



2015 FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC)
6 Hours of Silverstone

Michelin: a key performer at the 6 Hours of Silverstone

Winter testing, then the pre-season Prologue at Le Castellet, France, on March 27-28 served to highlight the outstanding potential of Michelin's partners in the FIA WEC's LM P1, LM P2, LM GTE Pro and LM GTE Am classes.

On April 10-12, teams reconvened in the United Kingdom for the championship's opening clash, the 6 Hours of Silverstone. Based on a former RAF airfield in the county of Northamptonshire, historical Silverstone Circuit (5.89km, 17 turns) is one of motor racing's most famous venues. Its varied, technically demanding layout ensures plenty of spectacular action and, last weekend, provided Michelin's latest endurance racing tyres with an opportunity to showcase their qualities.

This was particularly satisfying for the French brand since the 2015 FIA WEC regulations have introduced an additional challenge in the form of quotas that limit each car to just six sets of tyres for qualifying and the race. This measure applies to the LM P1, LM GTE Pro and LM GTE AM classes, while the LM P2 prototypes have only been able to use four sets per car since 2014.

More than ever, tyre consistency has become a crucial parameter in the discipline, especially in the LM P1 category where the new tyre allowances could allow fewer sets than there are pit stops, and this could require the teams to double stint at least once.

"We dialled this change into the development of our 2015 endurance racing ranges which nonetheless continue to feature the outstanding longevity expected of Michelin tyres," said Jérôme Mondain, manager of Michelin Motorsport's World Endurance Championship programme. "In addition to working in this area, we also uprated the performance of our tyres in their respective temperature windows. The result of this groundwork was evident at Silverstone where our partners expressed their satisfaction with the progress achieved. It was the perfect way to start the season!"

Although Michelin's partner teams ran different strategies during the British race, they all double stinted at some time or another. Alexander Wurz (N°2 Toyota TS 040 Hybrid) was the first to test the longevity of the Michelin tyres early in the race and, once the Japanese team had noted the consistency of the Austrian's tyres, it opted to run double stints for both cars all the way to the finish.

Unlike Toyota Racing, Audi Sport and Porsche Team stayed with single stints for much longer, with the exception of André Lotterer who kept the same set after the N°7 Audi R18 e-tron quattro's fourth pit stop. Meanwhile, Neel Jani kept the same tyres when the N°18 919 Hybrid stopped for the sixth time.

Tyre strategy consequently had a big influence on the way the 2015 FIA WEC unfolded and the result was a drama-packed, entertaining race that ended in victory for the N°7 Audi R18 e-tron quattro (Fässler/Lotterer/Tréluyer).



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Saturday's qualifying was dominated by Porsche Team which was rewarded with second place in Sunday afternoon's race for the N°18 919 Hybrid (Dumas/Jani/Lieb), while Toyota Racing claimed third spot with the N°1 TS 040 Hybrid (Buemi/Davidson/Nakajima).

In LM GTE Pro, the N°51 AF Corse Ferrari 458 GTE emerged on top again in the hands of the class's 2014 world champions Gianmaria Bruni and Toni Vilander, ahead of the N°91 Porsche 911 RSR of Christensen/Lietz. Third place went to James Calado and Davide Rigon in AF Corse's N°71 Ferrari 458 Italia.

Aston Martin took the top prize in LM GTE AM with the N°98 Vantage GTE of Dalla Lana/Lamy/Lauda. The other two steps of the podium went to Ferraris: the N°83 car of Aguas/Collard/Perrodo and the similar machine Basov/Bertolini/Shaytar (N°72).

The next round of the 2015 FIA WEC will take teams and drivers to the Belgian Ardennes for the 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps on May 2.