

Porsche and Matt Campbell ready for IMSA 12-hour classic

17/03/2021 Porsche's customer teams head into round two of the IMSA WeatherTech Sportscar Championship with high expectations.

The preview

This year marks the 69th running of the tradition-steeped twelve-hour race in Florida. In 2020, Porsche racing cars won both GT classes. Now, the teams aim to repeat this achievement. In the GTLM division, WeatherTech Racing fields one Porsche 911 RSR. In the GTD category for racing vehicles complying with FIA GT3 regulations, three customer squads campaign a total of four 911 GT3 R.

The Sebring International Raceway throws major challenges at man and machine. About a third of the 6.02-kilometre racetrack consists of concrete slabs, which were previously part of the runway at the former Hendricks Army Airfield. The racetrack is known for its hefty washboards – especially on these sections. Due to this special feature, the racetrack located about 100 kilometres south of Orlando is often mentioned on social media with the hashtag #RespectTheBumps.

"We used the time after the season opener at Daytona to tweak some of the processes within the team," explains Steffen Höllwarth, Head of GTLM Operations. "We tested at Sebring and we'll be well-prepared for the race there." The focus for the engineers of the customer teams will be on setting up the kinematics of the 911 RSR and the four 911 GT3 R. "The track has character – there is no such thing as smooth and gentle at Sebring," says Sebastian Golz, Project Manager Porsche 911 GT3 R. "For twelve long hours, the bumpy track surface gives drivers and the entire technology a good shakeup. In the race, each of the 911 GT3 R will cover a distance of around 1,900 kilometres, averaging a good 178 km/h. That's not easy for the driver or car. But when Wright Motorsports won in 2020, we saw that our vehicle is perfectly prepared for such tasks."

Porsche is by far the most successful manufacturer at this event on the storied circuit, which has regularly hosted the endurance race since 1950. To date, the Stuttgart marque has netted 18 outright wins and 74 class victories at Sebring. In the last three years, the Porsche 911 RSR has won the GTLM class at the twelve-hour race in Florida – an extremely popular event among fans. In 2020, the Wright Motorsports customer team won the hotly contested GTD category. In addition to the 24-hour highlight at Daytona and the races at Road Atlanta and Watkins Glen, round two of the season counts towards the IMSA Michelin Endurance Cup.

The Porsche drivers and customer teams

The works drivers Mathieu Jaminet from France and Matt Campbell from Australia team up with American amateur driver Cooper MacNeil in the cockpit of the No. 79 Porsche 911 RSR fielded by the WeatherTech Racing customer squad. The outfit is supported by Proton Competition from Germany. This is its second GTLM-class appearance in Sebring and the vehicle is the winning car from the 2020 season finale held at the same venue.

In the GTD class, the Wright Motorsports customer team lines up on the grid with a Porsche 911 GT3 R as last year's winners. In the No. 16 car, the American factory pilot Patrick Long (USA) joins forces with his compatriot Ryan Hardwick and Belgium's Jan Heylen. The Canadian team Pfaff Motorsports runs the number 9 car with works driver Laurens Vanthoor from Belgium, Canadian Zacharie Robichon and Porsche development driver Lars Kern from Germany. Earl Bamber (New Zealand), Americans Rob Ferriol and Trenton Estep as well as Christina Nielsen (Denmark), Katherine Legge (Great Britain) and Ana Beatriz from Brazil share driving duties in the identical 911 GT3 R fielded by EBM Hardpoint.

Drivers' comments before the race

Matt Campbell (Porsche 911 RSR #79): "I love the Sebring circuit. I've raced there with the WEC and I've tested there often. Despite the rough bumps, the track is great fun – especially at the wheel of the Porsche 911 RSR. I'm really looking forward to my first race with WeatherTech Racing. Mathieu and I share the car with Cooper MacNeil at Sebring. For the following shorter races we take turns. I can gain a lot of extra experience and hopefully achieve decent results."

Laurens Vanthoor (Porsche 911 GT3 R #9): "It's great that the long break after the opening round will be over soon. We put in a strong drive at Daytona, but an incident hampered us from yielding the deserved result. All in all, we gave a strong performance at our first joint outing as a team. We now want to build on that and fight for class victory at Sebring. I think that's a realistic goal."

Patrick Long (Porsche 911 GT3 R #16): "Sebring is a racetrack with soul. It's one of the greatest challenges in motor racing and it really puts man and machine to the test. It's an event that I always very much look forward to. The fact that we won the GTD class there last year is great, however our focus is on this season. In terms of the championship, it's important to earn maximum points at every round. That's our goal for the upcoming race."

Earl Bamber (Porsche 911 GT3 R #88): "At the Daytona season opener, we had a really fast car, but we couldn't harvest the just rewards. That should change at Sebring. As a team, we've gained a lot of insights and thanks to meticulous analyses, we've drawn the appropriate conclusions for the upcoming events. Trenton Estep rounds off our driver lineup at Sebring. He's a former champion of the Porsche GT3 Cup Challenge. So, my two teammates come from top-class Porsche Cups. I'm particularly thrilled because it underlines the opportunities for advancement and it's a great indication for the drivers who

are starting the debut season of the Porsche Carrera Cup North America at Sebring.”

Christina Nielsen (Porsche 911 GT3 R #89): “Our car ran really well at round one in Daytona, so I have high expectations for the upcoming race. Within the team, we reshuffled the cockpit crew. That’ll be interesting. Sebring suits me really well. I’ve scored some big successes there in recent years. The bumps are typical for the track. They get worse from year to year, which makes the race extremely exhausting.”

Live streaming of the race

The twelve-hour race of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship at Sebring gets underway on Saturday, 20 March, at 10:10am local time (4:10pm CET). The entire race can be viewed live outside the USA and Canada on www.imsa.com. Live timing of all sessions is available at scoring.imsa.com.

The schedule (local time, CET -6 hours)

Friday, 19 March

11:15 – 11:55 am: Qualifying GT

Saturday, 20 March

8:00 – 8:20 am: Warmup

10:10am – 10:10 pm: Race

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