

Toyota Gazoo Racing victorious!

Japanese manufacturers claim sensational one-two in Bapco Energies 8 Hours of Bahrain at Bahrain International Circuit

● **Team WRT's Andrade-Kubica-Deletraz win in LMP2 class, clinch teams' and drivers' championship double**

● **Iron Dames become first-ever all-female crew to win FIA World Endurance Championship race in LMGTE Am category**

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Toyota Gazoo Racing capped an outstanding 2023 season in the FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC) last night with a sensational one-two in a hugely thrilling Bapco Energies 8 Hours of Bahrain at Bahrain International Circuit (BIC) in Sakhir.

Toyota's #8 crew of Sebastien Buemi, Brendon Hartley and Ryo Hirakawa not only shone brightest under lights in their GRO10 Hybrid to take the impressive victory at "The Home of Motorsport in the Middle East". They also secured this year's FIA Hypercar World Endurance Drivers Championship title, adding to their FIA Hypercar World Endurance Manufacturers' Championship to complete a fantastic double.

Toyota teammates Kamui Kobayashi, Mike Conway and Jose Maria Lopez in their #7 Hybrid finished as runners-up, overcoming an opening-lap incident that saw them spin off

the track at the very first corner. They recovered magnificently to join Buemi, Hartley and Hirakawa on the podium, but lost out on the Hypercar drivers' title race.

Last night's result marked the sixth win in seven WEC races in 2023 for Toyota Gazoo Racing. It was the second triumph for the Buemi, Hartley, Hirakawa triumvirate, having also taken first place in Portugal.

Ferrari AF Corse's #50 crew of Antonio Fuoco, Miguel Molina and Nicklas Nielsen took the final podium step amongst the WEC's Hypercars in third.

Winning the Le Mans Prototype 2 (LMP2) category were Team WRT's #41 trio of Rui Andrade, Robert Kubica and Louis Deletraz. It was the final race in the WEC for the LMP2s, which has been a mainstay in the series since its inception.

WRT's triumph secured them this season's FIA Endurance Trophy for LMP2 Teams, as well as the FIA Endurance Trophy for LMP2 Drivers for Andrade, Kubica and Deletraz.

The #85 all-female squad Iron Dames completed the roster of race winners in Bahrain, taking the triumph in the Le Mans Grand Touring Endurance Am (LMGTE Am) class. Sarah Bovy started things off for their squad before handing over the driving duties to teammates Rahel Frey and Michelle Gatting, who took them home to the finish for their maiden WEC victory. The LMGTE Am was also holding its last race in the series.

The winners per category were awarded their respective trophies in the podium ceremonies at the end of all the action. Handing over the trophies were



Toyota Gazoo Racing's #8 crew of, from left, Ryo Hirakawa, Brendon Hartley and Sebastien Buemi celebrate their race win and title triumph



The Toyota Hybrids lead the 36-car WEC field into the first turn after the start of yesterday's race

Bapco Energies Group Chief Executive Officer Mark J Thomas, BIC Chairman Arif Rahimi, and Bahrain Motor Federation Chief Marshal Hasan Ghuloom.

Yesterday's Bapco Energies 8 Hours of Bahrain was the 12th time the WEC raced in Sakhir, and the fifth time the event took

place in its current eight-hour format.

Right after lights-out, the first-corner incident that saw the #2 Cadillac Racing Cadillac V-Series.R Hybrid clip the title-chasing #7 Hybrid of Toyota caused it to lose its position amongst the leaders.



Toyota's #8 crew of Sebastien Buemi, Brendon Hartley and Ryo Hirakawa claimed the race win last night in Bahrain and thus secured the FIA Hypercar World Endurance Drivers Championship title

tunes of others and charged to the front amongst the LMP2 runners. They won in class with 238 laps completed, while joining them on the LMP2 podium were their WRT teammates Robin Frijns, Sean Gelael and Ferdinand Habsburg-Lothringen in their #31 Oreca 07-Gibson. Third were the #28 JOTA of David Heinemeier-Hansson, Pietro Fittipaldi and Oliver Rasmussen.

In the LMGTE Am category, the Iron Dames took over as frontrunners in class heading into the last two hours following the retirement of stablemates Iron Lynx. The Iron Dames went on to take an historic victory with 232 laps completed in their Porsche 911 RSR-19.

Second in class were the #777 D'Station Racing of Casper Stevenson, Liam Talbot and Tomonobu Fujii in their Aston Martin Vantage AMR, while the #98 trio of Ian James, Daniel Mancinelli and Alex Riberas took third in their Vantage AMR.

Buemi was in the car for the pole-sitters in Toyota's #8 GRO10 Hybrid, and after getting away at the rip-roaring rolling start was able to build a good lead for his crew over the opening two hours. They gradually added to their advantage throughout the course of the race, and eventually took the chequered flag, waved by Richard Mille, at the end of the eight hours with 249 laps completed. They were classified a lap ahead of their #7 teammates, while Ferrari's #50 crew were more than a minute-and-a-half behind.

In the LMP2 class, Vector Sport's #10 Oreca 07-Gibson enjoyed the early lead, and Iron Lynx in their #60 Porsche 911 RSR-19 were ahead in the LMGTE Am class.

Towards the end, Team WRT made the most of the misfor-

De Haan wins Porsche Carrera Cup ME race

● **Bahraini stars Shaikh Jaber bin Ali Al Khalifa and Shaikh Salman bin Isa Al Khalifa both clinch podium in class**

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Dutchman Robert De Haan wrapped up a sensational opening round in the 2023/2024 Porsche Carrera Cup Middle East yesterday with a fine victory in race two at Bahrain International Circuit (BIC), held in support of this weekend's Bapco Energies 8 Hours of Bahrain.

De Haan triumphed after starting second on the grid, took the lead on lap five and went on to capture the chequered flag ahead of pole-sitter Theo Oeverhaus from Germany with a 1.262-second gap.

The Central Europe Racing driver made up for an unlucky result in the weekend's first race on Friday, when he had crossed the finish line in first place but was later given a five-second time penalty for a false start, dropping him to third. Oeverhaus, competing for DHL Team,



Shaikh Salman bin Isa Al Khalifa competes amongst other competitors in yesterday's Porsche Carrera Cup race

inherited the victory. Oeverhaus's countryman Janne Stiak of JS Racing came third yesterday to complete the overall and Pro class podiums 3.767s behind.

Ahmad Al Shehab of Team Kuwait took the win in the ProAm category after finishing fourth overall, with Canadian Bashar Mardini of Team BMR and Saud Al Saud of Saudi Racing classified second and third in class, respectively.

Italian Sebastian Gorga of RISE Motorsport completed a double this weekend amongst the PCCME's Am competitors. Bahraini stars Shaikh Jaber bin Ali Al Khalifa of One% team and Shaikh Salman bin Isa Al

Khalifa of Team Bahrain joined Gorga on the podium.

The PCCME will be back in action for the second of six rounds this season, again at BIC, on 15 and 16 December. Round three will then take place in Dubai on 20 and 21 January, and the fourth meeting a week later in Abu Dhabi on 27 and 28 January as the first events of 2024.

The final two rounds will then be held in support of Formula 1. The penultimate event will take place during next year's F1 Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix weekend from 29 February to 2 March. That will pave the way for the season-finale at the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix from 7 to 9 March.

BIC to host official FIA WEC Rookie Test today

● **Seven-time MotoGP world champion Valentino Rossi to headline roster of more than 30 drivers taking part**

● **Eighteen-car line-up including nine Hypercars, five LMP2s and four LMGTE Ams to hit the tarmac in two sessions**

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World Endurance Championship (WEC) action continues at Bahrain International Circuit (BIC) today with the official FIA WEC Rookie Test, taking place the very next day following the season-ending Bapco Energies 8 Hours of Bahrain.

The test is an annual event featuring some of the series' star drivers along with other leading names and up-and-coming talents in motorsport.

There are a total of 18 cars set to take part in Sunday's pro-



Valentino Rossi on the grid ahead of yesterday's Bapco Energies 8 Hours of Bahrain

gramme, which will feature a two-hour morning session followed by an afternoon running of three hours. The tests are to be held behind closed doors.

The field includes nine Hypercars, five LMP2s and four LMGTE Ams, while there will be more than 30 drivers taking part in the sessions, each having varying periods testing in their respective cars.

Amongst the leading names that will be a part of Sunday's

FIA WEC Rookie Test is seven-time MotoGP world champion Valentino Rossi, who will be in the cockpit of an LMP2 Oreca 07-Gibson with Team WRT.

Other top names are Formula 1 test and reserve drivers Stoffel Vandoorne and Pietro Fittipaldi, and former driver of Bahraini-British motor racing team 2 Seas Motorsport, Ben Barnicoat, to name a few. They will all be testing in WEC Hypercars.