

The Making of the 24H DUBAI Trophy

In 2022, CREVENTIC unveiled a new, grand prize for teams, drivers and competitors alike to compete for at the Hankook 24H DUBAI. Trophy specialist Lorenzo Invernizzi, founder of Libe Incisioni srl, walks us through the design and extensive build.

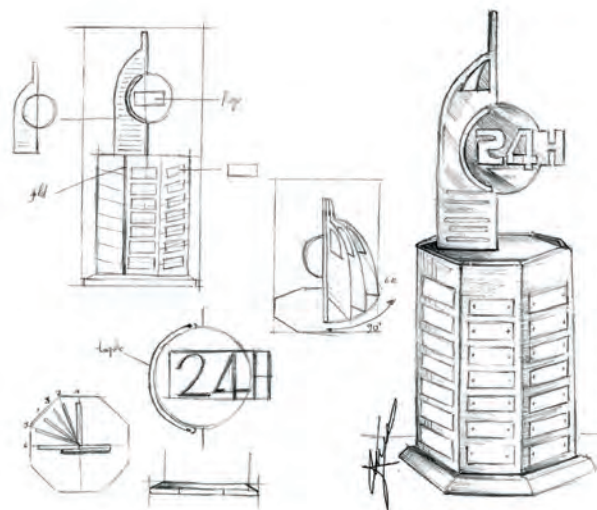
Though they perhaps weren't aware of it at the time, when Mohammed Bin Saud Al Saud, Axcil Jefferies, Christopher Mies, Dries Vanthoor and Thomas Neubauer climbed the podium at the 2022 Hankook 24H DUBAI, they were about to make event history in more ways than one.

Bin Saud for example became only the second driver from Saudi Arabia to take victory at CREVENTIC's most prestigious race, and the first to do so since Abdulaziz Al Faisal's second event win in 2018. In emulating his brother Laurens' outright win in 2016 – with the same team, no less – Dries Vanthoor's victory meant a third set of brothers now shared Hankook 24H DUBAI honours, following Alfred and Robert Renauer, and Mark and Rolf Ineichen's respective triumphs in 2017 and 2014. Thomas Neubauer meanwhile took the eighth outright win for France at the Hankook 24H DUBAI, drawing the Gallic nation level with Britain on the all-time list. Admittedly both still trail Germany, which, thanks to Christopher Mies, now has a massive 16 wins to its name.

And Axcil Jefferies? Well, he became only the 10th driver, in 17 years, to take a second outright GT win. And only the fourth driver to do so in consecutive years.

On top of even this though, history was made when the five MS7 by WRT teammates celebrated on the podium with the new, and official, Hankook 24H DUBAI trophy.

"This was an idea we'd had for some time, but the timing never felt quite right," CREVENTIC's operational manager Peter Freij explains. "But as we were preparing for the 2022 race, we saw the number of teams that were signing up, and could feel that the motorsport world was finally starting to move out of the 'Covid era.' The timing just felt right. We wanted to celebrate this."



Designed and sculpted by long-time CREVENTIC partner Libe Incisioni srl – the Italian manufacturer has been responsible for the 24H SERIES' overall and class winners' cups since [xxx] – the new overall winners' trophy is easily the most commanding example seen to-date on the Autodrome podium. Weighing in at a brawny 90kg and standing almost 5ft tall (150 cm, to be exact), the Hankook 24H DUBAI's new, official trophy is as commanding as it is refined.

"This felt like an exciting project to be involved with," LIBE founder Lorenzo Invernizzi explains. "The concept, the design and the entire manufacture of the trophy have been entirely executed by Libe Incisioni's staff for CREVENTIC, and we're very proud of the finished item."

Impressively, the final design is not far removed from Libe's original sketches, nor indeed the 3D renderings signed off by CREVENTIC before the build began in late 2021. Indeed, from day one, LIBE was keen to foreground not just the 24H SERIES itself but also "represent the Middle East by using a symbol of that world."

Consequently, the prominent '24H' logo at the top is affixed to a faithful representation of Dubai's famous Burj Al Arab, the five-star hotel that's been among the Emirate's most distinctive landmarks since construction was completed in 1999. So evocative is the design, the Burj Al Arab's helipad – standing 689-feet above the ground – has hosted a showcase tennis match between Andre Agassi and Roger Federer, a 'heli-lift' of the newly-launched Aston Martin Vanquish in 2013, and was the backdrop for Ronan Keating's 1998 single, 'Iris.' 13-time Grand Prix winner David Coulthard has even performed donuts in a Red Bull Racing Formula 1 car in 2013. Where better to draw inspiration?

"The Burj Al Arab is recognised worldwide for its shape, so that was the perfect starting point," Lorenzo continues. "There are also no substantial differences between the final result and our initial design. As a specialist for decades in the production of trophies, Libe is well aware of the structural and construction requirements needed for the build of all kinds of trophies."

"The upper part of the trophy is completely made of unbending brass used in the watch-making industry. That's really the best quality. It consists of six brass 'sails' – manufactured using a Computerized Numerical Control milling system – that are each 8mm thick, arranged at 15 degrees to form a 90-degree angle. In front of the sails, we placed a big, brass plate showing the '24H' logo, and these vertical elements were all fixed on a brass plate that's also 8mm thick."

Beneath the 80 cm Burj Al Arab and '24H' logo lies the 'meat and potatoes' of the trophy: an eight-sided wooden plinth, on which brass nameplates have been mounted, seven-per-side. Engraved on each of these is the name of the team, the car, and the drivers that have won each particular year's event, dating back to Philipp Peter, Dieter Qvester, two-time Le Mans winner Hans-Joachim Stuck, and Toto Wolff's – yes, that one! – victory with Düller Motorsport at the inaugural race in 2006.

"Each nameplate is customized by Libe using pantograph engraving. The idea was to create a Roll of Honour that's updated every year by adding a new, customized nameplate. This means that this trophy can be used for 56 years!"

Here though is where we should address a potential elephant in the Cool-Down room. While this concept may sound similar to a certain annual award bearing the 'Borg-Warner' name, Libe is keen to emphasize that America's biggest motorsport accolade was not the starting point for the new Hankook 24H DUBAI trophy...

"No, we weren't inspired by other trophies. Not even the Indy 500! The necessity of having a historic trophy meant we needed a large wooden base, and that then inspired us to create a specific, molded plate with two different finishes: a shiny polished outside, and a matte finish inside. We really wanted this trophy to have its own distinct character."

We should also point out that size in no way belies substance with the Hankook 24H DUBAI trophy. Each nameplate and brass element – including the octagonal 'piping' – has been gilded with pure gold, while the 2cm-thick base, in-keeping with LIBE's desire to use materials indicative of the Gulf region where possible, was carved from solid Africa flamed rosewood. The final touch – a glossy polyester polishing – helps to detract scuff marks.

You won't be too surprised to hear then that manufacture of the official Hankook 24H DUBAI trophy is far from the work of a moment...

"The production process took one month, from start to completion. This was all the time we had available before the 2022 race when we received the order, and we even worked during Christmas holidays, with only two days off, in order to satisfy our client's requirements. Let's just say that our competence and experience were fundamental to achieving an excellent final result!"

"Nothing was left to chance either in terms of shipping: the trophy was packed in a huge wooden box, with as much packaging as we could possibly include, and the transport from Italy to Dubai for the 2022 race was organized by Libe in cooperation with DHL. The trophy is then exhibited at the [Hankook] 24H DUBAI and awarded to the winning team on the podium after the race."

Granted, with the winning drivers unlikely to have room in their respective carry-ons for a trophy that weighs just slightly less than your average male leopard – to say nothing of the minefield that is European passport control – the trophy is instead transported post-race to the headquarters of the winning team, again overseen by Libe. While the Italian firm engraves the latest nameplate, fans and local / international media alike are invited to take photos of the Dubai trophy on display with the reigning event winners, Libe making this process easier by updating the team with handy service and cleaning tips. Should there be any significant issues, the trophy can be shipped back to Libe's headquarters in Bovisio Masciago – just outside Monza – for specialist repairs before the trophy's return trip to Dubai in January.

Extravagant? Well, yes, but then that is entirely the point of the whole endeavour. For close to two decades, the Hankook 24H DUBAI has been the pinnacle of CREVENTIC's endurance racing program, with the event fast-becoming one of the most significant endurance races of every new motorsport season. What better time than now then to give teams, drivers and manufacturers something else to compete for? To be immortalized upon. To make, in their own way, a little bit of history. ■

