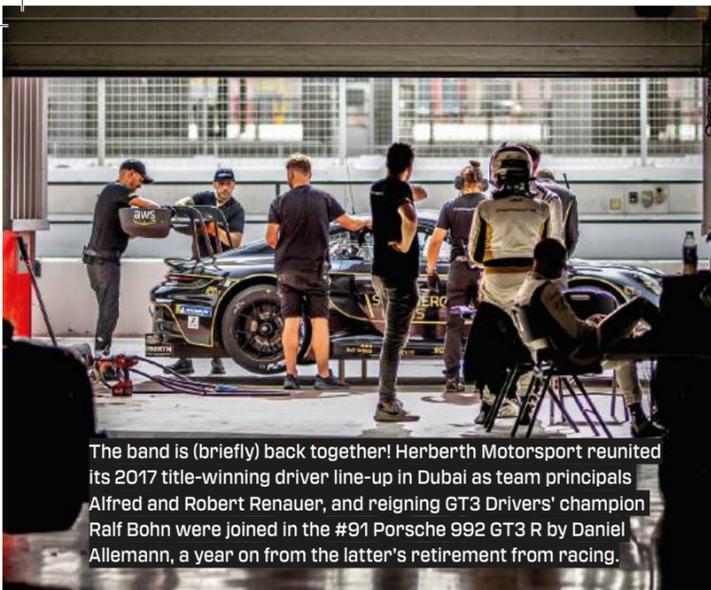
The most tenured event on the 24H SERIES calendar, the Michelin 24H BARCELONA began life as the '24 Horas de Barcelona de Automovilismo' in 1998 and was hosted for the 25th time in September 2024. The race continues its illustrious history in 2025 in its now-traditional September slot (ironically, the '98 edition was held in July).

Revived by CREVENTIC for 2011, and welcoming GT entrants for the first time that year, the Michelin 24H BARCELONA has rapidly become one of the toughest and most prestigious European endurance events each year. Michelin 24H DUBAI winners Schubert Motorsport (2011), IMSA LS Group Performance (2010) and Herberth Motorsport (2017) for example have all taken overall honours in Catalunya, with the Bavarian team making history in 2024 as the only team to win the event four times outright. Lapidus Racing secured a memorable victory for McLaren in 2012 - Woking's most recent success in the 24H SERIES - and even Spain's NM Racing Team ensured Ginetta is on the overall winners' list courtesy of the one-off, TCE-only edition in 2017.

Since 2003, the Trofeo Fermí Véllez has paid tribute to two-time Sebring 12 Hours winner, Group C2 World Sports Car Champion, and Barcelona native Fermín Véllez, for whom the event's main prize has been named.



Entries are now being accepted for all five European rounds of the 2025 Michelin 24H SERIES. Interested parties can contact Creventic directly via teams@creventic.com and/or +31 485 471166.



The band is (briefly) back together! Herberth Motorsport reunited its 2017 title-winning driver line-up in Dubai as team principals Alfred and Robert Renauer, and reigning GT3 Drivers' champion Ralf Bohn were joined in the #91 Porsche 992 GT3 R by Daniel Allemann, a year on from the latter's retirement from racing.



QMMF by HRT secured 992-AM Teams' honours in the 2024-2025 24H SERIES Middle East Trophy with class wins at the 6H ABU DHABI and 24H DUBAI in 2024. The Qatar-German alliance ran an unchanged line-up in Dubai, teaming Qataris Ibrahim Al Abdulghani, Abdulla Ali Al Khelaifi and Ghanim Al Ali with Julian Hanses.

# CR TRACK DAYS

Creventic is now offering professional race teams test sessions with up to 8 hours of open pitlane track time per day on some of the world's best FIA Grade One circuits.

These track days seamlessly complement Creventic's existing racing series, with dates carefully chosen to provide valuable testing opportunities ahead of select races in the 24H Series, Prototype Cup Germany, and other championships of the highest level.

A limited number of cars on track means CR Track Days provide an ideal environment for experienced drivers and teams to refine the setup of their Touring, GT, special GT, LMP3, LMP2 and historic race cars ahead of races, while also offering newcomers the perfect opportunity to drive their first laps in a real race car.

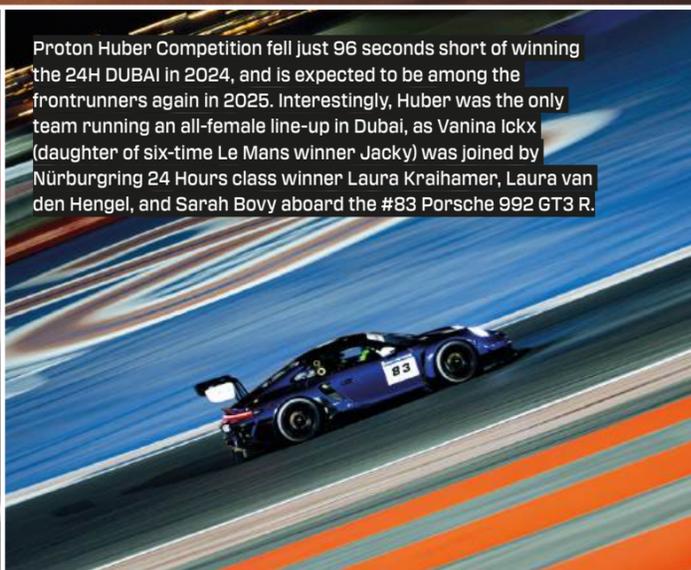
# SNAPSHOTS!



Winward Racing completed an impressive showing by finishing 1-2 in each of Creventic's four Track Day test sessions. The American team's #87 Mercedes-AMG GT3 EVO was quickest in three of them, and posted the overall fastest lap - a 1m 55.913s - in Session 3. Overall 24H DUBAI winner Gabriele Piana teamed in the #87 Mercedes with Rinat Salikhov and two-time Spa 24 Hours winner Jules Gounon.



Kox Racing emerged on top of the GTX runners, topping the class in three of the four sessions with its GT2-spec KTM X-BOW. Team owner, and namesake, Peter Kox shared driving duties with Nico Pronk ahead of the team's third entry for the 6H ABU DHABI.



Proton Huber Competition fell just 96 seconds short of winning the 24H DUBAI in 2024, and is expected to be among the frontrunners again in 2025. Interestingly, Huber was the only team running an all-female line-up in Dubai, as Vanina Ickx (daughter of six-time Le Mans winner Jacky) was joined by Nürburgring 24 Hours class winner Laura Kraihamer, Laura van den Hengel, and Sarah Bovy aboard the #83 Porsche 992 GT3 R.



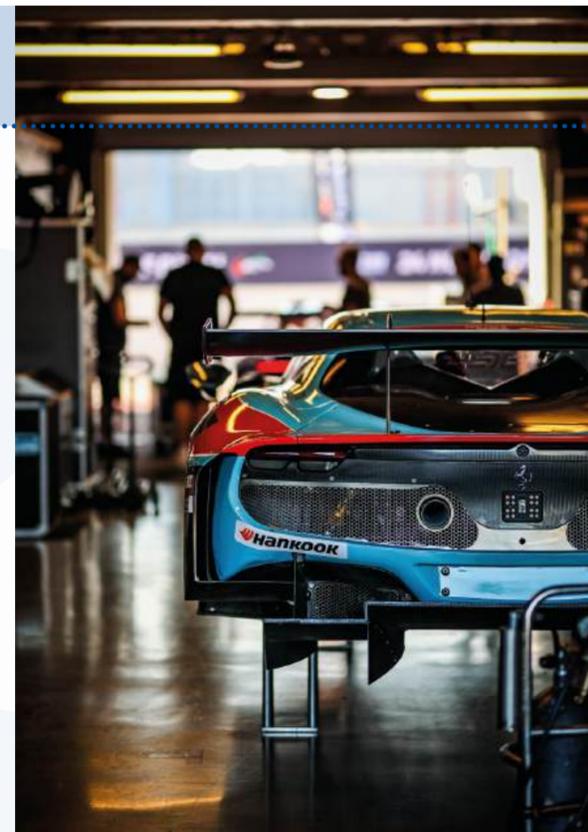
Visit [ortrackdays.com](http://ortrackdays.com) or scan the QR for the complete track day calendar, pricing and more information about specific track days.



# Tech talk

## Revised sporting and technical regulations confirmed for Michelin 24H SERIES in 2025

CREVENTIC has confirmed a raft of revised sporting and technical regulations for the 24H SERIES in 2025, with each one designed to make the on-track action even closer, the strategy from the pit perch more challenging, and, ultimately, the championship chase tighter than ever before.



### Tyre warmers for all!

In a move that brings the curtain down (for now, at least) on the 24H SERIES' separate GT and TCE divisions, the use of tyre warmers will be permitted across all categories in 2025. Previously, when overall division championships were in operation, only the faster and more aerodynamically-responsive GT cars were allowed the use of tyre warmers during official sessions. It is hoped that this decision will provide the series' 'gentlemen' drivers, in lieu of the need to build heat into each compound, with more time to focus on personal development on-track.

The ban on tyre changes during official 24H SERIES qualifying sessions meanwhile continues into 2025, albeit with an alteration. Teams are now required to use not only the same set of tyres for the entirety of qualifying, but also, and to avoid confusion, will no longer be allowed to remove wheels from the car and put them back in their heaters.

Teams will only be allowed to remove or replace wheels and tyres during qualifying if either have been damaged beyond reasonable repair, and only once they have been given express permission to do so by the event's scrutineers.

Qualifying for each 24H SERIES event remains unaltered for 2025. As in 2024, three drivers from each team (or, in the event of a two-car line-up, both drivers with one taking part in two sessions) will contest one of the three 15-minute qualifying sessions apiece. Their combined best average time will then determine their car's place on the grid.

Each team's designated 'AM' driver must contest Q1 or risk a post-session grid penalty.

### Tightened refueling limits during Code 60s

In a bid to further spice up the strategic chess games, regulations governing Code 60 caution periods – a hallmark of the 24H SERIES – have been amended for 2025. Whereas the purple flags, thrown to 'neutralize' the race in the event of an on-track incident, were previously initiated immediately, in 2025, race control will now provide teams with a countdown to the start of a Code 60 caution period. At the end of the countdown, all cars on-track must be travelling at no more than 60kph.

It is hoped this will help avoid confusion as to when a full-course neutralization has officially begun. By reducing the risk of multiple cars travelling at differing speeds at the same time, competitor safety should also be improved.

A rule mandating that teams can only refuel their car during a Code 60 caution period (introduced earlier this year ahead of the 12H MUGELLO) will carry over into 2025. As a result, team strategists will now have to carefully consider when to commit their cars to their one and only fuel stop, potentially throwing the playing field wide open.

In the unlikely event that a Code 60 caution period runs longer than one hour, teams are permitted to refuel their cars more than once. All team personnel in the refueling area must be wearing flame retardant clothing, including overalls, balaclava, and gloves in accordance with FIA guideline 8856-2000.

None of the above will change the factors determining potential Code 60 caution periods, which will continue to be called and withdrawn at race control's discretion.

In a further bid to improve safety, drivers must now dim high-beam headlights while on pitroad, in the garage and in the refueling area. This is intended to prevent pit personnel being dazzled, and thus avoid any serious incidents in an active pitlane.



### '24-hour' double points to be awarded once again in 2025

As in 2024, teams and drivers contesting at least four of the five European rounds on next year's 24H SERIES calendar will be eligible to compete for category championship honours next season. The Ladies Cup will be awarded once again in 2025.

The 'drop score' method allows teams, in the event of a

scheduling clash or unforeseen mechanical drama, to miss an event without negatively impacting their position in the standings. Teams entering all five events will be obliged to drop their lowest scoring race from their overall points total, similarly strengthening their title challenge.

The points structure remains unchanged for 2025. Class winners at each event will earn 40 points. 2nd place meanwhile will receive 36 points, and 3rd place will secure 32. From 4th place thereafter, points drop in sequence by two (28, 24, 20, etc) all the way to 15th.

Double points will once again be awarded at the season-closing Michelin 24H BARCELONA. Each category leader after 12 hours will earn 20 points, while 2nd and 3rd in-class at half-distance will secure 18 and 16 points respectively. From 4th through to 6th place, point scores drop sequentially by two (14, 12 and 10) and by one point from 7th place thereafter (9, 8, 7, etc) down to 15th place.

Consequently, a competitor leading after 12 hours that also goes on to win their class could potentially amass 60 points at the 2025 Michelin 24H BARCELONA.

Unlike in 2024, drivers registered across two entries for a 24H SERIES event are no longer required to declare a car in which they will score points. A decision designed to keep the battle for drivers' championship honours close across the whole season.

### 'AM' driver stint times revised; right to review in effect

'AM' / Bronze-licensed drivers competing in GT3-PRO and/or 992-PRO will be expected to complete at least one-sixth of the car's total race distance in 2025 instead of the one-twelfth requirement introduced this past season. Consequently, a GT3-PRO / 992-PRO team's AM driver must now compete for at least

two hours during a 12-hour event and four hours at a 24-hour 24H SERIES race to avoid earning their team a post-race penalty.

To alleviate potential team discord, Creventic is introducing a right of review system to the 24H SERIES in accordance with international FIA regulations. Any team that wishes to formally challenge a penalty imposed during a 24H SERIES event can send their written protest and €1000 deposit to the KNAC Nationale Autosport Federatie sporting authority in The Netherlands for review post-event.

Any and all drivers registering to compete at a 24H SERIES event must be at least 16 years of age, and must hold an international competitor license.

### Intervention break, race starts and race restarts

Two of the five 24H SERIES European races in 2025 – Mugello and Spa-Francorchamps – will be run with Creventic's now traditional 'overnight intervention,' meaning racing will be paused during the night after 'part one' and restarted the following morning for 'part two.' Cars will be kept under parc fermé conditions overnight.

During the intervention, teams are encouraged to cover their cars and switch off their on-board fire extinguishers. Ahead of the restart for 'part two,' teams can complete routine maintenance, including rudimentary cleaning (windows, front and rear lights, wheel arches, radiators and bumpers), increasing and decreasing tyre pressures (with small hand tools only), torque tighten wheel nuts, and replace the drinks bottle. Teams are allowed to remove the memory card and batteries from their onboard cameras, and disconnect the data log memory card (if this is possible without opening the bonnet) and accompanying roof antennae.

For 2025, teams will no longer be permitted to analyze their datalogger via laptop ahead of the restart for 'part two' of the race.

While cars are expected to take the following morning's restart on the same wheels and tyres with which they finished 'part one' of the race, teams will be permitted to switch to wet compound rubber should weather conditions change significantly enough that race control declares a wet race for 'part two.'

If conditions are sufficiently difficult that the restart takes place behind the safety car, the restart will be deemed to have officially begun as soon as the safety car leaves the pits, and the race clock will begin again. Each lap thereafter, be it behind the safety car and/or when the race goes green, will count towards each car's total.

### TCR to merge with TCX



As in 2024, team entries will be assigned to one of 11 different categories ahead of a 24H SERIES event, based on each car's homologation and the experience of their respective driver line-ups. GT3 entries for example will compete as 'GT3' (effectively 'GT3-PRO'), GT3-PRO/AM or GT3-AM, while Porsche 911 GT3 Cups (992) will race as either '992' (effectively '992-PRO') or '992-AM.'

In a move to bolster competition in both classes, the TCR category has been disbanded for 2025. TCR-homologated cars will instead compete in the 'TCX' ranks with suitably adjusted balance of performance.

To make category differentiation easier to understand, a specific set of race numbers will be assigned per-class. 'GT3' entrants for example will be allocated a race number between 1 and 99. 'GT4' teams meanwhile will be allotted a number between 400 and 499, and race numbers between 900 and 999 will be exclusively used by 992 competitors. Similar systems are in effect for GTX (700 to 799), TC and TCX (100 to 199), and, if required, the 'developmental' SP4 category (300 to 399).

While used unofficially since 2019, this race number system is now an official guideline in the 24H SERIES sporting regulations for the first time.

### Technical regulation highlights

Headlights and in-car lighting systems form the bulk of the 24H SERIES' revised Technical Regulations for 2025.

The exterior lights of each car must now be able to function independently, even when the car's engine is switched off. Furthermore, to ensure all competitors can fully illuminate the track ahead during night-time running, race control will mandate when, and at what juncture, headlight repairs must be made for the safety of all entrants on-track.

Teams will be permitted to leave repairs to one headlight, one rear light, and/or one brake light for example until their next scheduled pit stop. Similarly, loose or missing race numbers can be fixed or replaced when the car next comes to pitroad.

Should neither headlight, brake light nor rear light be operating however, competitors are required to pit their car immediately for repairs.

Teams' use of auto body tape to repair cosmetic damage has also been revised. Tape may be used to cover the gaps in the front bumper and bonnet, cooling openings, and any and all slots in the rear side windows (the latter must only be repaired with transparent tape). To avoid negatively affecting a car's handling however, aerodynamic devices must not be covered during repairs.

Select technical guidelines have also been introduced specifically for the 992 class. All 992-generation Porsche 911 GT3 Cups entered for a 24H SERIES event, regardless of '992-PRO' or '992-AM' categorization, must be fitted with a Porsche-supplied Cosworth Data Memory data-logger (teams are required to supply two compatible memory devices themselves). All 992 entrants must also be fitted with a standard, Porsche ballast base plate in accordance with the regulations for Porsche Carrera Cup Deutschland.

Looking ahead to 2026, all examples of the Porsche 911 GT3 Cup (992) entering an official 24H SERIES race must be fitted with a Manthey fuel filler neck for filler gun use. Modified brake cooling will also no longer be permitted for 992 entrants in 2026.

Sporting and technical regulations for the 2025 Michelin 24H SERIES can be found and read in full at [24hseries.com/](https://24hseries.com/) documents or scan the QR code.



Further details and clarifications can be sourced directly from CREVENTIC via [teams@creventic.com](mailto:teams@creventic.com) and/or +31 485 471166. ■





# 992 ENDURANCE CUP

POWERED BY PORSCHE MOTORSPORT

## 5-6 SEPTEMBER 2025

 SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS

# The 992 Endurance Cup is BACK for 2025



Creventic and Porsche Motorsport are pleased to announce that a second edition of the Michelin 992 Endurance Cup powered by Porsche Motorsport will be hosted at the Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps on 5-6 September next year.

A collaborative project between Porsche Motorsport, Michelin Tires, and Dutch promoter Creventic, the inaugural 992 Endurance Cup was held in September 2024 at the home of the Formula 1 Belgian Grand Prix. It was a continuous, 12-hour endurance race for which only the Porsche 911 GT3 Cup (992) was eligible to compete.

Following positive feedback from competitors, fans worldwide and event partners alike, an agreement has been made for a second edition of the event to run in 2025.

As in 2024, the Michelin 992 Endurance Cup powered by Porsche Motorsport will be held across 12 uninterrupted hours on Saturday 6 September 2025. Official Free Practice sessions and Qualifying will precede the event on Friday 5 September.

David Vink, Series Manager: "We are very excited that the Michelin 992 Endurance Cup powered by Porsche Motorsport will return for a second edition in September 2025. The 12-hour race was a landmark event for the Porsche 911 GT3 Cup (992), and proved that the incredibly close racing synonymous with Porsche's sprint races can transition seamlessly to endurance racing. We believe, with the continued confidence of Porsche Motorsport and Michelin Tires, that the 992 Endurance Cup can become a hallmark event for Porsche customers in the years to come."

Oliver Köppen, Manager Porsche One-make series and GT-Sport: "After the very positive feedback we received from customers that participated in the first edition of this race, we are happy to continue the project and to work with Creventic on an even greater customer experience in 2025. We hope this special event will develop into a fix point in our customers' annual calendars."

The esteemed Cars & Coffee, which gathers together some of the region's most alluring collector cars for attending fans, is also expected to return for the second 992 Endurance Cup. The show, made possible with support from Porsche Club Francorchamps and the independent Porsche web portal Vierenzestig.nl, is expected to take place in Francorchamps on Saturday 6 September, and, for 2024, attracted activations from Pagid and Manthey.

Almost 30 Porsche Cup cars entered the inaugural 992 Endurance Cup in September 2024. Max Kruse Racing secured pole position with drivers Tom Coronel, Paul Meijer and Benjamin Leuchter, and was joined on the front row by Mühlner Motorsport (Jeroen Bleekemolen, Martin Rump and Fabio Grosse). Belgium Racing (Dylan Derdaele, Jan Laurysen and Sacha Norden) was the fastest Pro-Am team and started 4th overall, while Mühlner Motorsport (Ryan Hardley, Anthony McIntosh, Glenn McGee and Tyler Hoffman) was the fastest 'Am' entrant in qualifying.

While the early battle for the lead was between Max Kruse Racing and Mühlner Motorsport during the opening hour, Black Falcon Team 48 Losch (Leek Hartog, Noah Nagelsdiek, Tobias Müller and Christopher Mies) soon brought itself into contention, eventually taking the lead during the fifth hour. After a commanding run, the #48 Black Falcon Porsche would eventually claim the win after completing 276 laps.

One lap down, Max Kruse Racing took 2nd after a spirited run, just 8.5 seconds ahead of the Red Camel-Jordans.nl (Rik and Luc Breukers, and Fabian Danz). Tierra Outdoor Racing by HWM (Ralph Poele's, Jop Rappange and Lucas Hunz Weis) finished 4th overall and secured Pro/Am class victory in the process, while QMMF by HRT (Abdulla Ali Al Khalefi, Ghanim Al Ali, Ibrahim Al Abdullatif and Julian Hanses) came home 8th overall to take the 'Am' class win. ■



# PROTOTYPE CUP GERMANY



The Prototype Cup Germany enters its fourth year in 2025, and will travel to six celebrated circuits in Germany, Belgium and Austria. Four of these six events will run in tandem with a round of the DTM.

Orry Lichtenberg, Series Coordinator: "2025 will mark the final year for the second generation LMP3, and we will offer this V8 machinery the perfect goodbye! Together with the DTM, we will attend highly anticipated events with amazing fans. We will return to the Norisring, which had an attendance of 102,000 visitors in 2024. The season finale will take us to a new venue for the series; the iconic Red Bull Ring. We are excited for it!"

For drivers, the Prototype Cup Germany has proven to be a great stepping stone. Several drivers, bronze and silver, who made their

debut in LMP3 machinery in Prototype Cup Germany, now compete in series such as the Michelin Le Mans Cup and the ELMS.

The series offers a lot of track time, especially for those drivers who choose to drive on their own. Over 44 hours of track time is available across the season. For teams, the Prototype Cup Germany is an amazing opportunity to compete another year with the Gen 2 LMP3 without big additional investments. The entry fee includes over €8,000 in tyres and discounts, which makes the entry fee itself under €30,000 for a full season.

We aim for a 15-plus grid of LMP3 machines to show thousands of motorsport enthusiasts these cars for one more year before the series will open up to the next generation of LMP3 cars. ■



## FAN INTERACTION

- » Signature sessions
- » Grid walks
- » Interviews



## THOUSANDS OF FANS

- » +40K fans at Lausitzring, Red Bull Ring and Hockenheim
- » +60K fans at Nürburgring
- » +100K fans at Norisring



## BIG NAMES

- » Former DTM teams
- » Big name drivers

# CALENDAR 2025

**SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS**

24H SERIES

18-20 APRIL

+8 HOURS TESTING

**HOCKENHEIMRING**

Hockenheim Historic

9-11 MAY

+3 HOURS TESTING

**LAUSITZRING**

DTM

23-25 MAY

+3 HOURS TESTING

**NORISRING**

DTM

4-6 JULY

NO EXTRA TESTING

**NÜRBURGRING**

DTM

8-10 AUGUST

+3 HOURS TESTING

**RED BULL RING**

DTM

12-14 SEPT.

+3 HOURS TESTING



OFFICIAL CHAMPIONSHIP APPROVED BY THE ACO



**6 EVENTS** : 12 Races - 4 events with DTM - 4 Grade One Circuits - 5 events with additional testing

**FORMAT** : At least 2 x 45 minutes free practice - 2 x 15 minutes qualifying - 2 x 55 minutes + 1 lap race - In 2025 still current 2020 generation LMP3

**SINGLE DRIVER ALLOWED** : Bronze - Silver

**DRIVER PARING** : Bronze together with bronze, silver or gold - Silver together with bronze or silver

**TOTAL TRACK TIME OVER THE SEASON** : Race weekends 24 hours - Including thursday tests + 44 hours

prototypecup.com



# ENTRY LIST



## 24H DUBAI 2025

1

GT3



**MANAMAURI ENERGY BY EBIMOTORS**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 R (992)

Fabrizio Broggi Sabino de Castro  
 Sergiu Nicolae Cosimo Papi

@willi\_motorsport

4

GT3



**HAUPT RACING TEAM**  
MERCEDES-AMG GT3 EVO

Reema Juffali Ivan Stanchin  
 Salmen Owega Romain Andriolo

@haupt racingteam/@smp\_racing

5

GT3



**TEAM MOTOPARK**  
MERCEDES-AMG GT3 EVO

Frédéric Jousset Sebastián Álvarez  
 Levente Révész Lin Hodenius Thierry Vermeulen

@motopark\_group

6

GT3



**RACING ONE**  
FERRARI 296 GT3

@racingone

7

GT3



**SMP RACING**  
MERCEDES-AMG GT3 EVO

Sergey Sirotkin Vitaliy Petrov  
 Denis Remenyako Alexandr Smolyar Kirill Smal

@haupt racingteam/@smp\_racing

8

GT3



**INTO AFRICA RACING BY DRAGON RACING**  
FERRARI 296 GT3

Axoil Jefferies  
 Matt Griffin Jason Ambrose

@dragonracing88

11

GT3



**HOFOR RACING**  
MERCEDES-AMG GT3

Michael Kroll Chantal Prinz  
 Alexander Prinz Carsten Tilke Timo Rumpfkeil

@hofor\_racing

16

GT3



**WINWARD RACING**  
MERCEDES-AMG GT3 EVO

Sergey Stolyarov Rinat Salikhov  
 Gabriele Piana Victor Shaytar

@winwardeurope

19

GT3



**MP MOTORSPORT**  
MERCEDES-AMG GT3 EVO

Henk De Jong Daniel de Jong  
 Bert de Heus Jaap van Lagen

@officialmpmotorsport

20

GT3



**HUBER MOTORSPORT**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 R (992)

Hans Wehrmann Robert Mau  
 Jon Miller

@huber motorsport

**21**  
GT3

**HAAS RT**  
AUDI R8 LMS GT3 EVO II

🇧🇪 Peter Guelinckx 🇨🇰 Alexander Bukhantsov  
 🇬🇧 James Winslow 🇩🇪 Bert Longin

@haasrt

**24**  
GT3

**DINAMIC GT**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 R (992)

🇷🇺 Stanislav Minsky 🇦🇹 Klaus Bachler  
 🇳🇱 Loek Hartog 🇩🇪 Anders Fjordbach 🇩🇪 Thomas Kiefer

@dinamic\_gt

**69**  
GT3

**CONTINENTAL RACING BY SIMPSON MOTORSPORT**  
AUDI R8 LMS GT3 EVO II

🇷🇺 Vasily Vladykin 🇷🇺 Mikhail Loboda  
 🇷🇺 Andrey Solukovtsev 🇷🇺 David Pogosyan 🇷🇺 Alim Geshev

@simpsonmotorsport

**77**  
GT3

**EBM**  
ASTON MARTIN VANTAGE AMR GT3 EVO

🇮🇩 Setiawan Santoso 🇹🇭 Munkong Sathienthirakul  
 🇹🇭 Tanart Sathienthirakul 🇬🇧 Earl Bamber

@earlbamberteam

**25**  
GT3

**SAINTÉLOC RACING**  
AUDI R8 LMS GT3 EVO II

🇫🇷 Michael Blanchemain 🇫🇷 Paul Evrard  
 🇫🇷 Alban Varutti

@sainteloc\_racing

**27**  
GT3

**HEART OF RACING BY SPS**  
MERCEDES-AMG GT3 EVO

🇬🇧 Ian James 🇺🇸 Gray Newell  
 🇨🇦 Zach Robichon 🇺🇸 Hannah Grisham

@sps\_performance

**80**  
GT3

**HERBERTH MOTORSPORT**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 R (992)

🇸🇦 Antares Au 🇮🇩 Kevin Tse  
 🇮🇩 Jonathan Hui 🇮🇩 Frank Yu

@herberthmotorsport

**81**  
GT3

**ERA MOTORSPORT**  
FERRARI 296 GT3

🇬🇧 Ryan Dalziel 🇺🇸 Kyle Tilley  
 🇺🇸 Dwight Merriman 🇬🇧 Oliver Bryant 🇬🇧 Jake Hill

@era.motorsport

**30**  
GT3

**CAR COLLECTION MOTORSPORT**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 R (992)

🇮🇹 Alex Fontana 🇮🇹 Matej Knez  
 🇷🇺 Roman Mavlanov 🇮🇹 Victor Plekhanov 🇮🇹 Damir Saitov

@carcollectionmotorsport

**31**  
GT3

**TEAM PARKER RACING**  
BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT3

🇬🇧 Shaun Lynn 🇬🇧 Maxwell Lynn  
 🇬🇧 Robert Huff 🇬🇧 Scott Malvern

@teamparkerracing

**88**  
GT3

**DRAGON RACING**  
FERRARI 296 GT3

🇺🇸 Dustin Blattner 🇺🇸 Blake McDonald  
 🇺🇸 Patrick Liddy 🇬🇧 Matthew Bell

@dragonracing88

**91**  
GT3

**HERBERTH MOTORSPORT**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 R (992)

🇩🇪 Ralf Bohn 🇺🇸 Jake Pedersen  
 🇳🇱 Kay van Berlo 🇩🇪 Robert Renauer

@herberthmotorsport

**33**  
GT3

**OPTIMUM MOTORSPORT**  
MCLAREN 720S GT3 EVO

🇬🇧 Morgan Tillbrook 🇬🇧 Thomas Ikin  
 🇬🇧 Mikay Porter 🇩🇪 Benjamin Goethe

@optimumsport

**40**  
GT3

**COMTOYOU RACING**  
ASTON MARTIN VANTAGE AMR GT3 EVO

🇬🇧 Jamie Day 🇧🇪 Tom Van Rompuy  
 🇧🇪 Matisse Lismont

@comtoyouracing

**92**  
GT3

**PURE RXCING**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 R (992)

🇮🇹 Alex Malykhin 🇷🇺 Alexey Nesov  
 🇮🇹 Thomas Preining 🇬🇧 Harry King

@purexcing

**96**  
GT3

**GWR AUSTRALIA**  
MERCEDES-AMG GT3 EVO

🇺🇸 Justin Mcmillan 🇺🇸 Brett Hobson  
 🇺🇸 Michael Sheargold 🇺🇸 Glen Wood 🇺🇸 Garth Walden

@gwr australia

**41**  
GT3

**COMTOYOU RACING**  
ASTON MARTIN VANTAGE AMR GT3 EVO

@comtoyouracing

**56**  
GT3

**SCUDERIA PRAHA**  
FERRARI 296 GT3

🇨🇪 Miroslav Výboh 🇨🇪 Matúš Výboh  
 🇨🇪 Josef Král 🇨🇪 Dennis Waszek

@scuderiapraha\_racing

**99**  
GT3

**ATTEMPTO RACING**  
AUDI R8 LMS GT3 EVO II

🇨🇳 Yi Deng 🇩🇪 Alex Arkin Aka

@attemptoracing

**269**  
GT3

**HERBERTH MOTORSPORT**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 R (992)

🇩🇪 Max Moritz 🇩🇪 Chris Breuer  
 🇩🇪 Vincent Kolb 🇩🇪 Florian Spengler

@herberthmotorsport

**777**  
GT3



**TEAM WRT**  
BMW M4 GT3 EVO

TBA TBA  
TBA TBA TBA

@follow\_wrt

**969**  
GT3



**PROTON HUBER COMPETITION**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 R (992)

🇫🇮 Kalle Rovander 🇫🇮 Jukka Honkavuori  
🇫🇮 Jani Käkälä 🇩🇪 Mark Wallenwein 🇮🇹 Joel Monegro

@huber\_racing

**909**  
992



**RED CAMEL-JORDANS.NL**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 CUP (992)

🇳🇱 Rik Breukers 🇳🇱 Luc Breukers  
🇳🇱 Ivo Breukers 🇨🇭 Fabian Danz

@redcamelracing

**911**  
992



**TFT RACING**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 CUP (992)

🇫🇮 Patrick Charlaix 🇫🇮 Jordan Boisson  
🇩🇪 Benjamin Paque 🇫🇮 Jerome Boullery

@tfttracing

**991**  
GT3



**PARADINE COMPETITION**  
BMW M4 GT3

🇬🇧 Darren Leung 🇬🇧 Josh Caygill  
🇸🇦 Ahmad Al Harthy 🇬🇧 Rob Collard 🇬🇧 Toby Sowery

@paradine.competition

**701**  
GT3



**VORTEX V8**  
VORTEX 2.0

🇫🇮 Lionel Amrouche 🇫🇮 Solenn Amrouche  
🇫🇮 Philippe Bonnel 🇫🇮 Gilles Courtois

@vortexas\_officiel

**912**  
992



**TIERRA OUTDOOR RACING BY HWM**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 CUP (992)

🇳🇱 Ralph Poppelaars 🇳🇱 Lucas Van Eijndhoven  
🇳🇱 Huub van Eijndhoven 🇳🇱 Jop Rappange

@hansweijsmotorsport

**914**  
992



**RAZOO - MORE THAN RACING**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 CUP (992)

🇩🇪 Daniel Drexel 🇳🇱 Simon Birch  
🇩🇪 Artur Chwist 🇷🇺 Ivan Ekelchik

@razooon\_more\_than\_racing

**710**  
GT3



**LEIPERT MOTORSPORT**  
LAMBORGHINI HURACÁN SUPER TROFEO EVO2

🇩🇪 Gerhard Watzinger 🇨🇭 Takis  
🇮🇹 JJ Song 🇺🇸 Don Yount 🇩🇪 Brendon Leitch

@leipertmotorsport

**749**  
GT3



**111 RACING**  
IRC GT

🇩🇪 Darren Currie 🇺🇸 Axle Donaldson  
🇩🇪 Jake Camilleri 🇩🇪 Mark Griffith

@111racing\_au

**917**  
992



**FULGENZI RACING**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 CUP (992)

🇮🇹 Alessandro Giannone 🇮🇹 Andrea Girondi  
🇮🇹 Enrico Fernando Fulgenzi

@enricofulgenziflamingo

**918**  
992



**MÜHLNER MOTORSPORT**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 CUP (992)

🇺🇸 Bryan Sircely 🇬🇧 Harley Houghton

@muhlnermotorsport

**795**  
GT3



**TEAM CMR**  
GINETTA G56 GTX

🇫🇮 Eric Mouez 🇩🇪 Rodrigue Gillion  
🇫🇮 Erwin Creed 🇫🇮 Hugo Mogica 🇫🇮 Hugo Bac

@cmr\_team

**797**  
GT3



**GRAFF RACING**  
ROSSA LM GT

🇬🇧 Harrison Newey 🇷🇺 Evgeny Kireev  
🇷🇺 Roman Rusinov

@graffracing

**928**  
992



**HRT PERFORMANCE**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 CUP (992)

🇫🇮 Michael Blanchemain 🇫🇮 Stéphane Adler  
🇫🇮 Jérôme Da Costa 🇫🇮 Franck Lavergne 🇫🇮 Franck Eburderie

@hrt\_performance

**929**  
992



**HRT PERFORMANCE**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 CUP (992)

🇫🇮 Vincent Roche 🇫🇮 Sylvain Caroff  
🇫🇮 Jean Michel Marie 🇫🇮 Julien Jacquiel 🇫🇮 Julien Piolin

@hrt\_performance

**888**  
992



**SEBLAJOUX RACING**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 CUP (992)

🇫🇮 Stéphane Perrin 🇫🇮 Mathys Jaubert  
🇫🇮 Alexandre Leroy 🇫🇮 Sébastien Lajoux 🇫🇮 Louis Perrot

@seblajoux\_racing

**901**  
992



**AJITH KUMAR RACING BY BKR**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 CUP (992)

🇮🇳 Ajith Kumar 🇫🇮 Fabian Duffieux  
🇫🇮 Mathieu Detry 🇩🇪 Cameron Moleod

@baskoetenracing

**930**  
992



**HRT PERFORMANCE**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 CUP (992)

🇺🇸 Gregg Gorski 🇩🇪 Holger Harmsen  
🇨🇭 Silvain Pastoris 🇩🇪 Marlon Menden

@hrt\_performance

**931**  
992



**HRT PERFORMANCE**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 CUP (992)

🇩🇪 Marlon Menden 🇨🇭 Silvain Pastoris

@hrt\_performance

**938**  
992



**GP RACING TEAM**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 CUP (992)

🇫🇷 Gabriel Pemeant 🇫🇷 Loïc Teire

@gp\_racing\_team26

**950**  
992



**DUEL RACING BY HUBER**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 CUP (992)

🇸🇦 Sami Moutran 🇸🇦 Ramzi Moutran  
🇸🇦 Nabil Moutran 🇸🇦 Phil Keen 🇩🇪 Theo Oeverhaus

@huber\_racing

**438**  
GT4



**AGMC RACING BY SIMPSON MOTORSPORT**  
BMW M4 GT4 (G82)

🇬🇧 James Kaye 🇮🇹 Tudor Tudurachi  
🇬🇧 Timothy Docker 🇬🇧 Kavi Jundu 🇨🇦 Ramez Azzam

@simpsonmotorsport

**470**  
GT4



**WS RACING**  
BMW M4 GT4 (G82)

🇺🇸 Timothy Pappas 🇳🇱 Jeroen Bleekemolen  
🇺🇸 Keith Gatehouse 🇩🇪 Matthias Möller

@ws\_racing

**971**  
992



**RABDAN BY FULGENZI**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 CUP (992)

🇸🇦 Saif Alameri 🇸🇦 Fahad Alzaabi  
🇸🇦 Salem Alketbi 🇸🇦 Christopher Zöchling

@ennicofulgenziracing

**974**  
992



**QMMF BY HRT**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 CUP (992)

🇸🇦 Abdulla Ali Al Khelaifi 🇸🇦 Ghanim Al Ali  
🇸🇦 Ibrahim Al Abdulghani 🇩🇪 Julian Hanses

@hrt\_performance

**495**  
GT4



**TEAM CMR**  
GINETTA G56 GT4

🇬🇧 Lawrence Tomlinson 🇬🇧 Freddie Tomlinson  
🇬🇧 Michael Simpson 🇫🇷 Nico Prost

@cmr\_team

**496**  
GT4



**CONTINENTAL TTR RACING**  
TOYOTA GR SUPRA GT4 EVO

🇷🇺 Dmitry Levin 🇷🇺 Marat Gubaydullin  
🇷🇺 Konstantin Mandrikov 🇷🇺 Viktor Agafonov

@continentalracing

**978**  
992



**SPEED LOVER**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 CUP (992)

🇧🇪 Rik Renmans 🇧🇪 Gilles Renmans  
🇧🇪 Wim Meulders 🇧🇪 John de Wilde 🇧🇪 Stienens Longin

@speedloveerracingteam

**989**  
992



**SEVEN x SEVEN RACING**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 CUP (992)

• Banky • Kiyoto Fujinami  
• Tsubasa Kondo • Taichi Watarai

@molitorracingsystems

**101**  
TCE-TCX



**ASBEST RACING**  
SEAT LEON CUP RACER

• Junichi Umemoto 🇩🇪 Lutz Obermann  
🇸🇪 Henrik Sandell 🇩🇪 Christian Ladurner 🇸🇪 Pia Ohlsson

@asbest.racing

**102**  
TCE-TCX



**ASBEST RACING**  
CUPRA TCR DSG

@asbest.racing

**990**  
992



**JBR**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 CUP (992)

• Taku Bamba • Nonikazu Shibata  
• Kiwamu Katayama • Yasutaka Ando 🇬🇧 David Tan

@molitorracingsystems

**992**  
992



**SEBLAJOUX RACING**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 CUP (992)

🇫🇷 Lauris Nauroy 🇷🇺 Alexandr Artemyev  
🇳🇱 Paul Meijer 🇫🇷 Lucas Sugliano 🇫🇷 Louis Perrot

@seblajoux\_racing

**127**  
TCE-TCX



**SRS TEAM SORG RENNSPORT**  
PORSCHE 718 CAYMAN GT4 RS (TYPE 982)

🇮🇹 Benito Tagliero • Yasuhiro Misashi  
• Yutaka Seki

@sorgrennsport

SCAN THE QR CODE  
FOR THE UP TO DATE  
24H DUBAI ENTRY LIST



**414**  
GT4



**RAZON - MORE THAN RACING**  
PORSCHE 718 CAYMAN GT4 RS CLUBSPORT

🇩🇪 Denny Berndt 🇨🇦 Damon Surzyszyn

@razoon\_more\_than\_racing

**427**  
GT4



**SRS TEAM SORG RENNSPORT**  
PORSCHE 718 CAYMAN GT4 RS CLUBSPORT

🇨🇮 Gero Bauknecht 🇸🇪 Tommy Gråberg

@sorgrennsport

# CLIO CUP

## MIDDLE EAST

The Clio Cup Middle East is back as a support series for the prestigious Michelin 24H DUBAI on 10-12 January.

This weekend marks the halfway point of the six-event championship season. Against the backdrop of the iconic Dubai Autodrome and the thrill of the annual 24-hour race hosted by Creventic, fans can expect breath-taking battles and adrenaline-fuelled excitement.

### High-speed action awaits

Renowned for its close racing and intense overtakes, the Clio Cup Middle East, organized by GP Extreme, continues to deliver electrifying moments at every turn. With its field of expertly-prepared Renault Clio Cup 5 cars, the series has become a must-watch highlight of the regional motorsport calendar. Fans can expect nothing less than wheel-to-wheel action as drivers push their limits in pursuit of glory.

### Mid-season showdown: fierce battles on the horizon

The stakes are higher than ever as the championship hits its pivotal midpoint. Young talent Harry Hannam currently leads the overall standings fresh off a dominant performance at round two. However, he faces strong competition from Alex Renner and Avik Anwar, both of whom are determined to close the gap and fight for the front row.

In the Gentlemen class, Alex Renner tops the standings, with Ivan Tverdohlebov keeping the pressure on as the class battle intensifies.

One thing is certain, the road to the championship is far from over. Don't miss the action as the Clio Cup Middle East continues to showcase some of the best racing in the region. ■



# Behind Garage Doors

with Joe Bradley

Ahead of a brand-new era for the 24H SERIES, Joe takes a look back at some significant moments from Michelin's 136-year history.



*As I've always said, and will continue to say, racing is quite simple. It's all about the tyres.*

The beginning of a new season of motorsport has never ceased to excite me, even after all these years of being involved in the sport at many levels. I still get goosebumps and the hairs on my arms stand up as I make my way through the main entrance here at the Dubai Autodrome.

The 2025 season has a lot in store, especially with the 24H SERIES' new tyre partner Michelin. Competitors, be they the drivers or race engineers, now have the challenge of discovering how to optimise their race cars on the new rubber. Previous experience in the 24H SERIES has been rendered obsolete, and data engineers will literally be starting with a blank sheet of paper this weekend (or blank computer screens anyway).

Michelin will, of course, have their tyre technicians patrolling the pit lane offering advice. An absolute godsend in quickly establishing your baseline setup. Gaining an understanding on how the tyre performs across the length of a race stint will be crucial to getting onto the podium in any way.

Michelin becoming our new tyre partner got me thinking back to the 1977 Formula 1 season, where we saw Michelin introduce radial tyres to F1 for the first time. Specifically at the British Grand Prix with Renault, who were also introducing turbocharged engines to the sport at Silverstone.

This was massive, as the thinking was that crossply tyres were always the way to construct race tyres. They allowed the cars to slide through the corners, which of course was the way racing cars were driven at the time. Then along came downforce, firstly via wings and aerofoils and then came a lot of downforce produced by 'groundeffect' aerodynamics. This created the requirement of race cars to be driven more or less on rails. No more power sliding through the turns, for this turned out too be a much slower approach. And yes, it was Michelin who pioneered this radical new way of

constructing race tyres.

The Pneumatic tyre itself was invented by a man called John Boyd Dunlop, all the way back in 1888. Dunlop was actually a veterinary surgeon by profession, and coming up with the pneumatic tyre was actually a solution he had for his son's tricycle to make pedalling over the cobblestones faster, and to reduce the bumpy ride. He patented his design the following year, and within those 12 months, it was fitted to a bicycle that went on to win its very first race.

These early tyres consisted of a rubber tube filled with air, enclosed by a rubber-coated canvas that was then fitted to a wooden wheel rim. Incredibly successful it proved to be too: the Chenard-Walcker of André Lagache and René Léonard won the

very first 24 Hours of Le Mans with this type of tyre in 1923.

In 1889, two brothers, Edouard and Andre Michelin, ran a farm machinery business in Clermont-Ferrand in France. One day, a cyclist whose pneumatic tyre needed repair turned up at their factory. The tyre was glued to the rim, and it took them over three hours to repair the tyre, which then needed to be left overnight for the new glue to dry. The next day, Édouard Michelin took the repaired bicycle into the factory yard to test. After only a few hundred metres, the tyre failed.

Despite the setback, Édouard was enthusiastic about the pneumatic tyre, and he and his brother worked on creating their own version, one that did not need to be glued to the rim. In 1891, Michelin took out its first patent for a removable pneumatic tyre which was used to win the world's first long-distance cycle race, the 1891 Paris-Brest-Paris.

These days, Michelin is one of the most renowned manufacturers of tyres in the world with a very rich and successful history in motorsport. That history will undoubtedly continue to be built upon in the coming years with the 24H SERIES. After all, and as I've always said, and will continue to say, 'racing is quite simple. It's all about the tyres.' ■



**In 2024, Gray Newell took on his second 24H DUBAI in the GT3 while most of his Heart of Racing teammates were en-route to Daytona! Just another step in his GT3 process, the man himself explains to Creventic....**

Images - Nico Mombaerts / Lenssen Photo - The Heart of Racing

**F**or the first time in its history, and after shipping delays through the Bab El Mandab Strait have thrown a sizeable wrench in Creventic's schedule, the 24H DUBAI was held on the same weekend as the Rolex 24 at Daytona in January 2024. This situation, understandably, left the teams that had entered both events with a quandary: Dubai, or Daytona?

For some teams, many of whose drivers were already en-route for their contractually obligated drives in Florida, this difficult decision was made for them, and had no choice but to withdraw from Dubai at the eleventh hour.

But for one team – the Heart of Racing – the choice was an easy one. Why not do both?!

**UAE. Saturday 27 January - 10am local time (1am, Daytona)**

It's race morning at the Dubai Autodrome, and there's just three hours to go before the start of the 19th edition of the 24H DUBAI.

Originally, and for only his second GT3 start at the 24H DUBAI, Gray Newell was set to compete with his long-time PRO Roman de Angelis, two-time GTD-class IMSA champion Mario Farnbacher, and The Heart of Racing team principal Ian James. A line-up that, at the same event just over 12 months prior, had finished 8th overall and on the GT3-PRO/AM podium. The Red Sea clash however means that de Angelis, James and Farnbacher have instead been dispatched to drive THOR's two Aston Martin Vantage GT3 EVOs in Daytona.

Why not Gray? Well, for starters, the native Seattleite has never driven at the Speedway – *"I've driven it on the SIM, so I have an idea how it goes, but I haven't had the chance to drive Daytona in real life."* – nor does he have any previous race experience aboard the GT3-spec Aston. There's also the small matter that Gray, who only started his racing endeavours in 2021, has just four 24-hour events to his name as of January 2024. Debuting at arguably the toughest 24-hour sports car race in North America with such limited prep time, AND for the event's reigning GTD class winner no less, would be the

tallest of tall orders.

But as Gray explains to Creventic, there is another, simpler reason: Gray actually quite likes starting his racing season in Dubai!

"I'm a big fan of the event here. And I also really like the track," he begins. "Normally, you'd think flat tracks are not as interesting, but this is definitely one of my favourites. It's a great mix of high-downforce, high commitment corners and very technical, low-speed turns where you have to be very precise with the brakes.

"Turn one is kind of the initial setup for what your radius will look like as you go up and over the hill. It's all about finding that timing, knowing how to drive the car into that understeer, finding the point where you're going to lift off and then commit before you go into [turn] five.

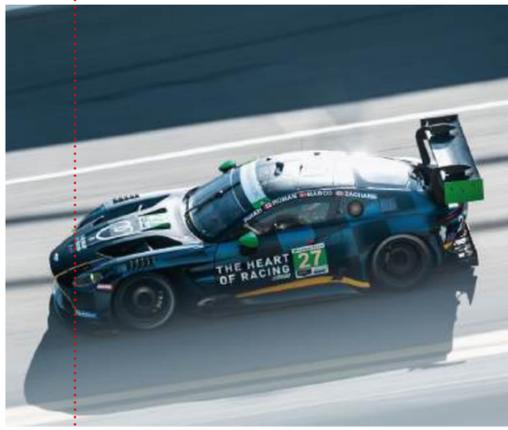
"Honestly, I think six is my favourite corner, because you're kind of finding that point where you have to give a little dab on the brakes to get the car slowed down, but if you've got too much steering in the car, you're going to get oversteer. It's this *billig* radius, and just about finding that moment where you commit back to the throttle. It's very, very satisfying."

It's not just the hours on-track that tweak Gray's interest in the 24H DUBAI though. Two evenings before our chat, the young American was one of 212 drivers attending Creventic's

welcome BBQ, a mix of local cuisine, music and a bit of fire eating – by professionals, not the drivers! – to celebrate the start of a new season. Similarly, two hours from now, the Autodrome grid will be crammed with drivers, team personnel, race fans, VIPs, and Diana Binks subbing for the Daytona-bound Nick Daman on radiolemans.com's traditional grid walk. It's a party-like atmosphere that rivals even that of the 'World Center of Racing.'

"This weekend's already been so enjoyable for me," Gray continues. "I like that there's a celebration of the local culture. It's really fun to have local musicians and artisans performing at the beginning of the week. And I really like how friendly this event is. There's a good camaraderie between all the teams. It doesn't feel like people are jabbing at each other, even on-track. People are doing a good job of co-existing. It's a really good event, and I think it's a lot of fun for the PROs and the AMs to have this very positive atmosphere."

Don't let Gray's enthusiasm for this "camaraderie" fool you though. He's been preparing, both physically and mentally, for the 2024 24H DUBAI for the past two months. He's just spent three constructive days with new teammates Daniel Mancinelli, Pierre Kleinubing and, notably, Aston Martin PRO Darren Turner working on a mutual setup. Plus, his fastest lap in yesterday's Q1 qualifying session – a 2m 01.208s – was



almost TWO seconds quicker than he managed aboard the Mercedes-AMG GT3 last year.

His 'normal' co-drivers and half of his team may be sound asleep more than 12,000 kilometres away readying for their own 24-hour challenge in nine hours time. But make no mistake, Gray Newell is taking his own twice-round-the-clock race in the UAE equally as seriously.

"For me, it's 'go time' from the moment I get on the plane. "The point for me where it always gets serious is qualifying. All the decision making we've done leads up to it - 'okay, this is the car we're going to have to race' - and we have to go and get the absolute most out of it."

### Daytona. Saturday 27 January - 3am local time (12pm, Daytona)

It's standing room only on the grid for the 19th edition of the 24H DUBAI as the mercury slowly creeps past 30 degrees. Nine time zones away, all is quiet at the darkened Speedway. There's still three hours to go before IMSA officials begin their final track inspection, and signage and transponder checks at 6am. Only then will the pitlane gates open to teams at 6.30am, a little under six hours before Daytona's own grid starts to form.

### UAE. Saturday 27 January - 4pm local time (7am, Daytona)

Just over three hours of the 24H DUBAI is complete, and fresh from his first stint, Gray is back in the garage speaking with Creventic. A clean start and solid opening stints from both Daniel Mancinelli and Gray mean the #27 Mercedes, being operated this weekend by Germany's SPS automotive performance for a second successive year, is running 13th overall and 4th in-class, 35 seconds behind GT3-Pro/Am leader Car Collection Motorsport.

The Naestyr CEO is clearly pleased not just with the Mercedes' smooth run so far, but also with his own progress. Last year after all, Gray made the jump to GT3 competition for

the first time in Dubai, having competed, and finished on the class podium with, an Aston Martin Vantage GT4 on his event debut in 2022.

"Going from a GT4 car to a GT3 car is a much bigger step than I considered. Not just because the GT3 car does a quicker laptime, but because the driving style you have to adopt is significantly different to a GT4 car. Instead of it being a mechanical-grip car, it's now an aero car, which means the way you drive it into a corner is a completely different matter to get your head around. Suddenly you have to find confidence in a car that will oversteer in very high-speed corners that, a GT4 car, wouldn't, simply because it doesn't have the downforce to do it.

"[2023] was pretty daunting for me. I had to step up to the top class, deal with all the traffic, deal with a new car I wasn't familiar with, and deal with expectations of myself. It went well, but I was exhausted by the end!

"So it's really gratifying to come back this year and immediately feel how much more comfortable I am in the car. For a younger driver like me who doesn't have the experience of my co-drivers, it's really *really* satisfying, especially in the 24H SERIES, where you have so much time on-track to get your head around the car."

### Daytona. Saturday 27 January - 8am local time (5pm, Dubai)

THOR's mechanics and engineers, and even some of the more dedicated race fans, have roused from their slumber. Following a much-needed breakfast, the team will make their way to their Speedway pit boxes for final checks and a pre-race team debrief. In just under five hours, it will be "go time," and THOR has a title to defend.

### UAE. Saturday 27 January - 8pm local time (11am, Daytona)

As is tradition, "the FIREworks!" - as boomed by radiolemans. com's Phil Anson - erupt over Dubai Motor City, signifying that

the 2024 24H DUBAI has passed quarter-distance.

Mixed fuel strategies mean The Heart of Racing is now four laps behind the overall leader, but still running 5th in GT3-PRO/AM. Unsurprisingly, traffic, a staple of the 24H DUBAI, has been a hurdle for the GT3 frontrunners since lap four...

"It's a BIG challenge. The first sector's really tough because the 'TCE' cars are going as fast as they can, but we've got so much downforce, we come up on them so quickly, and you have to think, really early, 'where am I going to try and commit to the move? Am I going to try and go over the kerbing on [turn] five and try to get around them at [turn] six?'"

"There are so many drivers, and you don't know their experience levels. Can they see me? Is it safe for me to try and stick my nose in there, or should I back out and wait until the next opportunity? It's a chess game at 200kph!"

### Daytona. Saturday 27 January - 1.40pm local time (10.40pm, Dubai)

At exactly 1.42pm local time (a seemingly irrelevant delay that, ironically, will lead to an awkward "officialing error" 24 hours later), the 62nd running of the Rolex 24 at Daytona finally gets underway.

In the 'GT' pack, Ross Gunn, who is partnering Farnbacher and THOR mainstay Alex Riberas in the #23 Aston Martin Vantage this weekend, opts for discretion over valour (this is not his first 24-hour rodeo), and after one lap, is running 12th in GTD-Pro. Four cars further back, teammate, and boss, Ian James moves the sister #27 AMR GT3 EVO up a couple of spots to 19th in 'GTD.' An unobtrusive yet still-positive start after technical gremlins doomed the #27 to just two timed laps during qualifying.

One hour later, Gunn is up to 6th in GTD-PRO, while James has slowly worked his way up to 10th in GTD. The #27 Aston is lucky to avoid being collected by Misha Goikhberg, who spears into the Bus Stop chicane right in front of the THOR team principal. The shunt ultimately eliminates the Forte

Racing Lamborghini Huracán after just 30 minutes. 22 hours and 57 minutes to go at the Speedway.

### UAE. Saturday 27 January - 1am local time (4pm, Daytona)

At half-distance in Dubai, The Heart of Racing Mercedes, with Kleinubing at the wheel, has moved into the overall top 10 and is running 3rd in-class. The sheer pace of Century Motorsport's BMW M4 GT3 means the GT3-PRO/AM leader has already pulled a three-lap gap, but the #27 Mercedes has closed to within a minute of nearest rival, Manamauri Energy by Ebimotors. The American outfit is settling quietly into its night shift.

On team instructions, Gray, following his second stint, is off for a few hours sleep ahead of his first stint tomorrow morning at 7am.

"I have a stigmatism in my eye, so at night, when there's no lights on the track, the cars behind me are just this big blur of light. So night driving is kind of a unique challenge because it's difficult to tell the closing speed of a car behind me.

"It's a difficult balancing act: you need to be focused on hitting your line and your apexes, but at the same time, you have to be thinking about, 'I'm at the end of my stint, my tyres are mostly off, and... is that a GT3 car that's pulling up on me, or is it a TCR car that just moved over?' I can't tell because it's all just a blur. So I have to be really, *really* paying attention."

If this reads like Gray has been handed a reprieve however, think again. PRO Darren Turner, an overall podium finisher at the 24H DUBAI in 2013, will remain on standby for the rest of the race, but he has just one scheduled stint left on Sunday morning. Ditto Daniel Mancinelli, who, with Turner, will do most of the heavy lifting during the night.

That means Gray will need to keep the already tired #27 Mercedes out of trouble and at the sharp end as the 24H DUBAI enters its closing stages. A tall order...





### Daytona. Saturday 27 January - 7.40pm local time (4.40am, Dubai)

Despite concerns that the Aston would struggle to match the pace of its BMW M4 rivals (an issue for the team across two continents, it seems), a buzz ripples through the THOR garage when both the #23 and #27 Astons eventually muscle their way to the front of their respective classes. Indeed, de Angelis spends almost an hour at the front of GTD with the #23, and will only lose ground when the team completes an earlier than expected brake change. With rain expected at Daytona Beach during the night, THOR's mechanics are confident that it's a gamble worth taking.

Amidst a "near record-pace" at Daytona, reigning class winner THOR is in contention.

### UAE. Saturday 27 January - 5am local time (8pm, Daytona)

A promising run, and a potential fight for a GT3-Am podium, hits a major hurdle as Mancinelli brings the battle-scarred #27 Mercedes into the box from 9th overall shortly after 4am. More than 30 minutes are lost remedying a "technical issue" - later confirmed to be a gearbox problem - and when Darren Turner brings the AMG back out on-track, the mighty THOR has dropped to 26th overall, nine laps behind the GT3-PRO/AM field.

Shoulders slump in pit box number 23 (how fitting!). A repeat podium is still on the cards - anything can happen in a 24-hour race, after all - but THOR's chances are slipping away...

### Daytona. Saturday 27 January - 10pm local time (Sunday 28 January - 7am, Dubai) - Hour 9

As Sunday morning breaks at the Dubai Autodrome 12,500 kilometres away, there's still more than 15 hours of the Rolex 24 to complete. THOR's GTD-PRO run is delayed slightly when LMP2 debris on-track dislodges the Aston's splitter, and the #23 is called into the pits for a replacement nose. Even so, Farnbacher/Gunn/Riberas run 6th in-class after nine hours.

James, running with de Angelis, Zacharie Robichon and Aston factory driver Marco Sørensen, has slipped further

back in GTD, but the #27 is still 16th in-class, albeit with an electrical gremlin bubbling beneath the surface. Though the quartet don't yet know it, this issue will grind the #27 Aston to a halt just two hours later, ultimately leading to the car's retirement.

A fairy-tale repeat win at Daytona won't be happening in 2024.

### UAE. Sunday 28 January - 10am local time (1am, Daytona)

Mid-morning on Sunday, fatigue and heartache - news about the #23 Aston's retirement in Florida has reached the Autodrome pit box - has hit the THOR garage hard. And there's still three gruelling hours left to run.

On-track, Gray is finishing his first double stint of the day. He pits the #27 Mercedes from 5th in-class and, for the first time in five hours, the American team is back in the overall top 20. Once they've sent Pierre Klienubing (called up, incidentally, for his first GT3 race since 2015 this weekend!) back out for his final run, SPS-THOR's mechanics will return to their folding chairs, keen to grab as much rest as they can before their next scheduled stop in an hour's time. No such 'luxury' for the engineers though, who will remain glued to the timing screens up to the chequered flag.

And Gray? He still has one final stint to go and is all too aware of the responsibility on his shoulders.

But still the smile is there. Hopes of a third podium are slim, but that wasn't necessarily the goal for Gray this weekend...

"Everytime I come to a race, my goal is to feel like I took a step forward. Obviously the goal is always to be on the top step of the podium, but in the event that something happens - the car can't finish the race, for example - if I can come away from a weekend feeling I was that much better than when I started, that's as much of a trophy as it is to be standing on the podium."

Fittingly, three hours later, Gray completes his final, clean stint - another step forward - and collects the chequered flag 5th in GT3-PRO/AM after 24 hard hours at the Autodrome. Despite the technical hiccup, The Heart of Racing celebrates its accomplishment. They've more than earned it.

12,500 kilometres away, their teammates still have 13-plus hours of the Rolex 24 at Daytona to complete. The weekend for The Heart of Racing is far from over. ■



**“We’ve been very fortunate to donate over \$10 million to the hospital.”**

Creventic caught up with The Heart of Racing's team principal Ian James to discuss the American team's origins, its charitable work with the Seattle Children's Hospital, and a surprisingly strong record in the 24H SERIES to-date.

**Ian, could you tell us a little about The Heart of Racing and its charity work...**

"Well, first and foremost, we raise quite a bit of money for the Seattle Children's Hospital, especially for their cardiac research. When we go racing, we're always finding ways to generate money and donate towards that course. So no matter what happens, results-wise, we always win because we're always generating money and awareness for the hospital.

"Also, although it's the 'Seattle' Children's hospital, this is a research hospital for other facilities around the world. We've been very fortunate to raise over \$10 million USD to this stage, which benefits hospitals around the world. We're very proud of that!"

**How did The Heart of Racing begin?**

"From 2014 to 2016, we were involved with IMSA [the United Sports Car Championship] with a satellite team, Alex Job Racing. And then in 2020 we came back with our own entity and one car with IMSA. That's how we started off.

"Today, we have three cars competing in the SRO, one car in IMSA, one car in the [FIA] World Endurance Championship, and a hypercar program on the horizon for 2025. The team has grown exponentially, and we're very proud of where we've got to today."

**IMSA fans will know The Heart of Racing as an 'Aston Martin' team, but Creventic fans will be more familiar with the team's AMG GT3. Is it difficult balancing two different manufacturers for endurance racing?**

"We're very fortunate to be an official Aston Martin team. They've been incredibly supportive. But we also race the Mercedes in the 24H SERIES because we enjoy competing with Creventic."

"This version of the Aston Martin Vantage [GT3] is a lot closer to the Mercedes-AMG GT3 in terms of feel. They're

both front-engined. They both have Mercedes-based engines, obviously. One's turbocharged and one's naturally-aspirated, so there is a difference there. But in terms of downforce and lap times, they seem to be very comparable."

**So far, from five outings in the 24H SERIES, The Heart of Racing has taken a podium at four of them. What's the secret behind this consistency?**

"A lot of people think you've got to 'win it' from hour one. We've got a different philosophy.

"Obviously we do a lot of racing around the world, so we see how each championship differs from each other. With these particular rules in the [24H SERIES], with the Code 60s for example, so much is down to hitting refueling and the pits at the right times. Having a good driver line-up. Really good team preparation of the car, etc. Also, we never lose sight of the end goal, which is to just keep churning out the laps!

"I think our team starts each race with a realistic overview. We try not to let any individual instances get too much to the forefront of our minds, and just let the race come to us."

**Big question: when is Heart of Racing going to commit to a full 24H SERIES campaign?!**

"In an ideal world, we'd love to do the whole 24H SERIES season. It's schedule dependent more than anything else, and every year we're kind of on tenterhooks to see where the dates fall in terms of every series we're running. There's only so many personnel and equipment resources that we have.

"But we really enjoy being here. For my teammate, Gray, the 24H SERIES has been a really good springboard because Creventic offers a lot of mileage and a lot of valuable experience racing among such a wide variety of cars."

*You can read about the Seattle Children's Hospital at [seattlechildrens.org](http://seattlechildrens.org)*



# What happened at last year's 6H ABU DHABI?

Ahead of the fifth edition of CREVENTIC's annual six-hour endurance event in Abu Dhabi, we take a look back at a memorable 6H ABU DHABI in 2024.

**C**ar Collection Motorsport came out on top of a race-long fight with Baron Motorsport to take its second win at the 6H ABU DHABI, and inadvertently played a role in the event's GT4 class victory being decided at the final corner.

The largest 6H ABU DHABI to-date – 43 cars – was already gearing up to become one of the most dramatic, as Baron Motorsport and the Car Collection Motorsport, the only two overall previous event winners in the field, took the fight for 2024 victory down to the wire.

Despite a spin earlier in the day, Baron Motorsport looked to have the race in-hand after a scintillating run by Axcil Jefferies pulled the Austrian team almost a lap clear. Having pushed its pit strategy to the max though, the fuel-starved Baron Motorsport was forced to make a final splash and dash

heading into the final 20 minutes, a stop that eroded most of the Ferrari's lead.

A technical issue with the fuel pumps however, during which race control neutralized the event, made a pit stop before the closing 20 minutes impossible, and it was pure bad luck that the Ferrari hit the refueling area just as the race went green once again. Car Collection Motorsport thus moved into the overall lead, and while Baron Motorsport managed to remerge within striking distance of the Porsche, the gap was too great for Jefferies to close over the final 20 minutes.

Dennis Marschall drove the #96 Porsche across the line to secure victory, the German team completing 140 laps of the 5.281 km Yas Marina Circuit in the process. Car Collection Motorsport thus became the first team to win the 6H ABU

DHABI more than once.

One of nine overall leaders at the 2024 6H ABU DHABI, Manamauri Energy by Ebimotors took its first event podium in 3rd with its Porsche 992 GT3 R. In a nod to how competitive the race had been, the Romanian-Italian team, after six uninterrupted hours of racing, finished just a few seconds clear of Attempto Racing.

**D**espite a precautionary engine change overnight, Red Camel-Jordans.nl came out on top of an incredibly tight fight for 992 honours, which saw five different cars hold the class lead across six hours.

Behind the Dutch team, a sensational battle for the final rostrum spots was decided with less than four minutes left on the clock, as QMMF by HRT overtook RABDAN by FULGENZI for 2nd place. At the time, this marked the Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation's best result to-date in the 24H SERIES' 992 class (this would be eclipsed a week later by a class win in Dubai), while Abu Dhabi's Rabdan Motorsport, having also led '992' early on, celebrated being back on the podium at its home event for the first time since 2022.

**V**ortex V8 secured a maiden win for its new '2.0' sports car after a decisive run in Abu Dhabi, one spin under the W hotel aside. In a remarkable performance on its 24H SERIES debut, Britain's Scott Sport finished just half a second behind with its Lamborghini Huracán Super Trofeo.

razoon-more than racing's KTM X-BOW GTX looked on course to replicate its GTX class win from 2023 only to lose its right rear wheel at turn 10 shortly after half-distance.

GTX podium contenders Leipter Motorsport and P21 Motorsport were similarly eliminated from contention by a heavy coming together during the third hour, amazingly, while the then-leading Century Motorsport BMW was lapping them both! Attempting to share the same stretch of asphalt, Leipter Motorsport and P21 Motorsport tangled at turn nine, significantly damaging the Lamborghini Huracán Super Trofeo's right front corner and sending the Porsche 991-I Cup heavily into the barriers. Incredibly, the Porsche recovered to the pitlane under its own steam, but was later retired after the damage proved too extensive. P21 Motorsport was deemed at fault for the incident, and was handed a 30-second time penalty.

Ironically, the incident helped the sister P21 Motorsport Porsche 991-II Cup secure its second consecutive 6H ABU DHABI class podium in 3rd.

In a stunning grandstand finish, and after a race-long duel between the two, Century Motorsport secured GT4 victory in Abu Dhabi over AGMC Racing team by Simpson Motorsport at the very last corner of the race.

Century Motorsport, which, like Simpson, was running a G82-generation BMW M4 GT4 in Abu Dhabi, was on course to take the win as the race entered its closing stages, but was

caught short when a technical issue forced the refueling area to be momentarily closed. Required to pit to complete a driver change (or risk earning a penalty for exceeding Ravi Ramyead's stint time), Century Motorsport then had to pit again the following lap for fuel and to serve a penalty, turning a near-one-minute lead into a 30-second deficit. The charging Charlie Robertson would eventually hunt down and overtake the Simpson Motorsport BMW at the final corner.

"I thought we were in the straight and narrow, but then I heard we had a 20-second penalty, which we served during our last pit stop," Charlie Robertson explained to Creventic. "So we probably lost around 45, 50 seconds to the car behind. I came out 23 seconds back with 10, 12 minutes to go, and just got my head down and tried my hardest. I could see the [Simpson] BMW getting closer and closer every lap, but I didn't know if I would get it."

Robertson's charge was inadvertently made more difficult by the Car Collection Motorsport Porsche, which, unaware of the duel, put both GT4 BMWs a further lap down on the final tour.

"I just saw some GT3 traffic on the last lap," Robertson continues, "let the Porsche through in a good place, and I thought he might just compromise the Simpson car. And he did. And I just managed to nick the win in the final corner! It was really good. I pushed everything out there!"

On its 24H SERIES debut, the Toyota Gazoo Racing UK works entry, operated by Speedworks Motorsport, secured the first series podium for the new Toyota GR Supra GT4 Evo in 3rd. Fittingly, the UAE's Continental Racing, also running a GR Supra GT4 Evo, rounded out a good weekend for Toyota with 4th in-class.

**A**C Motorsport took both the overall TCE win and its second TCR class victory at the 6H ABU DHABI after a race-long duel with CWS Engineering. Able to extend its fuel stints further than the Ginetta G55, the Audi RS3 LMS TCR was able to leapfrog CWS in the pits heading into the final hour.

The second CWS Engineering Ginetta G55 had started from pole position and held that advantage over the opening stages, but was soon on pitroad with gear selector issues. This was later traced to water in the compressor, which continually jammed the gearbox and eventually had to be changed altogether.

Race Track Competition ended its 6H ABU DHABI weekend in dramatic fashion when the Lamera Cup disintegrated after hitting the barriers at turn four. Daniel Lamouli fortunately walked away from the incident under his own steam, and was checked out at Yas Marina Circuit's on-site medical facility.

The incident was deemed to have been caused by a collision with the MDM Ireckonu Porsche 992 GT3 Cup, which was later handed a 120-second penalty for avoidable contact with the Lamera. Despite also replacing its brakes during the six-hour event, the MDM Porsche still managed to finish 5th in 992.

Particularly impressive, as reigning TCR Europe Touring Car Series champion Tom Coronel completed the formidable Dakar Rally mere days before his arrival in Abu Dhabi! ■

# ENTRY LIST



## 6H ABU DHABI 2025

**1**  
GT3

**MANAMAURI ENERGY BY EBIMOTORS**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 R (992)

Fabrizio Broggi Sabino de Castro  
 Sergiu Nicolae Cosimo Papi

@willi\_motorsport

**2**  
GT3

**CLIMAX RACING**  
MERCEDES-AMG GT3 EVO

Mike Zhou Lu Wei  
 Zhang Yaqi

@climaxracing

**4**  
GT3

**HAUPT RACING TEAM**  
MERCEDES-AMG GT3 EVO

Reema Juffali

@haupt racingteam/@smp\_racing

**5**  
GT3

**TEAM MOTOPARK**  
MERCEDES-AMG GT3 EVO

Nigel Schoonderwoerd Levente Révész  
 Yelmer Buurman

@motopark\_group

**6**  
GT3

**RACING ONE**  
FERRARI 296 GT3

@racingone

**7**  
GT3

**SMP RACING**  
MERCEDES-AMG GT3 EVO

Sergey Sirotkin Vitaliy Petrov  
 Denis Remenyako Alexandr Smolyar

@haupt racingteam/@smp\_racing

**11**  
GT3

**HOFOR RACING**  
MERCEDES-AMG GT3

Michael Kroll Chantal Prinz  
 Alexander Prinz

@hofor\_racing

**16**  
GT3

**WINWARD RACING**  
MERCEDES-AMG GT3 EVO

Sergey Stolyarov Victor Shaytar

@winwardeurope

**20**  
GT3

**HUBER MOTORSPORT**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 R (992)

@huber.motorsport

**21**  
GT3

**HAAS RT**  
AUDI R8 LMS GT3 EVO II

Alexander Bukhantsov Fabien Duffieux  
 Mathieu Detry

@haas.rt

**33**  
GT3

**OPTIMUM MOTORSPORT**  
MCLAREN 720S GT3 EVO

Morgan Tillbrook Thomas Ikin  
 Mikey Porter

@optimumsport

**38**  
GT3

**WEBUYANYPHONE.COM RACING BY SIMPSON MOTORSPORT**  
BMW M4 GT3

James Kaye Michael Lyons  
 Darren Ridge

@simpsonmotorsport

**44**  
GT3

**ARC BRATISLAVA**  
LAMBORGHINI HURACÁN GT3 EVO

Miro Konopka Adam Konopka

@arcbratislava

**56**  
GT3

**SCUDERIA PRAHA**  
FERRARI 296 GT3

Miroslav Výboh Matúš Výboh  
 Josef Král Dennis Waszek

@scuderiapraha\_racing

**59**  
GT3

**GARAGE 59**  
MCLAREN 720S GT3 EVO

@garage\_59

**69**  
GT3

**CONTINENTAL RACING BY SIMPSON MOTORSPORT**  
AUDI R8 LMS GT3 EVO II

Vasily Vladykin David Pogosyan  
 Andrey Solukovtsev

@simpsonmotorsport

**73**  
GT3

**PROTON HUBER COMPETITION**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 R (992)

🇩🇪 Jörg Dreisow 🇩🇪 Manuel Lauck

@huber\_racing

**77**  
GT3

**EBM**  
ASTON MARTIN VANTAGE AMR GT3 EVO

🇮🇩 Setiawan Santoso 🇹🇭 Munkong Sathienthirakul  
🇹🇭 Tanart Sathienthirakul

@earibammermotorsport

**98**  
GT3

**DRAGON RACING**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 R (991 II)

🇬🇧 Jim Geddie 🇬🇧 Glynn Geddie  
🇬🇧 Phil Keen

@dragonracing88

**99**  
GT3

**ATTEMPTO RACING**  
AUDI R8 LMS GT3 EVO II

@attemptoracing

**79**  
GT3

**DINAMIC GT BY TSUNAMI RT**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 R (992)

🇮🇹 Fabio Babini 🇮🇹 Johannes Zelger  
🇮🇹 Giuseppe Ghezzi

@dinamic\_gt

**80**  
GT3

**HERBERTH MOTORSPORT**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 R (992)

🇮🇩 Antares Au

@herberthmotorsport

**777**  
GT3

**TEAM WRT**  
BMW M4 GT3 EVO

@follow\_wrt

**701**  
GTX

**VORTEX V8**  
VORTEX 2.0

🇫🇷 Lionel Amrouche 🇫🇷 Philippe Bonnel  
🇫🇷 Gilles Courtois

@vortexsas\_officiel

**81**  
GT3

**ERA MOTORSPORT**  
FERRARI 296 GT3

🇺🇸 Dwight Merriman 🇺🇸 Kyle Tilley  
🇬🇧 Jake Hill

@era.motorsport

**86**  
GT3

**BARON MOTORSPORT**  
FERRARI 488 GT3 EVO

🇫🇷 Philippe Prette 🇮🇹 Angelo Nero  
🇩🇪 Philipp Baron

@baronmotorsport

**702**  
GTX

**VORTEX V8**  
VORTEX 2.0

🇫🇷 Arnaud Gomez 🇫🇷 Olivier Gomez

@vortexsas\_officiel

**748**  
GTX

**SAALOCIN BY KOX RACING**  
KTM X-BOW GT2

🇮🇩 Nico Pronk 🇮🇩 Dennis Retera  
🇮🇩 Peter Kox

@saalocin1

**87**  
GT3

**WINWARD RACING**  
MERCEDES-AMG GT3 EVO

🇮🇪 Rinat Salikhov 🇮🇹 Gabriele Piana  
🇮🇪 Sergel Borisov

@winwardeuropa

**88**  
GT3

**INTO AFRICA RACING BY DRAGON RACING**  
FERRARI 296 GT3

🇮🇩 XO 🇮🇩 Axcil Jefferies  
🇮🇩 Stuart White

@dragonracing88

**749**  
GTX

**111 RACING**  
IRC GT

🇮🇪 Darren Currie 🇮🇪 Axle Donaldson  
🇮🇪 Jake Camilleri

@111racing\_au

**750**  
GTX

**SCOTT SPORT**  
LAMBORGHINI HURACAN SUPER TROFEO EVO

🇮🇪 Keith Frieser 🇮🇪 Mikkel Mac  
🇮🇪 Aaron Scott

@scott.sport

**91**  
GT3

**HERBERTH MOTORSPORT**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 R (992)

🇩🇪 Ralf Bohn

@herberthmotorsport

**96**  
GT3

**GWR AUSTRALIA**  
MERCEDES-AMG GT3 EVO

🇮🇪 Justin Mcmillan 🇮🇪 Brett Hobson  
🇮🇪 Michael Sheargold

@gwr australia

**888**  
992

**SEBLAJOUX RACING**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 CUP (992)

🇫🇷 Stephane Perrin

@seblajoux\_racing

**909**  
992

**RED CAMEL-JORDANS.NL**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 CUP (992)

🇮🇪 Rik Breukers 🇮🇪 Luc Breukers  
🇮🇪 Ivo Breukers 🇨🇭 Fabian Danz

@redcamelracing

**911**  
992



**TFT RACING**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 CUP (992)

Patrick Charlaix Jordan Boisson  
Benjamin Paque

@tfttracing

**914**  
992



**RAZOOK - MORE THAN RACING**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 CUP (992)

Artur Chwist Daniel Drexel  
Simon Birch

@razook\_more\_than\_racing

**995**  
992



**TORO VERDE GT**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 CUP (992)

Graeme Mundy Steven Liquorish

@toroverdegt

**999**  
992



**RKC MOTORSPORT**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 CUP (992)

Ricky Coomber Niels Ulrich Nyboe

**917**  
992



**FULGENZI RACING**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 CUP (992)

Alessandro Giannone Andrea Girondi  
Enrico Fernando Fulgenzi

@enricofulgenziracing

**918**  
992



**MÜHLNER MOTORSPORT**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 CUP (992)

Bryan Sircely

@muhlnermotorsport

**414**  
GT4



**RAZOOK - MORE THAN RACING**  
PORSCHE 718 CAYMAN GT4 RS CLUBSPORT

Clemens Mühlbacher

@razook\_more\_than\_racing

**427**  
GT4



**SRS TEAM SORG RENNSPORT**  
PORSCHE 718 CAYMAN GT4 RS CLUBSPORT

Bernard Wagner Jan-Niklas Stieler

@sorgrennsport

**928**  
992



**HRT PERFORMANCE**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 CUP (992)

Gregg Gorski Gilles Thiers

@hrt\_performance

**929**  
992



**HRT PERFORMANCE**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 CUP (992)

Steve Caroli

@hrt\_performance

**438**  
GT4



**SIMPSON MOTORSPORT**  
BMW M4 GT4 (G82)

Takashi Hata Taiyo Ida  
Kenji Suzuki

@simpsonmotorsport

**496**  
GT4



**CONTINENTAL TTR RACING**  
TOYOTA GR SUPRA GT4 EVO

Stanislav Nonikov Ilya Sidorov  
Ahmed Al Khaja

@continentalracing

**971**  
992



**RABDAN BY FULGENZI**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 CUP (992)

Saif Alameri Fahad Alzaabi  
Salem Alketbi Christopher Zöchling

@enricofulgenziracing

**974**  
992



**QMMF BY HRT**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 CUP (992)

Abdulla Ali Al Khelaifi Ghanim Al Ali  
Ibrahim Al Abdulghani Julian Hanses

@hrt\_performance

**110**  
TCE-TCX



**CHAZEL TECHNOLOGIE COURSE**  
ALPINE A110 CUP

Guillaume Masset Felix Crepet  
Stephane Lipp Michel Abattu

@chazel\_technologiecourse

**193**  
TCE-TCX



**CHAZEL TECHNOLOGIE COURSE**  
ALPINE A110 CUP

Louka Desgranges Ivan Ovsienko

@chazel\_technologiecourse

**978**  
992



**SPEED LOVER**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 CUP (992)

Rik Renmans Gilles Renmans  
Wim Meulders

@speedloverracingteam

**992**  
992



**SEBLAJOUX RACING**  
PORSCHE 911 GT3 CUP (992)

Ling Kang Lu Zhiwei  
Cao Qikuan

@seblajoux\_racing

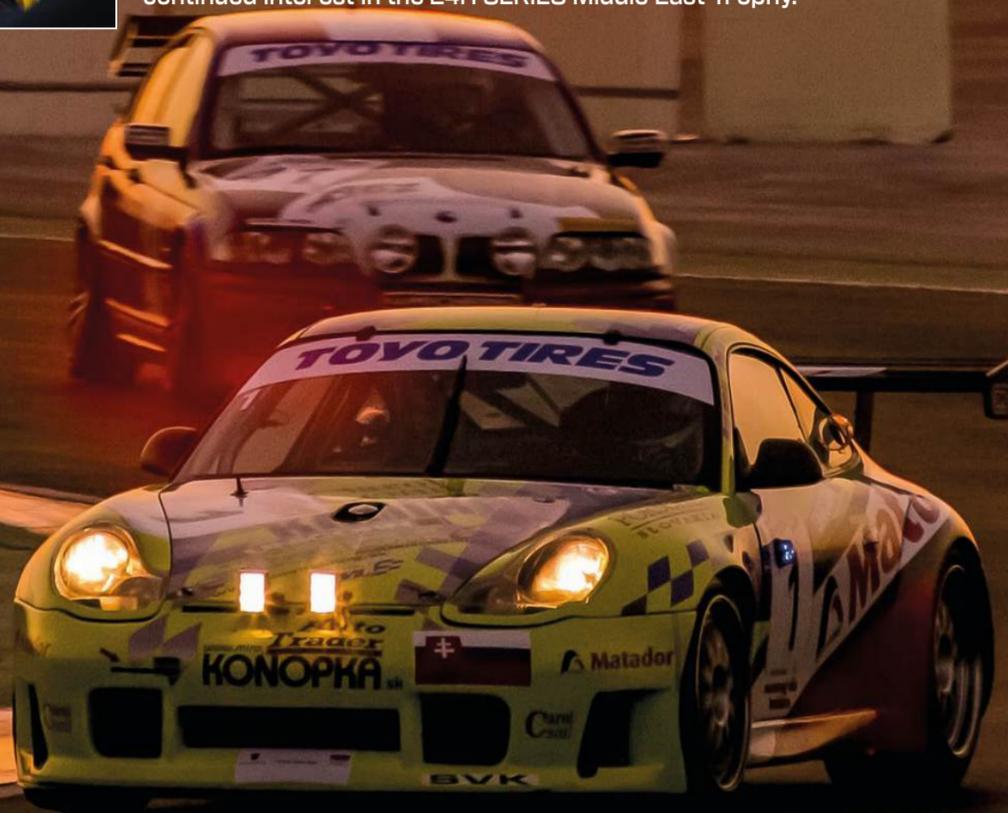
SCAN THE QR CODE  
FOR THE UP TO DATE  
6H ABU DHABI ENTRY LIST



# Story A.R.C.



Miro Konôpka, and his team ARC Bratislava, was on the grid for the very first 24H DUBAI back in 2006. 19 years later, the Slovakian outfit, in its continuing support of Creventic's Middle East program, is set to enter its fourth consecutive 6H ABU DHABI at Yas Marina. We caught up with Miro to discuss his continued interest in the 24H SERIES Middle East Trophy.



Images - Nico Mombaents / Petr Frýba / Eric Teeken

**F**ounded in 1997 by Dušan Vysloužil and Miro Konôpka (the latter of whom still oversees and competes for the team to this day), ARC Bratislava has raced only fleetingly at several of Creventic's European events through the years. And yet, the Slovakian independent has been a regular champion – not literally sadly, though time may still tell – of the 24H SERIES' Middle East program from the very beginning.

Indeed, having made the jump to international competition in 2003 as 'Team Slovakia' in the Porsche Supercup, Miro Konôpka has been on the grid for all but the first edition of the 6H ABU DHABI since 2021 as well as 12 of the 19 editions of the 24H DUBAI completed thus far, including the first 10.

In fact, such was Miro's enthusiasm for then-newboy Creventic's 'enthusiast'-dedicated endurance race in 2006, he was the very first entrant.

"I was there for the first edition, in 2006," Miro explains. "I've known [Creventic co-founders] Ivo [Breukers] and Gerrie [Willems] for a long time, and I believed this would be a really good project. In fact, I was the first guy to pay an entry fee! So I got race number 1 for the first edition!"

Ultimately, Miro's faith in Creventic was not misplaced, and 'AC Bratislava' – as it then was – finished a fighting drive at the inaugural 24H DUBAI 3rd overall and runner-up in the A6 class.

Fun fact, among the team's four-driver line-up in 2006 was Jirko Malchárek, an active member of the Slovakian parliament at the time who, four years earlier, also became the first Slovak to drive a Formula 1 car as part of official testing duties with Minardi.

The renamed 'ARC Bratislava' was back in Dubai for 2007 – cue another top five finish – and would be on the grid for four of the following five editions. In 2009, in what would remain the closest overall 24H DUBAI finish for 14 years, ARC Bratislava came devastatingly close to winning the whole thing!

"I remember, in 2009, we led for, something like, 12 hours," Miro continues. "And, half-hour before the end of the race, somebody crashed into my car, and that was it." – Despite the disappointment, the hastily repaired Porsche did at least salvage 4th at the flag.

"I've run more than 50 24-hour races, including 12 times in Dubai and six times at Le Mans. And the goal is always to finish. That's all. I'm realistic! Preparation is important, because, at a 24-hour race, the level really goes up. But you also need to be lucky. And on that day, we weren't."

Granted, the team's commitments to the Asian Le Mans Series, which ARC Bratislava has contested regularly since 2016 – and in which Miro even took LMP2-AM Drivers' honours in 2018/2019 – led to a five-year hiatus from the 24H DUBAI between 2016 and the Slovakian team's return to the event in 2021. Prior to that though, and even in the team's absence, Miro kept Slovakia's streak alive at the 24H DUBAI by competing with Bovi Motorsport (2011), Manor MP Motorsport (2013), Car Collection Motosport (2014) and Förch Racing by Lukas Motorsport (2015). Ironically, Miro's class win aboard the bespoke Brokernet Silversting in 2011 remains the best result to-date for 'ARC' [cough] in Dubai...

Unsurprisingly, despite the short break, and given the vehicles he's raced and the competitors both he and his team have faced at the 24H DUBAI through the years, it shouldn't come as too much of a surprise to learn how much Creventic's racing program in the Middle East has changed since 2006...

"Phwoar!" Miro continues, with a laugh. "It's impossible to compare!"



"I remember, at the first edition, it was absolutely another level. In the beginning, it was more of a 'gentlemen' race. Drivers and teams. But all big series change eventually, and of course, now it's a lot more professional. And there's a lot of very good, and... 'funded' teams that come in!"

"Before, there were a lot less PRO teams and a lot more 'gentlemen teams,' and now... there are still a lot of AM teams, but, in the early days, there were more 'enthusiasts'. Remember, back in 2006, we were racing against SEATs, a lot of BMWs, and we had a Group N class. More cheap cars and old Clios. Now, the cheapest car is usually a Ginetta, which, maybe in the first edition, would probably have finished in the top five!"

**T**he 24H DUBAI is just a part of ARC Bratislava's story with Creventic in the Middle East, of course. Indeed, while a scheduling clash in 2021 meant the team missed the inaugural edition, Miro and ARC have been an entrant in the 6H ABU DHABI every year since 2022. And a relatively successful one too.

After a strong run to 6th overall in 2022, Miro, together with three-time Lamborghini Super Trofeo Europe class champion Andrzej Lewandowski, took GT3-AM honours at Abu Dhabi in 2023 (a default result, admittedly, given that ARC was the event's only GT3-AM entrant) and finished in the overall top 10. A hard-earned result, given that a miscommunication during qualifying meant the #44 Lamborghini Huracán GT3 EVO ended up starting from the very back of the GT grid.

It should be stated as well that Miro's now regular entry for the 6H ABU DHABI – one he's set to continue in 2025 – is one born of genuine enthusiasm. Not only for the Yas Marina Circuit itself, but of the event also.

Indeed, while the 24H DUBAI provides the mental and physical challenge endurance racing enthusiasts expect of a 24-hour event (and that very much includes six-time 24 Hours of Le Mans entrant, seven-time Nürburgring 24 Hours, five-time Spa 24 Hours and four-time Daytona 24 Hours competitor, Miro), the man himself admits that Creventic's annual six-hour 'vacation' in Abu Dhabi offers a less intense though still very competitive challenge compared with its more tenured Dubai counterpart.

"Abu Dhabi is a vacation! A fantastic track. Abu Dhabi is a very nice place to be. I always have a lot of drivers interested in Abu Dhabi.

"And... look, I am 62 years old. I enjoy Dubai very much, but it's not easy. It's a 24-hour race, and it's a very long night. And that's a problem for me, because it's not easy for me to run at night, for the entire night! In Abu Dhabi, when you run at night, it's almost like running during the day!"

Though his enthusiasm for one event over the other is more one-sided than it once was, Miro is still quick to point out that these two very different events – one a true 24-hour mental and physical challenge, the other a competitive ‘vacation’ – could make the 24H SERIES Middle East Trophy a more tantalizing prospect for teams and drivers, PRO and AM alike, as it continues developing.

“I think it’s a good idea to have more races in the Middle East [Trophy]. For me, I hope one day we could have three or four events. Maybe a six-hour race, the [24H DUBAI], and then one or two more six-hour races in Abu Dhabi, and maybe Qatar or Saudi Arabia.

“Look at Asian Le Mans. Before, it was just races in Asia. Now, it’s not just Asia. Now it’s a winter test for European Le Mans [Series] teams and drivers. Years ago, we only had 15 cars. Now we have 44, and nearly all of them are from Europe, with teams and drivers, including ‘gentlemen,’ flying in for the winter.

“Okay, this system of one or two races. It’s nice. It works. But Creventic likes to go ‘big,’ and they do it well.”

That’s not Miro blowing hot air for the sake of his Creventic interviewers, by the way. The #1 race number on the ‘AC Bratislava’ Porsche in 2006 proves that Miro is more than happy to put his money where his mouth is for a racing endeavour he believes in.

So much so that ARC Bratislava was also one of the first teams to register for the inaugural 12H KUWAIT back in December 2022, the first-ever international event hosted by Kuwait Motor Town.

It’s just a shame the race itself didn’t go particularly well for the ARC Bratislava Lamborghini.

“For us, it was not so good. We were the leader early on in that race,” – a charging Zdeno Mikulasko took the overall lead with a decisive move on lap five – “but we had eight punctures! And after three hours, we [retired] the car, because for us, it was a very big risk. I think there was a problem with the tyres at that race, I’m not sure.

“I think if [the 24H SERIES] went again to Kuwait, I would come back, no problem. The track is nice, the people and organization are nice. And hopefully the tyres wouldn’t be an issue!”

Unsurprisingly, at the time of writing, ARC Bratislava, one of the biggest ‘champions’ of Creventic’s Middle East program, has registered its Lamborghini Huracán GT3 EVO for its fourth consecutive 6H ABU DHABI. Had the stars aligned, ARC Bratislava would also have been on the grid for the 20th edition of the 24H DUBAI, much as it was for the first one back in 2006. Sadly, circumstances mean that’s no longer the case...

“If I was the first entrant for the first edition, I also wanted to be there for the 20th edition too. But we couldn’t make that work.”

But who knows? Maybe one day, two decades on, the #1 will work its way back to Miro Konôpka and Autoracing Club Bratislava in Dubai. Or Abu Dhabi. ■



## Will ARC Bratislava compete with Creventic in Europe?

### Why the Middle East?

Given that Creventic held its first official European event as early as 2008, and has hosted the largely European-based 24H SERIES for more than a decade now, you may be wondering why the Přípojná-based ARC Bratislava, a stalwart of the 24H SERIES Middle East Trophy, has yet to contest a full European program with the Dutch promoter. Admittedly, ARC Bratislava has competed fleetingly at several 24H SERIES’ European rounds in the past. The Slovakian team twice entered the 12H HUNGARY for example (the inaugural edition in 2008, and again in 2010), was on the grid for the second 12H MUGELLO in 2015, picked up a GTX class victory at the 12H MONZA in 2020, and took two further category wins on its first two entries – of three to-date – at the 24H BARCELONA in 2012 and 2015.

For the one and only time Creventic held a 24H SERIES event at the Slovakia Ring, ‘ARC Bratislava by Ferry Monster Autosport’ even took TCR honours at the TCE-only 24H SLOVAKIA in 2016. But, as far as European events go, that’s pretty much it.

(The irony that Miro was speaking with Creventic for this article at the Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya during the 2024 24H SERIES European season finale has not been lost on us...)

The reason, however, is a simple one. At just a shade over 62 years old, Miro is, and always has been, a competitor. His team after all was originally founded as an opportunity for he and Dušan Vysloužil to participate in local hill climbs and road rallies, and even two, sadly gruelling entries at the Sebring 12

Hours in 2007 and 2008, before their eyes were collectively set on a full European racing program in the FIA GT Championship in 2009. After that, ARC competed regularly in the Blancpain Endurance Series between 2012 and 2018, completed a short run in the Intercontinental GT Open from 2018 to 2020, and made its debut in the FIA CEZ Trophy in 2012, a series the team has run ever since.

Throw in sporadic 24-hour entries at Le Mans and Spa (across the GT and LMP2 categories, just FYI) and that leaves precious time left for a full 24H SERIES European season as well.

Still, to run an endurance racing program in the Middle East during the winter off-season offers an ideal opportunity for teams like ARC Bratislava to stay race sharp and keep the competitive ‘rust’ at bay without negatively affecting its European program.

And, okay, yes, there are financial considerations too...

“I spoke about this with Ivo, with Helen [Roukens] and with Gerrie, and I think maybe it would be interesting... of course, it is a Creventic decision, but, for me, it would be interesting to have more eight-hour, or 10-hour races [in the 24H SERIES]. In Europe, we have no six-hour races, and in the ‘winter series,’ we have Abu Dhabi after Dubai. A 24-hour race can be crazy money, but we still want to race. So this could be a good [compromise].”

Miro does admit though that a full 24H SERIES campaign for ARC Bratislava remains a possibility beyond 2025...

“At some point, I think I would like to run, completely, the 24H SERIES in Europe. When? Well, let’s see.” ■



SUPPORT SERIES



The Gulf Radical Cup, organized by GulfSport Racing, has become perhaps the most competitive of the 12, single-marque Radical series running around the globe. The live-streamed Radical World Finals held at the Yas Marina GP Circuit in November attracted 32 drivers representing 18 nationalities across three classes of Radicals. The Final was won by UAE driver Alim Geshev (SR10 - Platinum Class). The PRO1500 class (SR3XXR) meanwhile, the same as all the cars seen here this weekend, was won by young Mexican hotshot, Ian Aguilera. Canadian driver Robert Burgess took victory in the PRO1340 category.

For this weekend’s third event of the 2024/2025 season, Round 2 winner and current Gulf Radical Cup champion Alex Bukhantsov returns to competition having missed the start of the season due to his LMP3 commitments in the Michelin Le Mans Cup and European Le Mans Series. One of the four favourites for success this weekend is the fast-improving Team Relentless driver Usmaan Mughal, who will compete

alongside Kinetic7 boss Rick Parish. They of course will not have it their own way, as both Aguilera and Keshev will be extremely eager to score maximum points.

With plenty of track time that includes testing, qualifying sessions, sprint races and a 45-minute race with mandatory pit stops and success penalties. Anything can happen, and behind those top four there are another dozen experienced drivers and race winners looking to get on the podium.

Both Creventic B.V. and Dubai-based GulfSport Racing Ilc have been successfully promoting and running race events in the United Arab Emirates since January 2006. There is an interesting crossover as some visiting Creventic drivers also compete in the Gulf Radical Cup, given that these high-downforce 620kg production sports prototypes – pulling 2.3G – provide a great physical workout and offer valuable track time on both of the UAE’s Grand Prix circuits.

“Tell us about your helmet design...”

# Stéphane Kox



Involved in motorsport from a very young age, Stéphane Kox made her racing debut concurrently in go-karts and aboard KTM's esoteric X-BOW in 2012. Temporarily putting a cap on her racing career in 2019 to concentrate on her legal studies, Stéphane, daughter of Le Mans class winner Peter Kox, made her competitive return in 2021 in the DTM Trophy. She has since contested the Asian Le Mans Series and, from 2022 onwards, has become a 24H SERIES Middle East Trophy regular. We're guessing you weren't expecting a Martin Luther King reference during this interview though, right...?

**Stéphane, the primary colours on your helmet are pink and black, with a little white detailing. It's a very striking look, but why these colours in particular?**

"It might sound a little clichéd for a girl, but I really do like pink. It's quite a significant colour: you can see it from far away, and in the pictures of me in the car, the pink really stands out.

"The cushions inside my helmet are pink too! A while ago, I didn't have the right homologation helmet for an event, so I had to buy this one that weekend or I wouldn't have been able to race. But it was too big. At that time I was working in Formula 1,\* and the guy from Bell, he was doing [seven-time F1 World Champion, Lewis] Hamilton's helmet. I sent him a message: 'hey, I need to make my helmet smaller, could you help me with it?'; 'yeah yeah, no problem.' So I took my helmet to Spa, into the Formula 1 paddock, and walked with it right into the Mercedes truck!

"He asked me if I wanted a specific colour for the cushions, because they were black at the time, and I thought, 'yeah, why not make them pink too.' That was a very special moment, seeing my helmet standing next to Hamilton's!"

*\*In 2022, Stéphane was the official Formula 1 pit reporter for Viaplay Group, the Scandinavian streaming service that acquired exclusive rights to broadcast F1 in The Netherlands and the Nordic region.*

**The diagonal stripes down the sides: are they a nod to your father Peter's design?**

"Mostly, yes. When I was really little and did karting, I actually used his helmet. It was a bit too big, but I used it anyway. Then, when I got my own helmet, I wanted to have a dedication to his design. So I've had the same design as my father has had for his entire career, with the striping around the mouth and on the back. Those have always been the same as his, but I wanted them in my own colours."

**The quotation on the back – "I have a dream" – is obviously very powerful. What does it mean to you, personally?**

"I chose it when I did my first helmet design because my dream

was to succeed in motorsport. This was obviously very famously said by Martin Luther King, and I found the speech... it was quite personal to me actually. When I got into racing, I'd just come out of a difficult time in my life and I wanted to take the next step. And motorsport really helped me get back on-track.

"That's why I put 'I have a dream' there. It was my dream to get out of the period I was in, and eventually, all these years later, it worked."

**It's interesting that you've used a very subtle colour so the message doesn't really stand out...**

"Yes, because this message was for me only. It's my personal [motivation] and I want to have it with me when I'm in the car. That's why it's written quite subtly, black-on-black."

**What's the significance of the butterflies?**

"Well, a butterfly starts off [in a cocoon], and it pops out into something very beautiful. And that's how I feel about my motorsport dream. It started out differently, it went through a phase and transition, but it came out beautifully."

**One of the reasons we like your helmet design is that it's very clear and represents you, as both a driver and a person. In your opinion, do you think helmet designs are too complicated these days?**

"To be very honest, I do like it sometimes when I see a very 'sparkly' helmet. It's not that I don't like the idea, it's just that it doesn't fit me. And I do like the fact that people can really express themselves through their helmet designs.

"However, I must say that I don't like, for example in Formula 1, that drivers change their livery so many times. It's a shame because a helmet design is related to you. It's personal. You express yourself through it.

"Of course, it doesn't have to be exactly how it used to be. I think a lot of the adaptations have been fun! But I really like it when a driver pays respect to his own design, and their journey, and keeps the same or similar design throughout their career."

*Stéphane Kox was speaking with Kees Koning at the 6H ABU DHABI in 2024.*

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# 2024

## A Year in Pictures

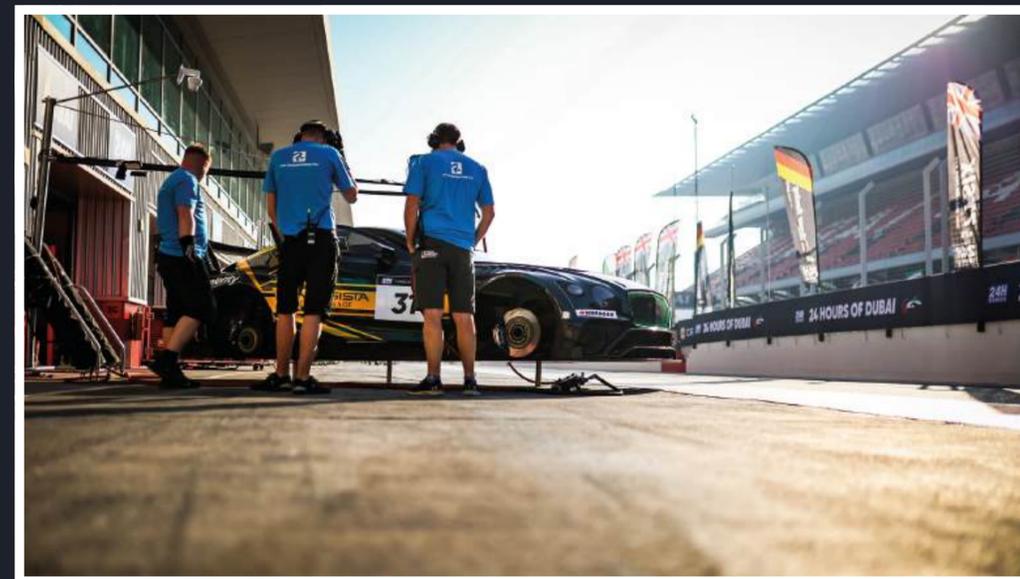
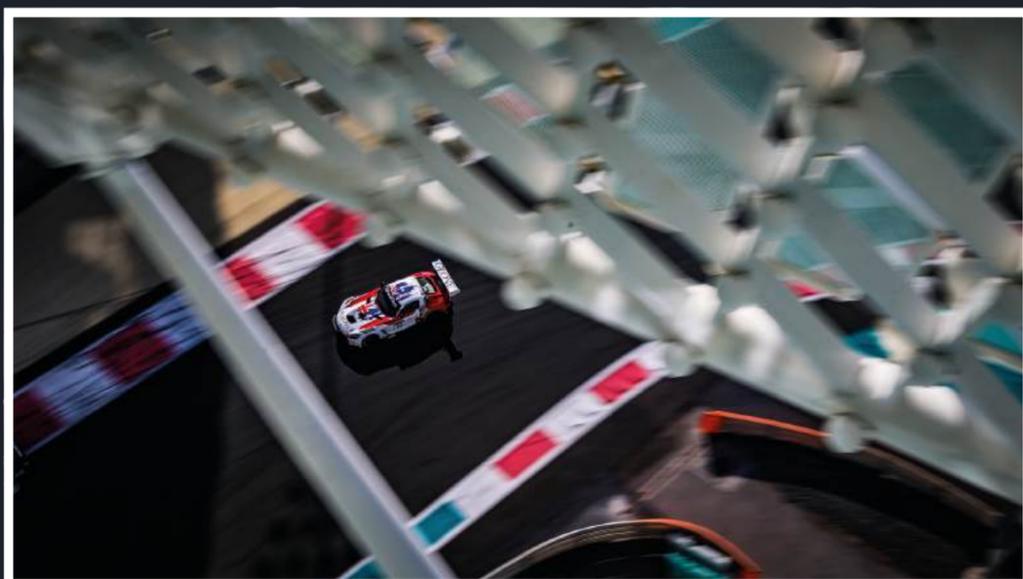
Heading into his third year as the official photographer for the 24H SERIES, Nico Mombaerts runs us through some of his favourite images from the 2024 season. A selection that includes his favourite (stomach-turning) type of photoshoot, celebrated corners shot from different perspectives, a few tips on shooting into the sun, and even a few thoughts on circumnavigating Yas Island's famous W Hotel.

Words and images - Nico Mombaerts

### Top-down, bottoms up?

**Where?** 6H ABU DHABI (Yas Marina Circuit) **When?** Saturday 20 January **Who?** Grove Racing

**Why?** Shooting at the Yas Marina Circuit without sneaking into the W Abu Dhabi hotel is not possible. This iconic hotel, which is partially built over the racetrack, contains a nice rooftop that gives you the opportunity to shoot the cars top down, often blind, in the midst of the white steel structure. Be patient, get the car lined up between the steel support beams, and you can get some amazing, complex shots. Small point, do not try to get into the hotel wearing your media vest. You'll feel compelled to grab lunch at the W Lounge on the ground floor and you'll miss most of the afternoon session!



### No further comment

**Where?** 24H DUBAI (Dubai Autodrome) **When?** Wednesday 24 January **Who?** Team Parker Racing

**Why?** What more is there to say about this image? I don't even think I need to run through the technical aspects of this shot, or the aesthetic I was going for. All eyes are instead on this legendary car - the Bentley Continental GT3 - that competed in Dubai. Never have I received so many comments after posting my images online than I did when I posted my selection of this absolute beast. Oh, and, if possible, the soundtrack was even more incredible.

No further comments necessary.

### The other side of the fence

**Where?** 12H MUGELLO (Autodromo Internazionale del Mugello) **When?** Friday 22 March **Who?** CP Racing

**Why?** Mugello is one of those tracks, amidst the glorious Tuscan hills, that is very attractive for spectators. When shooting at this circuit, I often step away from the service roads where we usually operate to explore the surrounding areas for new angles. I'll even dare to claim that the best views are not beside the track but from a distance. This shot of CP Racing for example was taken from the rise above turn three (Poggio Secco). If you don't mind a few leaves in your face, you can really feel the undulating nature of the track. And yes, Charles and his guys were warned to stay off the sausage kerbs.





### Another angle

**Where?** 12H SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS **When?** Sunday 21 April **Who?** Vortex V8 / RD Signs / Red Ant Racing

**Why?** One of the biggest challenges involved with shooting at a track you've worked dozens and dozens of times before – like I have at Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps – is finding new angles to capture the same action from a different viewpoint. Normally, a photographer would get as close to that 'viewing hole' in the fence as possible for a clean shot down the Kemmel Straight and into Les Combes. Instead, I took a couple of steps back. That meant I could frame this three-way fight in a way you may not have seen before without losing that iconic Belgian 'racing fog' in the background.



### Close up!

**Where?** 24H PORTIMAO (Autódromo Internacional do Algarve) **When?** Thursday 9 May **Who?** MRS GT-Racing

**Why?** The coolest shots, but also the most challenging ones as a motorsport photographer, are the car-to-car rolling shots. Sitting backwards in the trunk of whatever vehicle you're using as the camera car (for this shot, it was my rented Kia Rio), on a bumpy track, and at speeds of up to 50kph is not the most comfortable. Especially when you have to match your camera shutter speed with that of the car being shot. And ideally, you want to slow that down even more in order to keep that sensation of speed alive in the final image. Do this for three or four laps, and it gets very disorienting. An empty stomach and stocking up on travel sickness pills are highly recommended if you want to give this a go.



### Battle of the beasts

**Where?**  
12H SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS  
**When?**  
Saturday 20 April  
**Who?**  
Hofoer Racing / Haas RT

#### Why?

We all know that the Ardennes can be challenging when it comes to weather conditions, but this last edition of the Hankook 12H SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS was out of this world. Sun, rain, snow, hail, ice... you name it, we had it all. It's hard to pick one image that shows all of the conditions we battled that weekend, but this GT3 fight probably does it best: slippery conditions; limited visibility; a demanding sequence of corners. The normally flat-out Eau Rouge-Raidillon presented a very different challenge for drivers that weekend.

### Magic hour in the Algarve

**Where?** 24H PORTIMAO (Autódromo Internacional do Algarve) **When?** Saturday 11 May **Who?** Saintéloc Junior Team

**Why?** One of the apps you need as a motorsport photographer is called 'Sun Tracker' (or 'Sun Seeker' if you want to splash out and don't mind paying €9). As you've probably guessed, this app tells you the path of the sun so you can then choose the best locations to shoot the sunset. This particular location, on the outside of turn 11, is one of the best to capture the sunset, but also one of the most challenging; as you're shooting almost directly into the sun, the cars are coming blindly at you, and still at high-speed. For the best result in this position, you'll want to go old-school and full-manual rather than autofocus to stop the camera fighting back against you.





### Low and Slow

**Where?** 12H MISANO (Misano World Circuit Marco Simoncelli) **When?** Thursday 4 July **Who?** Prime Speed Sport

**Why?** Shooting at the Misano World Circuit Marco Simoncelli is not what you'd call easy. Known most famously as a MotoGP track, Misano is extremely flat and, also, surprisingly fast, with big run-off areas and gravel traps. As a result, a large portion of the trackside locations are marked as 'no-go' red zones. On top of that, when shooting in the midst of summer, the sheer amount of heat haze means getting the sharp and crisp shots I always try to pursue becomes a real challenge. To deal with all of this usually means going full-blown manual behind the camera lens. And when you do that, you produce an image like this. It really does give you an idea just how quick these GT cars can run at Misano.



### 'Mr Pancake' is born

**Where?**

12H MISANO (Misano World Circuit Marco Simoncelli)

**When?**

Friday 5 July

**Who?**

Sergio Pires (Haas RT)

**Why?**

This image is the reason my nickname among my peers - 'Mister Pancake' - was born. The 28mm lens I was using in the pitlane at Misano during Free Practice is so small and flat that it looks like a Japanese pancake, hence the name.

Like any other camera and/or lens, the 28mm is just a tool to create the image I have in my mind's eye. Like this one of a very focused Sergio Pires, waiting for his stint aboard Haas RT's Audi R8. He's concentrating so much, I'm not even sure he noticed 'Mr Pancake' taking this sneaky shot!

Or maybe Sergio's a waffle guy instead...



### Sheer retro pleasure

**Where?** 24H BARCELONA (Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya) **When?** Friday 13 September **Who?** Jens Klingmann (Poulsen Motorsport)

**Why?** Back to my favorite lens of all time, the 1.4 Art series. This 'through the side window' shot, combined with those famous BMW M racing colours on Jens' helmet and the sun rays hitting the cars cockpit, give a unique, retro vibe that I just love. The fact that the blue 24H SERIES banner in the background, and the red seats of the grandstand behind that, are in the correct 'BMW M' order just frames this shot perfectly.

### The lion reflects

**Where?** 24H BARCELONA (Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya) **When?** Sunday 15 September **Who?** Dennis Bohn (Lionspeed GP)

**Why?** Why centralize your subject when there is so much more to see and capture around them?

Shot early morning during the 24H BARCELONA, the lighting conditions, the setup inside the garage, and the fact that the Lionspeed GP mechanics keep their 'office' so clean, was a perfect setup to capture this reflection of Dennis Bohn as he got ready for his next stint. And yes, well-spotted. Dennis is indeed wearing his father Ralf's spare helmet!



# HEAD to HEAD



## Scott Noble

Herberth Motorsport (#91)

2024  
GT3 and GT3-AM  
Drivers' champion



## Jason Hart

Herberth Motorsport (#91)

2024  
GT3 and GT3-AM  
Drivers' champion

**When was you first race together, and which series and team were you competing with?**

**J:** "The first proper race I remember with Scott and I driving together was the Indy 8 Hours, which we did in a GT4 car [with NOLASPORT]. I'm guessing that was maybe three years ago...?"  
**S:** "October 2021, maybe...?"  
**J:** "Yeah, 2021. It was the last time they allowed GT4 cars at the Indy 8 Hours."

**What would you say is your best, personal moments in the 24H SERIES?\***

**S:** "Well the most memorable for me was the craziness at [the 2024 12H] Spa-Francorchamps! The weather was so dynamic, so ever-changing, and it was a super challenge for an amateur like myself. I think for some of the PROs as well.  
"We also ended up winning our class at Mugello [2024], which was wonderful! We also found two phenomenal family restaurants that weekend so that made it a perfect weekend!"  
**J:** "For sure, Mugello and Spa. Every race with Herberth is amazing. They're a great team. They have a great group of people. We've loving it!"

*\*We should point out that this interview took place at the 24H PORTIMAO, four months before Jason and Scott won the 24H BARCELONA overall. The result secured the pair and former series champion Ralf Bohn the 2024 GT3 and GT3-AM Drivers' championships. We're guessing their answers would have been quite different had we asked the questions in September!*

**Scott which is Jason favourite track?**

**J:** "This should be easy. I've only raced there once!"  
**S:** "Oh, only once?" [Slight pause] "Spa...?"  
**J:** "No, Le Mans!"  
**S:** "Oh Le Mans, that's right!" [Both laugh] "That was a phenomenal experience. I came over to Europe for that with my family to watch Jason race. I followed the entire race and think I only slept three or four hours.  
"But when I looked at that long list of drivers and figured out

where I was ranked?" [Clicks tongue] "I thought, 'I've got to get to work and start racing in some lower series before working my way up to Le Mans.' It really is the elite of the elite."

*\*Jason competed at the 2021 24 Hours of Le Mans aboard a JMW Motorsport Ferrari 488 GTE EVO.*

**And Jason, which is Scott's favourite track?**

**J:** [Pause] "It's hard to say because I think it changes every time we race in Europe! In the USA, Scott was very strong at circuits like Sebring and Watkins Glen. Now, over here, he's stepped up to the 992 GT3 R, and I think he did a great job at Mugello.  
"Unfortunately, we didn't get to experience Spa in the dry, but that's one of the top tracks in the world, without question. So... yeah, I'm not sure. I think his favourite track is evolving."  
**S:** "Yep, it is. In the States, I love Sebring, because it's rough and masculine and difficult, and you really take a beating! As for Europe, it is most certainly Spa. The beauty of a ski-worthy mountainside made special with challenging, high-speed apexes and elevation changes.

"When you come to Europe, there's a fluidness to these tracks and a whole other technique that you have to learn. It's certainly made me a better driver, coming to Europe."

**Which circuit haven't you visited together, but would like to?**

**S:** "We've been making that list at dinner every week!" [Both laugh]  
**J:** "I think we both want to experience Spa in the dry. Bathurst is something that neither of us have experienced too, and we're both kind of looking at the [Bathurst] 12 Hours because it's just a wild race track and a very aggressive race. That's probably the highest cherry on our list so far."

**Scott, what is Jason's best quality as a driver?**

**S:** "He has a lot of great qualities as a driver, but I especially love how committed he is to coaching.  
"I'm still quite 'young' to racing, but when I don't understand something fully, he doesn't give up and tries different ways to

communicate. He just knows so much, not just how to drive but how to communicate the physics going on, and how, as a driver, you can manage that. It's just constant work getting me to understand everything!"

**And Jason, what is Scott's best quality?**

**J:** "His best quality, on-track, is that he doesn't give up. He's willing to continue looking at data. Continue looking at onboard videos. Continue doing the track walks. To study. To absorb and learn, and program his mind until the achievement comes. Some folks might get worn down or say, 'y'know what, this racing thing is too much work.'  
"I admire people like him who have been very successful in life and could easily be on a yacht wherever he wants, but instead decides to come to the track and work for fun. I love that!"

**Scott, what is the most embarrassing thing Jason has done during your time as teammates?**

**S:** "He's a pretty aggressive rental car driver!" [Both laugh] "One time, we rented a minivan at Sebring. He was showing me how to get down to the apex, and we took out the apex sign with the front of the minivan! It was bent at 45 degrees and stayed like that all weekend!"

**And Jason, what's the most embarrassing thing Scott has done during your time as teammates?**

**J:** "Now and then, he'll ask somebody to turn the radio down while he's in the car. And we keep having to explain that there's a volume knob on the radio over to his right. It can be quite funny."  
**S:** "I get too focused driving, and the team will give me instructions over the radio. I won't hear one word. Not one word! So I have to wait until I'm on the straight and say, 'please repeat!'"  
**J:** "We can tell when he's really pushing himself hard, because all of a sudden, 'the radio's too loud!'"

**Quick fire round!**  
**12 Hours, or 24 Hours?**

**S:** "24."  
**J:** "Yeah, the most prestigious races are 24 hours."

**Coffee, tea or Red Bull?**

**J:** "Coffee, with maybe a splash of cream."  
**S:** "Tea. I'm probably the most high-maintenance iced tea orderer ever!" [Jason, who's clearly heard this mini-rant before, starts to snigger]. "In Europe, mango, peach and lemon iced tea is all I can find, and nothing unsweetened. So I usually end up ordering an English black tea and a glass of ice to make 'my' iced tea. Every waiter in Europe thinks I'm nuts!"

**Petrol or electric?**

**J:** "Petrol."  
**S:** "Never electric!"

**Pineapple on pizza: yes or no?**

**S:** "Yes!"  
**J:** "For sure! I have four girls, and every pizza we have always has to have pineapple on it."

**Max, Lewis, Fernando or Charles?!**

**S:** "I've got to respect Fernando, the 'old man,' still giving it everything. I'm pretty fascinated that someone can stay that high at their game and not be 20 years old!"  
**J:** "For sure, I gotta respect Fernando too, but Max seems to be a super talent."

**Scott, describe Jason in one word.**

**S:** "In one word?" [Pause] "I would just say 'family.'"

**And Jason, describe Scott in one word.**

**J:** "Oh, for sure, Scott nailed it! 'Family.'"

**Which one of you is fastest?!**

**J:** "At what...?!" (Easy, boy. Easy.. - Ed.)  
**S:** "Definitely Jason. If I'm ever the fastest, I don't make the corner!" [Both laugh]

*Scott Noble and Jason Hart took their first overall 24H SERIES win at last year's 24H BARCELONA. Tellingly, the result also secured both Herberth Motorsport and 2017 Overall GT Drivers' 'Continents' champion Ralf Bohn a record-extending fourth outright win at the event.*

“Tell us about your helmet design...”

# Solenn Amrouche



At the 2024 Hankook 24H BARCELONA, Solenn Amrouche hit a notable milestone when she took her first class win in the 24H SERIES. It's the latest landmark in a burgeoning GT racing career for the young French up-and-comer, one that only started with Midjets in 2019.

Having added a 24H SERIES 992-AM class podium to her tally since then, Solenn, daughter of series mainstay Lionel Amrouche, is looking to keep that momentum going with Vortex heading into the 2024-2025 24H SERIES Middle East Trophy. Aided by a little inspiration from Radiator Springs' resident legal representative and a certain seven-time Formula 1 World Champion.

So, first things first Solenn, in terms of your helmet design, how much input did you have in the process?

“I actually drew everything by myself. I started with a sketch of a helmet and I put my favourite colour – orange – in the background. Then I started adding all the references and symbols that are important to me.”

Like the white horse and the stars on the side...?

“Exactly. The stars are inspired by Lewis Hamilton's helmet.\*

“As for the horse, it has several meanings for me. The first is the idea of always getting back up after a fall. I rode horses for nine years, which helped me work on my confidence and improve my discipline. The fact that it is white represents elegance and rarity, because we are all unique.

“It's also a nod to my mother: she comes from the Perche region of France, so I specifically wanted to include a Percheron horse.”

*\*In 2015, Sir Lewis Hamilton introduced a new helmet design donning two stars, representing the two F1 World Championships he'd achieved to that point. He has since added one star per subsequent world title earned.*

The compass on the top of your helmet. Does that refer to how much you travel for motor racing?

“Yes, indeed. Also, I put the north at the front because, as the saying goes, ‘tu ne perds pas le nord.’ You must not lose the north. For me, that means you must not lose sight of your goals.”

What's the significance of the 'Piston Cup' on the front?

“The Piston Cup is a nod to my favourite animated movie, ‘Cars.’ If you look closely at the back, you'll see I've also included Sally's tattoo, hidden just like her's...”

*\*That's Sally Carrera, for the non-‘Cars’ aficionados. The design for Radiator Springs' town attorney was, apparently, inspired by the ‘996’ generation Porsche 911 Carrera.*

Are the Piston Cup and the crown around the top connected...?

“Actually the crown is there because, when I was little, I always told my parents that one day I would be a princess. So, on-track at least, I'll always have my tiara!”

We noticed that you have a similar design to your father, Lionel. Is this a ‘family design’?

“No, I drew these stripes on my father's helmet myself because I've been so inspired by Lewis Hamilton. He started with nothing and has gone on to be so successful!

“They represent evolution, and the passage from a situation where you have nothing, but with a lot of work and perseverance, you can achieve great things. It was important for me to represent Lewis' stripes on my helmet so as not to forget all the sacrifices my father has made.”

A lot of driver helmet designs are overly complex these days. In your opinion, is it important for a helmet design to reflect a driver's personality?

“I would say it's a personal choice. For me, a helmet represents a driver's character and their story. When the helmet goes on, we no longer see the face or the features behind it. So in that respect, the helmet should always represent its driver, even when their face is hidden.”

*Solenn Amrouche was speaking with James Gent. Our thanks also to Philippe Bonnel for his assistance.*



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