

FIA World Endurance Championship (FIA WEC)
Prologue (March 25-26), Circuit Paul Ricard (Le Castellet, France)

New Michelin tyres for a FIA WEC 2016 season rich of changes

The FIA World Endurance Championship's now-traditional Prologue test at Le Castellet, France, will get 2016 action under way on March 25-26 when Michelin's partners will be able to try the more competitive tyres it has developed for what promises to be another fiercely-fought campaign.

The 2016 FIA WEC features nine rounds (compared with eight last season) following the addition to the calendar of Mexico City's Autodromo Hermanos Rodrigues.

Since 2015's finale in Bahrain last November, the teams, including the front-running LM P1 factory operations, have undertaken extensive development work in readiness for the season ahead.

Michelin Motorsport spent the winter break assisting its long-term partners in this process, aided by the close working relationships that the French tyre firm's engineers have forged with their colleagues at Toyota Gazoo Racing (where there is a V6 engine for the TS050 Hybrid instead of the former V8, plus a new energy recovery system), Audi Sport Team Joest (revised aerodynamics and a new body design for the R18 e-tron quattro) and Porsche Team (revised power distribution for the 919 Hybrid after the introduction of new regulations that cap power output at 1,000hp).

*"We have a range of six tyres for the LM P1 cars," notes **Jérôme Mondain**, manager of Michelin's FIA WEC programme. "They have been adjusted to match changes to the technical characteristics of our partners' cars. We focused on taking on-board the new constraints we face this season while at the same time taking performance forward. Such high-performance racing cars necessitate a long process of close collaboration. After the Prologue, a programme of private tests with our three LM P1 partners will allow everyone to fine-tune their respective packages ahead of this year's opener at Silverstone [Great Britain] on April 17."*

All the LM P1 front-runners race on Michelin tyres and the combination of changes to the cars and Michelin's own development programme has led to modifications to the construction and tread compound. *"We have improved overall performance and also the consistency of our tyres as they wear. We didn't need to work on tyre life which everyone considers sufficient, since the quotas for each round, namely four sets for free practice and six for qualifying and the race (eight in Shanghai and Bahrain), are unchanged,"* observes Jérôme Mondain.



Three types of tyre for Michelin's LM P1 partners: slicks, 'hybrid' and rain.

- Three types of slick:
 - SOFT 'cold weather'
 - SOFT 'hot weather'
 - SOFT 'hot weather +'

The ideal operating windows of these three tyres cover the air and track temperature spread with overlap to provide the necessary versatility for changing conditions.

- The Michelin Hybrid

The Michelin Hybrid first replaced the more conventional 'intermediate' in 2012. Its revolutionary compound allows it to be used in wet conditions despite its slick tread. It has made a decisive difference at venues like Silverstone and Spa-Francorchamps.

- Two types of rain tyre:

WET
FULL WET

The WET and FULL WET are for 'normal' and heavy rain respectively.

MICHELIN's LM-P1 tyres are all the same size (31/71-18). In 2014, their overall tread width was narrowed by 5-6cm and their weight was cut by around 2kg each.

New developments for LM GTE Pro

The arrival of Ford, the launch of a new Ferrari and big changes for the Porsches promise an even closer fight in LM GTE Pro.

"As in LM P1, we have worked hard with our LM GTE Pro partners," says Jérôme Mondain. "There is a mix of all-new and significantly improved cars, so we have focused on different areas to improve the performance of our tyres as races progress and also adapt them to the different cars. As in LM P1, this entailed working on the construction and compounds. Our LM GTE Pro range features three slicks and two tyres for wet weather."

The LM GTE Am cars will use the tyres developed in 2015 for the LM GTE Pro cars.

MICHELIN's LM GTE Pro and LM GTE Am tyres:


- Three slicks:

Medium 'cold weather'
Medium
Medium 'hot weather'

- Two types of rain tyre:

WET
FULL WET





As in LM P1, these compounds offer ideal operating windows to cover the different spreads of temperature without detracting from their versatility.

The allocation per car is four sets for free practice, plus six for qualifying and the race.

Sizes: 30/68-18 (front) and 31/71-18 (rear)

Round 1 of the 2016 FIA WEC takes teams to Silverstone, England, on April 17.

