



PRESS RELEASE

MOTORSPORT

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## **Michelin covers all the bases at the challenging Fuji Speedway**

The 2022 FIA World Endurance Championship continued today with the penultimate clash at Japan's Fuji Speedway, a venue that hadn't been visited by the series since 2019 due to the Covid pandemic. The fifth round slotted into this season's schedule after Monza, Italy, which is this year celebrating its centenary, and ahead of the 8 Hours of Bahrain which will bring the series to a close in November.

While this weekend's free practice and qualifying sessions took place in fairly overcast weather, the 6 Hours of Fuji itself was held in splendid sunshine. As the thermometer soared to 30°C and the track temperature climbed to practically 50°C, the switch to much hotter conditions provided Michelin with another opportunity to demonstrate the wide spectrum of conditions its endurance racing tyre range covers.

The 4.563-kilometre, 16-turn track near Mount Fuji sits about 100km from the Japan's capital, Tokyo. Since its inauguration in 1965, it has undergone numerous modifications and features the longest straight encountered in the course of the campaign. It has been the property of Toyota since 2005 and seven of the eight FIA WEC rounds contested there before this season's trip were won by the Japanese firm. The 2020 and 2021 races were both cancelled due to Covid restrictions, so this year's was the first to star endurance racing's latest Hypercar prototypes. It was won by the N°8 Toyota GR010 Hybrid of Sébastien Buemi, Brendon Hartley and Ryo Hirakawa, while the N°7 sister car came second in the hands of Mike Conway, Kamui Kobayashi and José Maria Lopez. The third podium step was secured by the N°36 Alpine A480-Gibson (André Negrão/Nicolas Lapierre/Matthieu Vaxivière).

"Like everybody in the FIA World Endurance Championship, we were excited to return to Japan and the unique atmosphere of Fuji Speedway," said **Pierre Alves**, the manager of Michelin's endurance racing programmes. "In addition to seeing the Japanese fans again – who turned out in their droves – we were eager to test our endurance ranges which we were running here for the first time, and to gather as much data as possible. Having done that, I can say that we are extremely satisfied with our level of performance, in both the Hypercar and GTE Pro categories. In the top class, the teams were able to demonstrate the benefits of having the medium compound as the track temperature climbed to as high as 47°C! In spite of that challenge, performance remained consistently strong throughout, with tyres that were still like new even after two stints. In GTE Pro, the teams ran different strategies at the beginning of the race, but we soon



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realised that the medium compound was a better choice than the hot-weather soft option. The teams had had the opportunity to evaluate the medium alternative at length during their preparations for the race in free practice when the track temperature was less than 30°C. Having a choice of tyres with clearly-differentiated temperature windows gives us a chance to demonstrate the relevance and complementary qualities of our different solutions.

“Fuji is a particularly complicated circuit, with three very different sectors that call for tyres with a very broad range of attributes. They need to generate plenty of grip and traction in the slower corners, along with flawless stability through the high-speed sections and under heavy braking.

“Today’s result illustrates the lasting performance of our tyres, with similar lap times from the first kilometre to the last, irrespective of the compound. Circuits like Fuji Speedway provide us with realistic laboratories that are very important to our development process. As we prepare for what promises to be a particularly intense period in endurance racing on a global scale, it is more vital than ever that we collect key data to enable us to provide the best tyres possible to suit all the different types of circuit we are likely to visit across the world.”

All of the five cars contesting the FIA WEC’s Hypercar class compete on Michelin tyres, as do the five runners in the LM GTE Pro category which saw AF Corse’s N°51 and N°52 Ferrari 488 GTE EVOs of James Calado/Alessandro Pier Guidi and Miguel Molina/Antonio Fuoco come first and second at Fuji. Third was the Porsche 911 RSR-19 of Porsche GT Team’s Kevin Estre and Michael Christensen.

Winner of the 13-car LM GTE Am field was the N°33 Aston Martin Vantage AMR (TF Sport, Marko Sørensen/Henrique Chaves/Ben Keating) ahead of the N°95 Iron Dames Ferrari 488 GTE EVO of Rahel Frey/Michelle Gatting/Sarah Bovy. Sotoshi Hoshino, Tomonobu Fujii and Charles Fagg finished third in their D’Station Racing-tended Aston Martin Vantage AMR. All three podium finishers were equipped with Michelin tyres.

The 2022 FIA World Endurance Championship will conclude with the 8 Hours of Bahrain on Saturday, November 12.

Michelin’s ambition is to improve the mobility of its customers over the long-term. As a leader in the mobility domain, Michelin designs, manufactures and distributes tyres best-suited to customers’ needs and uses, as well as services and solutions to enhance vehicle efficiency. Michelin also offers its customers ways to enjoy unique experiences during their journeys and when travelling. In addition, Michelin develops high-tech materials for many sectors of activity. Based in Clermont-Ferrand, Michelin has offices in 177 countries, employs 124,760 people and operates 68 tyre factories which together produced around 173 million tyres in 2021 ([www.michelin.com](http://www.michelin.com)).



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