

7. 5. 41 Le Mans 2015 – first win in the hybrid era

After 17 fruitless years, Porsche celebrated its 17th victory at Le Mans in 2015. The drought was finally broken by Nico Hülkenberg, Earl Bamber and Nick Tandy in the Porsche 919 Hybrid.

After Porsche took an overall win at the 2015 24 Hours of Le Mans, an emotional scene played out in the pit lane as Dr Wolfgang Porsche put his hands on LMP1 boss Fritz Enzinger's shoulders and said: 'This is just like the old days at Porsche.' Nico Hülkenberg, Earl Bamber and Nick Tandy recorded the team's 17th victory at Le Mans in the Porsche 919 Hybrid, which was making only its second appearance at the famous race. The first of Porsche's 16 previous victories had come in 1970, when Hans Herrmann and Richard Attwood won in the Porsche 917, and the last had been achieved in 1998 by Laurent Aïello, Allan McNish and Stéphane Ortelli in the Porsche 911 GT1 '98.

In 2015, three 919 Hybrids were sent into battle against stiff competition from Audi and Toyota. Having secured the top three places in the qualifying session, the hybrid Porsche prototypes continued to demonstrate blistering pace under race conditions and also required less time in the pits than their rivals. As the eventual winner, the 919 featuring the number 19 started from third. With both Formula One driver Nico Hülkenberg and Earl Bamber making their Le Mans debuts, Nick Tandy's two previous entries in the GT class at the Sarthe circuit made him the only member of the trio with any experience of the event. A combination of lightning-quick lap times, high concentration and superlative driving saw the three enjoy a flawless race and cross the finishing line in first place. 'When the boys in the third car took victory at Le Mans, my initial reaction was one of real surprise as they were essentially new to it,' said LMP1 team boss Andreas Seidl. 'But on the other hand, it wasn't a shock at all – we had chosen three professionals on the basis of a demanding selection process and prepared them in exactly the same way as our regular drivers from the word go, so why should they have been any less quick?'

Having led in the early stages, the team of Timo Bernhard, Brendon Hartley and Mark Webber went on to take second place. Neel Jani, whose time in qualifying secured pole position, and his teammates Marc Lieb and Romain Dumas were hindered by brake problems and two minor collisions that limited them to a fifth-place finish. The 919 Hybrid went on to win again at Le Mans in 2016 and 2017 before the LMP1 project was brought to a close.