

# Endurance racing stars are here!

Bahrain International Circuit welcomes FIA World Endurance Championship participants ahead of Bapco 6 Hours of Bahrain this weekend in Sakhir



Toyota Gazoo Racing driver Sebastien Buemi, second from left, is assisted upon his arrival at Bahrain International Airport

TDT | Manama

The Kingdom of Bahrain and Bahrain International Circuit (BIC) have begun welcoming the drivers, teams and officials of the FIA World Endurance Championship ahead of this weekend's Bapco 6 Hours of Bahrain.

The event's participants are coming from all across the globe for the first-ever WEC double-header to be held at "The Home of Motorsport in the Middle East" in Sakhir.

The Bapco 6 Hours of Bahrain is the fifth and penultimate round of the 2021 WEC season. It will be the first of back-to-back WEC races in the Kingdom to end this championship campaign. It will be followed on the weekend of November 5 and 6 by the season-finale, the Bapco 8 Hours of Bahrain.

The Kingdom's guests were

assisted upon their arrival at Bahrain International Airport by members of BIC's Meet and Greet Team.

Many of them went straight to work at BIC to begin their final preparations for this weekend's racing, which kicks off Thursday night with Free Practice 1 to be held behind closed doors.

Friday and Saturday will be open to the public, with two more Practices taking place followed by Qualifying on Friday. That will set the stage for the gruelling six-hour race on Saturday, flagging off at 11am and ending at 5pm.

All the racing will take place along BIC's 5.412-kilometre Grand Prix circuit.

Prior to the Sakhir spectacle, the WEC held events across some of Europe's top tracks, with the 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps in Belgium in May, the 8 Hours of Portimao in Portugal in June, the



6 Hours of Monza in Italy in July and the world-famous 24 Hours of Le Mans in France in August.

Bahrain continues to be the only Middle Eastern destination of the WEC, and this year the series' only stop in all of Asia.

The WEC's newest champions are set to be crowned at BIC at the end of the final round, ensuring that there will be plenty of exciting action as the title battles culminate in these final two weekends.

Off the race track, there will be plenty of entertainment for the whole family, including international dance shows, music acts, roaming performers and a kids' zone.

Tickets are now available for Friday and Saturday at just BD5 for adults (BD8 for both WEC

## BIC launches ticket-holder competition for exclusive pre-race grid walk

TDT | Manama

Bahrain International Circuit (BIC) has launched an exciting competition through its Instagram account for fans to win the opportunity to be a part of an exclusive pre-race grid walk at the upcoming FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC) double-header.

This "money can't buy" opportunity is the first time BIC has offered such an experience for race fans through a competition.

It is open to all ticket-holders to this weekend's Bapco 6 Hours of Bahrain or to the Bapco 8 Hours of Bahrain taking place November 5 and 6.

The pre-race grid walk will be a fantastic opportunity to get as close to the race cars, drivers and teams as possible just moments before they battle it out in the endurance racing spectacle. It will be held along the Main Straight of BIC's 5.412-kilometre track, between



The WEC grid at BIC from a previous race (File photo)

the Main Grandstand and the WEC teams' Pit Lane, giving the winners an unbelievable vantage point usually only experienced by those competing in the sport.

All fans have to do is comment on the competition's post on BIC's Instagram page (@

bah\_int\_circuit) and mention the friend or family member they would like to take with them on the grid walk.

The winners will be selected randomly. Three pairs of passes will be up for grabs for each race weekend, giving race-goers plenty of chances to win.

## Major warm-up for Australian Open tennis cancelled again over virus

Reuters | London

A major warm-up tournament for the Australian Open was cancelled on Tuesday, with organisers blaming uncertainty over Covid-19 rules players will face in Melbourne.

It is the second year the Kooyong Classic, normally played in the weeks leading up to the season-opening Grand Slam, has been scrapped because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Kooyong president Adam Cossar said he was disappointed the event could not take place in January 2022 but hopes it will return in 2023.

"With the great deal of uncertainty over recent months about the arrangements that would be in place in January, it has not been possible to make the best plans to deliver the best and safest sporting (event)," he said in a statement.

# Toyota Gazoo Racing ready for desert double

TDT | Manama

Hypercar history will be written when the 2021 FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC) titles are decided in a Bahrain double-header, and four-time Le Mans winner Toyota Gazoo Racing are ready for a duel in the desert.

For the first time in WEC history, races will be held on consecutive weekends at the same venue; on Saturday 30 October the Bapco 6 Hours of Bahrain, followed by the Bapco 8 Hours of Bahrain a week later.

A 100 per cent win-record this season means Toyota Gazoo Racing travels to Bahrain in pole position to retain the World Championship. The team leads Alpine by 51 points, with a total of 65 on offer in the final races, meaning third place in the first Bahrain contest is enough to guarantee a third consecutive title.

There is a three-way fight for the drivers' crown and the identity of the first Hypercar drivers' World Champions will be decided only in the final race of 2021.

Following their emotional first Le Mans victory in August, the #7 GRO10 HYBRID crew of Mike Conway, Kamui Kobayashi and José María López head the standings as they attempt to defend the title they won in Bahrain last year.

Sébastien Buemi, Kazuki Nakajima and Brendon Hartley, in the #8 GRO10 HYBRID, are only nine points behind having also won two of the four races so far this season. Another two victories would guarantee them the title while the third-placed Alpine drivers are also in the championship challenge, trailing by 30 points.

TOYOTA GAZOO Racing has a very strong record in Bahrain,



The two Toyota Gazoo Racing cars...set for desert duel

having won five times from eight visits to the 15-turn, 5.412km Bahrain International Circuit, including three wins for its legendary TS050 HYBRID LMP1 car.

The new GRO10 HYBRID Hypercar will make its Bahrain debut in exactly the same specification as at Le Mans, when the team earned a one-two victory thanks to a strong team effort to overcome fuel pressure problems caused by contamination in the fuel cell. That issue has been addressed prior to Bahrain following extensive technical investigations.

Kobayashi commented: "To finish the season with two races at the same circuit is new for WEC and it means everyone can expect an intense two weeks.

"Of course, it's the first time for us to drive with the GRO10 HYBRID on this circuit so we need to focus on constantly



The Toyota Gazoo Racing crew of Mike Conway, Kamui Kobayashi and Jose Maria Lopez in the #7 GRO10 HYBRID head the standings as they attempt to defend the title they won in Bahrain last year, but teammates Sebastien Buemi, Kazuki Nakajima and Brendon Hartley in the #8 GRO10 HYBRID are only nine points behind

improving the car balance so we are in good shape for both races."

Added Buemi: "I am looking forward to a long stay in Bahrain; it's going to be good. We have been preparing in the simulator for this and we expect a tight fight with the sister car and the Alpine.

"We will need to adapt to the different conditions because the behaviour of the car changes quite a lot from day to night. The team has worked hard since Le Mans to understand a few issues and continuously improve the car and I will give my very, very best to fight for the championship until the end."

**YOU KNOW WHAT**

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SEBASTIEN BUEMI