



Heart of Racing by SPS leads five-way GT3 fight at 2023 Hankook 12H SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS; Holmgaard Motorsport on top in TCE.

- *Heart of Racing by SPS leads Saintéloc Junior Team by less than eight seconds at halfway point; four GT brands inside top five.*
- *992-generation Porsche 911 GT3 R currently 3rd and 4th overall on 24H SERIES powered by Hankook debut.*
- *HRT Performance on top in 992; Belgium's Red Ant Racing leads 992-Am.*
- *Buggyra ZM Racing vs. Lionspeed GP vs. Atlas BX Motorsports in GT4.*
- *2022 TCE event winner Holmgaard Motorsport in the running again in 2023.*

SPA-FRANCORCORCHAMPS (6 May, 2023) – Heart of Racing by SPS currently leads a rain-affected Hankook 12H SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS at half-distance, albeit by less than eight seconds over race-long rival Saintéloc Junior Team.

Rain proved a significant factor throughout the afternoon: the first heavy rainfall began just 45 minutes into the six-hour event while the second struck during the second hour. Though neither shower lasted long, the ferocity was such that very few drivers opted to stay on slicks during the deluge to gain track position.

As the conditions began to calm, the Heart of Racing by SPS Mercedes-AMG GT3 (#27, Ian James / Gray Newell / Roman De Angelis), an overall podium finisher last time out at the Hankook 12H MUGELLO, eventually worked its way to the front, and after a faultless run, has since led 42 of the completed 118 laps thus far around the 7.004 km Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps.

“That’s half the job done so far and only the ‘Am’ drivers’ have driven, so we’re very pleased to be where we are!” Ian James explained to radiolemans.com’s Diana Binks. “It’s been nerve-wracking and crazy because we’ve never known what to do from lap-to-lap: keeping the tyres at the right pressures, given the conditions, has been a real challenge. So we’re just glad there’s been no incidents. The car’s still in good shape, flawless pitstops... it’s been great!”

Asked how he would like the race to end tomorrow, James explained with a smile, “The same. In the lead!”

After a similarly impressive run from the front row, the Saintéloc Junior Team Audi R8 LMS GT3 EVO II (#26, Erwan Bastard / Paul Evrard / Antoine Doquin) finished ‘part one’ of the 2023 Hankook 12H SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS just 7.7 seconds behind the Heart of Racing by SPS.

2017 Overall GT Teams’ ‘Continents’ champion Herberth Motorsport (#91, Daniel Allemann / Ralf Bohn / Alfred Renauer / Robert Renauer / Laurin Heinrich) and the returning Modena Motorsports (#16, Francis Tjian / John Shen / Benny Simonsen / Mathias Beche), both of which have entered a new, 992-generation Porsche 911 GT3 R for the event, currently round out the overall top four. Like the top two, Modena’s Benny Simonsen closed to less than 14 seconds of Herberth’s Ralf Bohn after a stellar final stint.

Series debutant JP Motorsport (#69, Christian Klien / Patryk Krupinski / Norbert Siedler) will take tomorrow’s restart in 5th. The McLaren 720S GT3 started the event way down the grid in 40th after an issue prevented the German team from posting a lap in Q1, but ran consistently in the overall top five after two hours and even led the event outright for eight laps.

With Norbert Siedler able to stay on the lead lap in the closing stages, the overall top five – comprising four different brands – will all take tomorrow’s restart on the lead lap.

Reigning GT Continents Trophy winner CP Racing (#85, Charles Putman / Charles Espenlaub / Shane Lewis) had been running in the GT3-AM lead early on, but dutifully played its traditional strategic long-game to finish ‘part one’ of the event 6th overall and 2nd in GT3-AM behind class leader Modena Motorsports. The charging Hofor-Racing (#11, Michael Kroll / Chantal Prinz / Alexander Prinz / Maximilian Partl), which also runs a Mercedes-AMG GT3 this weekend, completes the GT3-AM podium, and finished a wafer-thin 1.9 seconds behind CP Racing in 7th overall.

The E2P Racing Porsche 991 GT3 R (#90, Javier Morcillo / Pablo Burguera / Antonio Sainero) is the final GT3 runner in the top 10, and currently sits in 10th place.

The HAAS RT Audi R8 LMS GT3 EVO II (#21, Mathieu Detry / Stéphane Perrin / Frédéric Vervisch / Olivier Bertels) made a strong start to the event by converting pole position into an early lead. The decision to pit during an early Code 60 however, shortly before the rain fell, ended up pushing the Antigua team back into the mid pack. The Hankook 12H MUGELLO race winner then lost more than two hours in the pits after an off against the barriers at Raidillon caused significant damage to the Audi's front left corner.

Another frontrunner during the opening hour, the Land Motorsport Audi R8 LMS GT3 EVO II (#55, Stefan Wieninger / Tim Müller / Christopher Mies) also lost time to an early pit stop, as well as a beached moment in the gravel at Les Fagnes and an aquaplaning spin on the run down the hill to Eau Rouge. The Audi was then involved in a collision with the PCR Sport Mercedes-AMG GT4 (#418, Vicente Dasi / Josep Parera / Jase Gleichberg) on the exit of Les Combes inside the closing 50 minutes, an incident that managed to collect both 2nd-placed Saintéloc Junior Team and Scherer Sport PHX, for which the #55 Audi was handed a 20-second time penalty.

Land Motorsport's sister Audi R8 (#34, Dr. Johannes Kirchhoff / Tim Vogler / Max Edelhoff) suffered late-race drama of its own in the closing 15 minutes with a gearbox temperature spike, dropping the #34 Audi from 6th overall to 17th at the flag after a precautionary stop. The team's GTX-entered TTRS meanwhile (#755, Christopher Tiger / Ben Koslowski) has already lost 3.5 hours in the garage to a gearbox change.

Before its collision, the Audi R8 LMS GT3 EVO II of reigning GT European Trophy winner Scherer Sport PHX (#1, Michael Doppelmayr / Pierre Kaffer / Elia Erhart / Swen Herberger) led 30 laps overall – more than any other competitor thus far bar Heart of Racing by SPS – but was twice forced to pit with a severe vibration at the right rear.

A tough race so far for the Juta Racing Audi R8 LMS GT3 EVO II (#71, Yevgen Sokolovskiy / Vytenis Gulbinas / Arunas Geciauskas / Jonas Gelžinis), which had already lost most of its front left corner after contact on the first lap, was compounded yet further with a bold move into La Source by the MP Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3 (#58, Thomas Gostner / David Gostner / Corinna Gostner / Manuela Gostner) with just under 90 minutes remaining. The colliding Mercedes and Audi managed to collect the Senkyr Motorsport BMW M4 GT4 (#444, Tomas Erdelyi / Richard Gonda / Robert Šenkýř / Petr Svantner) in the process, and the Italian team was handed a 30-second time penalty.

In an incredibly impressive showing for the 992 contenders, three of the category's entrants have led at least one lap outright during the opening six hours of the Hankook 12H SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS.

The HRT Performance Porsche 911 GT3 Cup (#930, Adam Christodoulou / Eric Zang / Xinzhe Xie) – which at one point, courtesy of Adam Christodoulou, passed erstwhile leader Herberth Motorsport, on merit, to take the overall lead – currently heads the Willi Motorsport by Ebimotors Porsche 911 GT3 Cup (#955, Fabrizio Broggi / Sergiu Nicolae / Sabino de Castro). The 992 frontrunners finished 'part one' 8th and 9th on the road.

Reigning 992 Teams' 'Europe' champion Red Ant Racing (#903, Ayrton Redant / Yannick Redant / Kobe de Breucker) at-present rounds out the class podium in 11th place on the road. The Belgian team's sister entry (#904, Sam Dejonghe / Philippe Wils / John de Wilde), which also led the race outright thanks to a monster stint in the wet by Sam Dejonghe, is currently the highest-placed 992-Am entrant.

Red Camel-Jordans.nl (#909, Ivo Breukers / Rik Breukers / Luc Breukers) had looked set to take the 992 class lead into the overnight intervention, but a late fuel stop ended up dropping the Dutch team to 12th overall and 4th in-class.

The returning VDS Racing Adventures (#758, Raphaël van der Straten / Nathan Vanspringel / Nick Geelen) leads the GTX class at half-distance with its bespoke MARC II V8, the Belgian team having pulled two laps clear of the GT3 Poland Lamborghini Huracán Super Trofeo (#763, Andrzej Lewandowski / Adrian Lewandowski / Mariusz Miękoś) after a faultless run, one spin at Bruxelles aside. Despite a collision with Juta Racing's second Audi R8 at Les Combes, the RD Signs - Siauliai racing team Lamborghini Huracán Super Trofeo (#720, Audrius Butkevicius / Nicola Michelin / Paulius Paskevicius) has since moved back past the 9und11 Racing Porsche 911 GT3 Cup MR (#719, Georg Goder / Ralf Oehme / Martin Schlüter / Tim Scheerbrarth) to retake the final GTX provisional podium spot.

GTX Teams' standings leader Vortex V8 endured a tough afternoon when its #702 Vortex 1.0 (Laurent Misbach / Lucas Sugliano / Philippe Gruau) suffered heavy damage – both front and rear – with an off at Raidillon during the second hour. Laurent Misbach was fortunately able to walk away unscathed.

A close fight for GT4 class honours between the Buggyra Racing Mercedes-AMG GT4 (#416, Aliyyah Koloc / David Vrsecky / Adam Lacko) and the Lionspeed GP powered by SRS Team Sorg Rennsport Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 RS Clubsport (#427, Daniel Miller / Patrick Kolb / José Garcia) was split by just 45 seconds at the flag after the opening six

hours. This in spite of a heart-in-mouth moment during the early stages when the Buggyra Mercedes went off on the wet grass heading down the hill to Eau Rouge. GT4 standings leader Atlas BX Motorsports (#403, Steven Cho / Roelof Bruins / Jongkyum Kim / Taekeun Yang), also running a Mercedes-AMG GT4 at Spa-Francorchamps, was only 37 seconds further adrift at the flag.

Belgium's Xwift Racing Events (#408, Pieter Denys / Steven Dewulf / Tim de Borle / Gavin Pickering) is currently 5th in GT4 on the series debut for the Toyota Supra GT4, the team having recovered from a suspected electrical fire that filled the cockpit with smoke during Gavin Pickering's opening stint.

Holmgaard Motorsport (#102, Jonas Holmgaard / Magnus Holmgaard / Roy Edland / Martin Vedel Mortensen), which won TCE overall at last year's Hankook 12H SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS, holds a comfortable division lead after a flawless run so far for the CUPRA Leon Competición TCR. Spain's RAIL EQUIP BY TOTCAR SPORT (#123, Jorge Belloc Diaz / Jorge Belloc Ruiz / Álvaro Rodríguez Sastre), which also took a TCR podium at last year's event, currently holds 2nd in-class, although a collision on the final lap of the day meant the CUPRA TCR ended 'part one' beached in the gravel at La Source.

Wolf-Power Racing's poor luck this season continues as the #117 Audi RS 3 LMS TCR (Marcus Menden / Rob Huff) managed just seven laps before a terminal gearbox issue struck. The three-time Overall TCE Teams' champion does at least round out the overall TCE podium thus far after a consistent run by the sister RS 3 LMS (#121, Jasmin Preisig / Ivars Vallers).

2020 Overall GT Teams' 'Continents' champion SRS Team Sorg Rennsport Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 CS (#227, Seppi Stigler / Bernhard Wagner / Heiko Eichenberg / Patrik Grütter) slipped back from the division leaders during the wet-dry-wet early stages, though the event's TCE polesitter does still lead the TCX class ahead of Roma Racing by BMW Team Van Der Horst BMW M2 CS Racing (#245, Paul Roosen / Mauro Mercuri / Johan Lambregs). The BMW M2 CS Racing of Hofor Racing by Bonk Motorsport (#331, Martin Kroll / Michael Bonk / Alexander Schmidt) remains on-course for a second successive TC-class win of the season.

Following the event's traditional overnight intervention, the 2023 Hankook 12H SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS restarts tomorrow – Sunday 7 May – at 10.30 hrs local time, and will run for six uninterrupted hours until the chequered flag is flown at 16.30 hrs. The action will be live with commentary from radiolemans.com on the official 24H SERIES YouTube channel. Regular updates will also be published on Twitter (@24HSeries), Facebook

(24H Series) and Instagram (24H Series). Further information can be found at www.24hseries.com.

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