



Saintéloc Junior Team overcomes steering issue to take maiden Hankook 24H DUBAI pole

- Saintéloc Junior Team beats Leipert Motorsport to overall pole by less than a tenth.
- 24H SERIES Middle East Trophy leader Manamauri Energy by Ebimotors starts 5th.
- Three-for-three for Vortex 2.0 in 24H SERIES Middle East Trophy.
- SMP Racing bests Red Camel-Jordans.nl for 992 pole by just 0.018s.
- AGMC Racing team by Simpson Motorsport sneaks GT4 pole on the last lap.

DUBAI (26 January, 2024) – The Saintéloc Junior Team has secured its first overall Hankook 24H DUBAI pole position by just six-hundredths of a second, despite the Audi R8 suffering a steering issue in the closing stages of qualifying.

The Saintéloc Junior Team Audi R8 LMS GT3 EVO II (#18, Michael Doppelmayr / Pierre Kaffer / Elia Erhart Swen Herberger) topped two of the three 15-minute qualifying sessions dedicated to a massive 23-car GT3 field at the Dubai Autodrome, which headlined an unprecedented three hours of qualifying for the Hankook 24H DUBAI. Ahead by just over a tenth after Q2 (aided by Elia Erhart's overall fastest lap of 1m 59.346s), the Saintéloc Audi R8 managed one lap in Q3 before making an unscheduled stop with four minutes left on the clock. The French team's 1m 59.807s average around the 5.39km Dubai Autodrome however was still enough to hold off fellow front row starter Leipert Motorsport.

“First of all, I have to say that Saintéloc has done an awesome job with the car,” Pierre Kaffer explained to radiolemans.com's Peter Snowden. “The last few days we've worked quite a lot on the setup, and that paid off. The car was so good in qualifying, so thanks to Audi, which has given us such a beautiful car once again.”

Asked about his early exit from qualifying, Kaffer continued:

“Unfortunately, it's just one of those things, and it doesn't happen often to an Audi, but we had a problem with the steering. So I could only drive one lap, and then I had to box. I

was thinking in the car, 'okay, it's over,' but in the end, we managed to hold on, and this is a great result."

A stunning last lap in Q1 saw the Leipert Motorsport Lamborghini Huracán GT3 EVO2 (#63, Gabriele Rindone / Brendon Leitch / Marco Mapelli / Alban Varutti) jump into provisional pole position by a scant 0.003s. Consistently fast runs in Q2 and Q3 means the former Overall GT Teams' 'Continents' champion secured its best-ever grid slot at the Hankook 24H DUBAI. This also marks the first time a Lamborghini will start the event from the front row since 2019.

One year on from its first-ever motor race, the HAAS RT Audi R8 LMS GT3 EVO II (#21, Stanislav Minsky / Thomas Kiefer / Torsten Kratz / Mathieu Detry / Miika Panu) will start 3rd overall and from GT3-Am pole position ahead of the Getspeed Mercedes-AMG GT3 Evo (#9, Anthony Bartone / Al Faisal Al Zubair / Dominik Baumann / Martin Konrad / Fabian Schiller).

Hankook 24H DUBAI – Top 3 in Qualifying

1. Saintéloc Junior Team (#18, Audi R8 LMS GT3 EVO II) – 1m 59.807s*
2. Leipert Motorsport (#63, Lamborghini Huracán GT3 EVO2) – 1m 59.871s
3. Haas RT (#21, Audi R8 LMS GT3 EVO II) – 1m 59.976s

*Average of best lap times across three, 15-minute qualifying sessions.

The Manamauri Energy by Ebimotors Porsche 992 GT3 R (#95, Fabrizio Broggi / Sergiu Nicolae / Sabino de Castro / Cosimo Papi), which goes into this weekend at the head of the GT3 Teams' standings in the 24H SERIES Middle East Trophy, finished this morning's Free Practice with the fastest time and rounds out the overall top five on the grid ahead of the Audi R8 LMS GT3 EVO II of series debutant Eastalent Racing Team (#54, Christopher Haase / Simon Reicher / Markus Winkelhock / Mike Zhou / Gilles Magnus). Ebimotors' closest championship rival meanwhile – the CP Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3 EVO (#85, Charles Putman / Charles Espenlaub / Joe Foster / Shane Lewis / Darren Law) – lines up 18th.

The racing one Ferrari 296 GT3 (#6, Stefan Aust / Steffen Görig / Marco Pulcini / Thierry Vermeulen / Giacomo Altoé) will start 7th overall, ahead of the Porsche 992 GT3 R of 2017 Hankook 24H DUBAI winner Herberth Motorsport (#91, Ralf Bohn / Daniel Allemann / Alfred Renauer / Robert Renauer). The Proton Huber Competition Porsche 992 GT3 R (#83, Rinat Salikhov / Sergei Borisov / Victor Shaytar / Sven Müller) and the Grove Racing

Mercedes-AMG GT3 Evo (#10, Stephen Grove / Brenton Grove / Jordan Love / Matthew Payne / Phil Keen) round out the overall top 10 on the grid.

Local team, and five-time Hankook 24H DUBAI class winner Dragon Racing (#88, Roald Goethe / Benjamin Goethe / Oliver Goethe / Stuart Hall / Jordan Grogor) amazingly set the fastest lap of Q3 – a 1m 59.701s, courtesy of Oliver Goethe – although the Ferrari 296 GT3 will start 22nd after a spin in Q1. Series debutant Team Parker Racing meanwhile (#31, Shaun Lynn / Maxwell Lynn / Joe Wheeler / Robert Huff), which brings the Bentley Continental GT3 back to the 24H SERIES, will start its first Hankook 24H DUBAI one place further ahead in 21st.

GTX and 992

24H SERIES Middle East Trophy GTX contenders Vortex V8 and ragoon – more than racing, fittingly, will start tomorrow's Hankook 24H DUBAI side-by-side in the GTX class.

Thanks to a succession of fastest laps by Olivier Gomez during Q3 – his quickest being a 2m 02.825s – the new Vortex 2.0 (#701, Lionel Amrouche / Philippe Bonnel / Olivier Gomez / Arnaud Gomez) bested the ragoon-more than racing KTM X-BOW GTX (#714, Artur Chwist / Haytham Qarajouli / Daniel Drexel / Kevin Woods / Mikael Pitamber) by just over one tenth to take its third successive pole position in the 24H SERIES.

“It's amazing!” Gomez explained to radiolemans.com's Peter Snowden. “Three months ago, we were not sure if we would participate in the [Hankook] 24H DUBAI. But we thought the Middle East Trophy is an ideal condition to develop the car, and we decided [to commit] just three months ago. But we are here, and we are on pole position. So that's Kuwait, Abu Dhabi, and now Dubai. It's amazing!”

Behind the pair, the Toro Verde Ginetta G56 Cup (#795, Lawrence Tomlinson / Freddie Tomlinson / Michael Simpson / Nico Prost) qualified just less than a second behind the top two after a fast lap from former Formula E and World Endurance Champion race winner Nico Prost during Q3.

A wide-open 992 qualifying, which included three different teams at the top of the three 15-minute sessions, eventually saw SMP Racing (#937, Sergey Sirotkin / Vitaliy Petrov / Aleksandr Bolduev / Alexandr Smolyar / Denis Remenyako) take the top spot after a storming effort from former Formula 1 driver Sergey Sirotkin. The Red Camel-Jordans.nl Porsche 992 GT3 Cup (#909, Ivo Breukers / Luc Breukers / Rik Breukers / Fabian Danz), which ended Q2 on provisional pole, will start 2nd in-class, just 0.018s behind.

The distinctive Team Captain America by Bas Koeten Racing Porsche 992 GT3 Cup (#925, Kay van Berlo / Grant Talkie / Curt Swearingin / Richard Edge / Pedro Torres) was the third quickest 992 runner in qualifying, and secured the 992-Am top spot in the process. Again, by the narrowest of margins, just 0.041s ahead of PROsport Racing Porsche (#901, Simon Balcaen / Guillaume Dumarey / Steven Palette / Jörg Viebahn).

Having ended Q1 a sensational 2nd fastest in 992, 992-Am Teams' standings leader QMMF by HRT (#931, Abdulla Ali Al Khelaif / Ghanim Al Ali / Ibrahim Al Abdulghani / Julian Hanses) eventually dropped back to 14th in the overall 992 field, but still posted the 6th average fastest time of the 992-Am runners.

Hankook 24H DUBAI – Top 3 in GTX

1. Vortex V8 (#701, Vortex 2.0) – 2m 03.381s
2. Razoon – more than racing (#714, KTM X-BOW GTX) – 2m 03.535s
3. Toro Verde (#795, Ginetta G56 Cup) – 2m 04.480s

Hankook 24H DUBAI – Top 3 in 992

1. SMP Racing (#937, Porsche 992 GT3 Cup) – 2m 04.015s
2. Red Camel-Jordans.nl (#909, Porsche 992 GT3 Cup) – 2m 04.033s
3. Team Captain America by Bas Koeten Racing (#925, Porsche 992 GT3 Cup) – 2m 04.455s

GT4 and TCE

The AGMC Racing team by Simpson Motorsport BMW M4 GT4 (#438, Fabian Duffieux / Artur Dzhaliilov / Ivan Krapivtsev / Hugo Cook / Cameron Mcleod) will start from GT4 pole position after an astonishingly close battle with the Continental Racing by TTR Toyota GR SUPRA GT4 EVO (#496, Vasily Vladykin / Andrey Solukovtsev / David Pogosyan / Mikhail Loboda).

Having started Q3 just 0.035s off provisional GT4 pole, Simpson Motorsport's Cameron Mcleod posted the fastest lap of the session – a 2m 10.149s – on the last lap to snatch

class pole position by just 0.40s. A Happy Australia Day indeed for the young Antipodean.

“I think all the drivers did an awesome job,” Cameron explained to radiolemans’ Diana Binks. “I’m still getting to grips with the car, so I was just pushing, pushing every lap. I made a few small mistakes, so I could improve here and there, so I just kept going around and around, and I got [pole] on the last lap by the smallest margin. It’s fantastic! I’m very happy for the boys. The car is amazing, the team is amazing, so I’m happy.”

The Century Motorsport BMW M4 GT4 (#429, David Holloway / Piers Johnson / Nicholas Halstead / Rianna O’Meara-Hunt), which goes into this weekend’s 24H SERIES Middle East Trophy finale level on points with Simpson Motorsport, avoided potential disaster when three of its laps were initially disallowed during Q2. The Hankook 6H ABU DHABI class winner recovered to qualify 3rd of the GT4 runners, a little over three-tenths off the GT4 front row.

Despite suffering a clutch issue with seven minutes of Q3 remaining, the first of two CWS Engineering Ginetta G55s (#278, Colin White / Mark Griffith / Daniel Morris / Thomas Holland / Owen Hizzey) will start from overall TCE class pole position ahead of AC Motorsport’s pole-sitting Audi RS3 LMS TCR (#188, Ivars Vallers / James Kaye / Thierry Chkondali / Paul Sieljes / Kobe Pauwels). The British team’s sister Ginetta (#277, Daniel Morris / Christian Broberg / Colin White / Mark Griffith / Thomas Holland) will line up just behind the TCE front row in 3rd.

The Simpson Motorsport Audi RS3 LMS DSG (#138, Nadir Zuhour Ivan Stanchin / Andrei Muraveika / Ahmed Al Khaja / Kavi Jundu), which ended Q1 on provisional TCR pole, eventually slipped back to 2nd fastest of the TCR runners, and will start just ahead of the SRS Team Sorg Rennsport Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 CS (#227, Benito Tagle / José Garcia / Christoph Krombach / Gero Bauknecht / Patrick Kolb).

After a difficult qualifying session, the returning Lotus PB Racing Lotus Elise Cup PB-R (#226, Stefano d’Aste / Vito Utzieri / Stefano Moretti / Maurizio Copetti), a former class podium finisher at the Hankook 24H DUBAI, rounds out the TCE runners on the grid.

Hankook 24H DUBAI – Top 3 in GT4

1. AGMC Racing team by Simpson Motorsport (#438, BMW M4 GT4) – 2m 10.000s
 2. Continental Racing by TTR (#496, Toyota GR Supra GT4 Evo) – 2m 10.040s
 3. Century Motorsport (#429, BMW M4 GT4) – 2m 10.355s
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Hankook 24H DUBAI – Top 3 in TCE

1. CWS Engineering (#278, Ginetta G55) – 2m 11.154s
 2. AC Motorsport (#188, Audi RS 3 LMS TCR) – 2m 12.738s
 3. CWS Engineering (#277, Ginetta G55) – 2m 13.044s
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Following 90 minutes of Night Practice tonight at the Dubai Autodrome, tomorrow's Hankook 24H DUBAI (Saturday 27 January) is set to begin at 13.00 hrs local time, and will run uninterrupted until 13;00 hrs on Sunday 28 January. The action will be live with commentary from radiolemans.com on the official 24H SERIES YouTube channel. Regular updates will also be published on X (@24HSeries), Facebook (24H Series) and Instagram (24H Series). Further information can be found at www.24hseries.com.

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