



## Thomas Laudenbach: "Electrification in motorsport is important"

27/01/2023 Thomas Laudenbach has headed up Porsche Motorsport for more than a year now. The sports car manufacturer is looking ahead to a particularly complex season.

In the world's major endurance racing series, there is a new, very cost-effective set of rules. On this basis, Porsche has decided to start into this new era with the hybrid prototype 963. What makes this setting so attractive from 2023 onwards?

Thomas Laudenbach: "The new regulations that will come into effect in the World Endurance Championship WEC and the North American IMSA series convinced us immediately. Manufacturers will now have the opportunity to present their capabilities against tough competition. At the same time, the framework conditions are defined in such a way that the costs involved are quite reasonable. In the past, we have seen lots of racing series and vehicle classes where the costs exploded. The conditions now are all in place for it to remain attractive in the long run. Putting it briefly: it hasn't been this

attractive for a long time to compete for overall victories in the major classics at Le Mans, Daytona or Sebring. For the first time in decades, it will be possible to race with identical cars in the top classes on both sides of the Atlantic – and that's great!"

Under the Porsche Penske Motorsport banner, two works cars each will be competing in the World Championship and in North America. What sporting goal are you aiming for?

Laudenbach: "To win races, to shine at the highlights of Le Mans, Sebring, Daytona and the Petit Le Mans and to collect championship titles. The competitive environment will be tough – there's no question about that. Furthermore, the rules and regulations ensure that all the top cars will be competing at the same level. There will be no series winners. It won't be a foregone conclusion and we're certainly not underestimating the situation. Nevertheless, it must always be Porsche's goal to be at the top of the podium."

Part of Porsche's tradition in endurance racing dates back to the 1980s, when the legendary 956 and 962 scored great victories. These successes were partly achieved by private teams. The 963 will also be used by customers from 2023 onwards. In more recent days when you were winning one race after another with the high-tech 919 hybrid race car, this wasn't possible. Why not then and why now?

Laudenbach: "The 919 hybrid, technologically speaking, was the peak. Under the LMP1 rules at the time, there was a considerable amount of freedom. That's great for engineers, but unfortunately has the downside of a significant financial expenditure. The cars were fascinating, but expensive and demanding on the track. For this reason, these cars were not suitable for customer teams. In the new LMDh category, which includes the Porsche 963, this is now different: the costs are considerably lower, the hybrid components less complicated and racing is now affordable for a professional and experienced customer team. This gives us the opportunity to build on the great 1980s. Back then, the best private teams competed directly with the manufacturers and ensured we had tremendous sporting events and full grids. That will be possible again as of next year – hopefully with the same success for Porsche as we had 40 years ago."

Also in 2023, there will be a new car for professional customer racing: the Porsche 911 GT3 R based on the nine-eleven generation 992. What expectations do you have for this car, which will be entered in numerous GT3 racing series worldwide?

Laudenbach: "Hopefully it will be just as successful as its predecessor. With the previous 911 GT3 R, our customers won the world's major GT3 endurance races: Nürburgring, Spa-Francorchamps and the GTD class at Daytona. In the DTM, our partners have really shone. We expect no less from the new GT3 R in the coming years. The car is an evolution – now based on the 911 generation 992. We have further optimised countless elements that were already in the predecessor. The input we received from our customers was extremely important, and our partners will immediately notice that our new car is a remarkable step forward. I'm quite sure that with the new 911 GT3 R, our customer teams will be right up there with the leaders in what will be highly competitive races and championships."

The 963 and the 911 GT3 R represent the pinnacle of the customer sports pyramid. Slightly below them are the 718 Cayman GT4 RS Clubsport and the 911 GT3 Cup. The 5,000th Cup car recently rolled off the production line – a successful model in the truest sense of the word. This vehicle will also be competing in the Porsche Mobil 1 Supercup, which has so far been held as part of Formula 1. In the future as well?

Laudenbach: "We have extended the contract with Formula 1 by eight years. This is an important statement from our side – not only with regard to the Supercup, but for motorsport in general. Don't forget: customer sport is the core of Porsche Motorsport. Hardly any other brand offers such a coherent and sustainable pyramid, starting with Clubsport and the Porsche Sports Cup, then the GT4 and the more than 30 one-make cups worldwide with the 911 GT3 Cup and on to the GT3 car and the Porsche 963. It's important to us that we see our cars on the best stages. In the case of the Cup car, that's undoubtedly the Grand Prix environment of Formula 1."

The GT4 e-Performance has generated a lot of excitement. The 1,000 PS plus prototype of an all-electric race car represents a glimpse into the possible future of customer racing. What's next for this project in 2023?

Laudenbach: "This project is very close to our heart. Electrification is not limited to road vehicles, but is also very important in motorsport. Our racing activities have to be relevant at all times in terms of what's happening on the road. In top level sport, we are implementing electrification in Formula E, in endurance we have hybridisation and in customer sport our vision is the GT4 e-Performance. The car is spectacular, it creates excitement, amazement and fascination. Not only with the fans, but also with our works drivers – who get out of the car with a big grin on their faces after every drive. Since there are no racing series for such electric race cars as yet, we are sending the GT4 e-Performance on a kind of world tour: among other things, the car is scheduled to race under the sun of Long Beach near Los Angeles in April. We want to take the fascination of electrification in motorsport to the outside world."

Fascinating competition is also offered in Formula E, in which Porsche will be increasing its involvement yet again in 2023. What's new for the coming year?

Laudenbach: "In 2023, we will be fielding the new vehicle generation, the so-called Gen3 car. It is considerably more powerful, lighter and with an overall better performance, in addition to being more efficient. Furthermore, we have taken on the experienced Portuguese António Félix da Costa as a works driver for the new season. Together with Pascal Wehrlein, his job will be to win races. Also, for the first time, not just two, but four Porsche 99X Electric Gen3 cars will take to the tracks. Our TAG Heuer Porsche Formula E Team will again field two cars. Two cars from the Avalanche Andretti Formula E partner team, however, are new. The big benefit is that we get twice the amount of data in the short practice sessions. This means we should be even better prepared when we compete in the races. Our goals are high: we aim to win races and want to have a say in the outcome of the championship right up to the last race."

# MEDIA ENQUIRIES



## Holger Eckhardt

Spokesperson GT and Customer Motorsports, Esports  
+49 (0) 170 / 911 4982  
[holger.eckhardt@porsche.de](mailto:holger.eckhardt@porsche.de)

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