

2017 FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC)
Round 6: 6 Hours of COTA

A positive debut for Michelin's new 'HARD+' slick in LM P1, and an all-Michelin podium in LM GTE Pro

The 2017 6 Hours of COTA in Austin, Texas, USA, saw Porsche LMP Team collect another one-two finish and its fourth straight FIA World Endurance Championship victory thanks once again to the N°2 Porsche 919 Hybrid of Bernhard/Hartley/Bamber who have pulled out an assertive lead in the provisional Drivers' standings. Meanwhile, second place for Lotterer/Tandy/Jani in the N°1 sister prototype has extended the German make's own cushion at the top of the Manufacturers' table and Toyota Gazoo Racing will now need to earn perfect scores in the remaining races to keep its title chances alive.

The sunny conditions resulted in temperatures in excess of 30°C throughout, while the track temperature stood at more than 40°C. Toyota Gazoo Racing showed competitive form in the searing heat, particularly during the early stages when the two TS050-Hybrids succeeded in taking the battle to the German prototypes.

As usual, tyre strategy played a key role at the Circuit of the Americas and, since the air temperature exceeded 34°C when the race started, Race Control applied the rule that limits drivers to no more than 80 minutes at a time behind the wheel in hot conditions, making consecutive stints in the car impossible. The teams were consequently forced to come up with game plans that took this constraint into account.

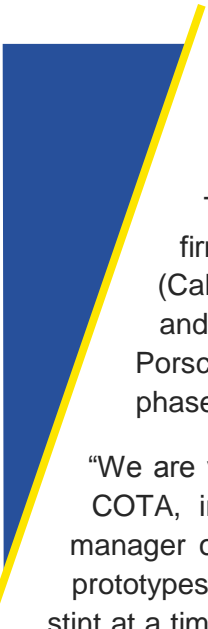
The two Porsches and the N°7 Toyota all started the race on **HARD**-compound slicks, but the Japanese outfit sent its N°8 car out on Michelin's new '**HARD+**' alternative.

Developed to cover the potential demands of the championship's long-haul fixtures, this new tyre delivers greater consistency when parameters such as circuit layout, track abrasiveness, the weather, car set-up and driving style call for such an option.

As the track temperature climbed, Porsche decided to switch to **HARD+** tyres after its cars' first stints, while Toyota put its N°7 machine on the same rubber at the second round of pit stops after an initial double stint on **HARDs**.

These three prototypes stayed on the same compound until the very last pit stop when they reverted to **HARDs** for the closing stages. The N°8 Toyota ran the new slick from start to finish, however, and ultimately came third.





There was an all-Michelin top three in the LM GTE Pro class thanks to the French firm's partners Ferrari and Porsche. The spoils went to the N°51 Ferrari 488 GTE (Calado/Pierguidi) which finished ahead of the N°92 Porsche 911 RSR (Christensen/Estre) and the N°71 Ferrari (Rigon/Bird). The Italian cars ran **MEDIUM**-compound slicks, but Porsche preferred the new **HARD** option that Michelin has developed for it for the final phase of the season.

“We are very pleased with the consistent lap times our partners posted during the 6 Hours of COTA, irrespective of type of tyre their cars were on,” observed **Jérôme Mondain**, the manager of Michelin's endurance racing programmes. “It is interesting to note that the LMP1 prototypes successfully double stinted, even though the drivers themselves only completed one stint at a time due to the rule that restricts driving time in hot weather. This could be a pointer to a solution that could be seen in the future. Our new HARD+ slick had a strong debut here in Austin and it is very likely it will be used again at some of the remaining rounds of the championship.”

The next round of the 2017 FIA World Endurance Championship (October 13-15) will take teams to Japan for another six-hour race at Fuji Speedway.

