

Ayhancan Güven is the big winner of the PESC season-opener

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05/02/2022 The Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup (PESC) heads into the new season this coming Saturday, 5 February. On this occasion, the Porsche 911 GT3 Cup will celebrate its digital racing debut on the virtual version of the Hockenheim Grand Prix circuit.

The race

On the digital version of the 4.574-kilometre Grand Prix circuit in Germany's Hockenheim, 35 of the world's best sim racers from 15 countries went head-to-head in the virtual variant of the 911 GT3 Cup. The one-make cup racing vehicle is based on the latest 992-generation Cup-911.

In qualifying, Coanda driver Dayne Warren clinched pole position for the nine-lap sprint race, with

Charlie Collins (VRS) and Diogo C. Pinto (Team Redline) claiming the second and third grid spots. Ex-champion Sebastian Job from Great Britain (Red Bull Racing Esports) posted the fourth quickest time ahead of newcomer Quentin Vialatte from Belgium (R8G eSports) and Ayhancan Güven (Coanda). Immediately snatching the lead after the start, Warren spearheaded the quartet and eked out a small gap to his pursuers. Although the top four were separated by less than a second, the order remained unchanged to the finish line: Warren took the flag in first place followed by Collins, Pinto and Job. Positions five to eight went to Vialatte, Güven, the Frenchman Jeremy Bouteloup (Coanda) and Moreno Sirica from Italy (Williams Esports). With the top eight tackling the 19-lap main event in reverse order, Sirica inherited pole position, with Bouteloup lining up alongside him on the first grid row.

Moreno Sirica's pole position joy was short-lived: In the first lap, he fell back to ninth place. Jeremy Bouteloup led the field ahead of Ayhancan Güven, Quentin Vialatte and Sebastian Job. As one of the hot favourites, Job lost all chances of a top result on lap three when he was spun in the hairpin and thrown down the field.

Meanwhile, a gripping duel for the lead unfolded between Bouteloup and Güven, with the Turkish racer ultimately grabbing the top spot in lap seven. In lap nine, Pinto also overtook the Frenchman, who continued to lose ground. The Portuguese driver then proceeded to chase down the leader – with Charlie Collins and Dayne Warren also putting the leading pair under pressure. Despite Pinto's repeated attacks, the 2020-2021 Porsche Junior defended his top spot. The decision went down to the wire in the very last lap: Although Collins had been handed a drive-through penalty, he at-tacked Pinto, effectively giving Güven some room to breathe. The Portuguese driver lost more time when he slid from the track at the Motodrom entrance. He ultimately took the flag in fourth place. As Warren also had to take a pit drive-through penalty, victory in the main race went to Güven, with Carroll and Bouteloup claiming the other two podium steps. As the best rookie, Australian Cooper Webster (Red Bull Racing Esports) finished fifth, with Coanda driver Oskar Biksrud coming ninth at his debut event. At just 15 years of age, the Norwegian is the youngest competitor in the Por-sche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup. After the first of ten race weekends on the Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup calendar, Ayhancan Güven leads the series with 65 points ahead of Diogo C. Pinto (63) and Graham Carroll (55).

Porsche-Junior Laurin Heinrich dominates the All-Star races

As part of the support programme, famous content creators again pitted themselves against guest drivers from real-life motorsport. Laurin Heinrich dominated both races. The new Porsche-Junior also contests the Porsche Mobil 1 Supercup with the 911 GT3 Cup. In the first Hockenheim sprint, he relegated Tyson "Quirkitized" Meier and Borja Zazo to second and third. As the winner, the German had to start race two from the back of the grid but quickly worked his way up the order. After a thrilling three-way fight with Emily "Emree" Jones and the Brazilian IndyCar driver and Indianapolis-500 winner Tony Kanaan, Heinrich again swept into the lead in the eighth of 15 laps. The Australian came second ahead of Zazo.

Racing continues in 14 days: Barcelona hosts round two

Round two of this year's Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup will be contested on 19 February, with the 35 digital Cup-911 racers tackling the Circuit de Barcelona Catalunya. The Grand Prix circuit on the outskirts of the Spanish metropolitan city already hosted the global esports championship run on the iRacing simulation platform in 2020 and 2021. Last year, Sebastian Job won the main race. The sim racers face special challenges on the 4.655-kilometre circuit when it comes to driving and finding the ideal setup for their virtual Porsche 911 GT3 Cup. The distinctive corner combinations – some of which are blind – require driving prowess and a lot of experience. The sprint is contested over nine laps with the main race run over double the distance. Famous influencers from the esports world will again compete at Barcelona, where they will fight for victory in two All-Star races.

Online voting: Which racetrack will host the PESC on 5 March?

Fans and followers of the Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup can directly influence the schedule of the digital one-make cup: via online voting in the Porsche Motorsport Hub (https://motorsports.porsche.com), they decide where round three will be held on the first Saturday in March. The list of choices includes tradition-steeped racetracks such as Watkins Glen (USA) and Interlagos (Brazil) as well as the street circuit at Long Beach (USA) and the Hungaroring in Hungary. Voting began during the PESC season-opener at Hockenheim and runs until the start of the Barcelona races – with the result finalised during the event on the Circuit de Barcelona Catalunya.

Comments after the race

Ayhancan Güven (TR/Coanda):"I won a couple of races in the real-life Supercup. Now I've claimed my first victory in the virtual edition – that's crazy. I don't think I was the fastest today but the reverse grid gave me the opportunity in the main race. I drove smart, I defended hard, and I got the win! Unfortunately, as soon as my real racing season starts there will be some date clashes. So I may have to miss some races of the Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup. Still, I'll keep practicing and try to help my teammates."

Graham Carroll (GB/Red Bull Racing Esports): "It took a lot of patience to reach the podium. Some of the other drivers went over the incident limit, others had problems on the track. Suddenly I was on P2. It's great to have Cooper Webster as the third driver with Sebastian Job and me. He's on the same pace, so we can learn from each other."

Jeremy Bouteloup (F/Coanda): "Unfortunately, I couldn't hold on to the lead. While braking for the hairpin, I got hit from behind and almost lost the car. After several slight contacts and especially in terms of track limits, I didn't want to risk a drive-through penalty. So, I got a little bit nervous and tried to keep out of trouble. I'm glad to finish in P3."

Dayne Warren (AUS/Coanda): "Everyone in the team worked really hard to be up front. We're all focussed on winning and being the best team. So far it's worked out perfectly."

Laurin Heinrich (D):"I want to thank Porsche for inviting me to this event – going up against someone like Tony Kanaan is something very special. I know the Hockenheimring from real-life racing. I have to say that the virtual Porsche 911 GT3 Cup of the new 992-generation is closer to the real racing car than its predecessor."

Results

Hockenheim, sprint race
1. Dayne Warren (AUS/Coanda)
2. Charlie Collins (UK/VRS)
3. Diogo C. Pinto (P/ Team Redline)
4. Sebastian Job (GB/Red Bull Racing Esports)
5. Quentin Vialatte (B/R8G eSports)

Hockenheim, main race
1. Ayhancan Güven (TR/Coanda)
2. Graham Carroll (GB/Red Bull Racing Esports)
3. Jeremy Bouteloup (F/Coanda)
4. Diogo C. Pinto (P/Team Redline)
5. Cooper Webster (AUS/Red Bull Racing Esports)

Points' standings after 1 of 10 championship races
1. Ayhancan Güven (TR/Coanda), 65 points
2. Diogo C. Pinto (P/Team Redline), 63 points
3. Graham Carroll (GB/Red Bull Racing Esports), 55 points

The preview

The Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup (PESC) heads into the new season this coming Saturday, 5 February. On this occasion, the Porsche 911 GT3 Cup will celebrate its digital racing debut on the virtual version of the Hockenheim Grand Prix circuit. This year, 35 of the world's best esports sim racers from 16 countries fight for championship points and prize money totalling US$ 200,000 in the 992-generation Cup-911. The global championship contested on the iRacing simulation platform comprises ten rounds and concludes in early June with the season finale at the Autodromo Nazionale in Monza. In addition to revered racetracks such as the Nürburgring-Nordschleife and the Circuit des 24 Heures in Le Mans, the calendar again includes the Formula 1 circuits in Barcelona, Silverstone, Montréal and Spa-Francorchamps. Moreover, the virtual one-make cup series competes on the Red Bull Ring in

Spielberg, Austria, for the first time. Another novelty: via online voting, the esports community decides which circuit will host round three of the season.

“Porsche Motorsport kicked off the new sim racing year in mid-January with a podium result at the virtual 24 Hours of Le Mans – now the countdown is on for the start of the 2022 Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup season,” states Marco Ujhasi, Manager Esports at Porsche Motorsport. “And for the first time, the 911 GT3 Cup, based on the 992 generation, is showcased in the virtual Porsche one-make cup as the new competition car. 2022 marks the fourth season for this popular series and again we have an international lineup. We look forward to some action-packed races – and so are the many fans.”

Sebastian Job from the Red Bull Racing Esports team aims to clinch his second title in the Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup: The British sim racer claimed the championship crown in 2020. “My goal is very clearly to win the championship. Last year I had to give in to others, unfortunately,” explains the 21-year-old. “Some of the top drivers from last season are not competing this year but the competition is still strong and the fight for the title will be a tough challenge. Right now I have to familiarise myself with the new car but we should have everything under control by the first race!”

Other title aspirants determined to wrest the crown from the reigning champion Joshua Rogers are Job’s compatriot Kevin Ellis Jr, who competes for the Apex Racing team, and Charlie Collins from the Virtual Racing School. After winning the series for the second time since 2019, the 2021 champion from Australia will not compete this year.

David Williams wins the Contender Series and progresses into the PESC

As always, the limited grid spots for the Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup were highly coveted. Only the top 20 drivers from last season received automatic entry into this year’s series. To get one of the 15 remaining cockpits, candidates from all over the world had to first tackle a two-stage selection process. During stage one, all iRacing registered users could participate in a special qualifying competition. In stage two, the top 15 drivers in the overall standings advanced to the so-called Contender Series. At six events held in September and October last year, those 15 went up against esports racers who had finished on positions 21 to 40 in the 2021 PESC.

David Williams from Great Britain emerged as the winner. The Virtual Racing School driver relegated Frenchman Quentin Vialatte and Belgium's Julien Soenen (both R8G eSports) to positions two and three. With twelve other contestants from the shootout, they can now look forward to racing in the 2022 PESC. Racing pro Ayhancan Güven returns to the grid. As a Porsche Junior, the 24-year-old Turkish driver concluded last year’s real Porsche Mobil 1 Supercup in third place.

At the season-opening round of the Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup on the Hockenheimring, sim

racers pit themselves against each other in a sprint race over nine laps starting at 20:00 on 5 February, followed by the main race over twice the distance at approximately 20:25. Fans can watch the iRacing action live online on Porsche's channels YouTube and Twitch.

Prominent influencers contest the All-Star Series

Well-known content creators from the Esports racing scene will showcase their skills in a support series. They fight for victory in the TAG Heuer Esports Supercup All-Star Series. Australia's Emily Jones alias "Emree" competes as the defending champion. Other celebrity influencers include Jimmy Broadbent, Jaroslav Honzík – better known online as "Jardier" – as well as Pierre-Olivier "Depielo" Valette. At selected events, racing drivers from the Porsche Motorsports squad will enter a virtual cockpit and take on the international field.

A special feature of the All-Star Series: The virtual Porsche 911 GT3 Cup will be fielded for the first three races of the season. After that, the Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 and the 911 GT3 R will each race at three more events. A vote by the community determines which car will be driven at the finale. The live stream begins at 18:30with the All-Star qualifying session. The two influencer races get the green light at 18:45 and 19:05 respectively.

Further information on the Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup can be found on the Porsche Motorsport Hub and the Twitter account @PorscheRaces.

The schedule (all times CET)*

Saturday, 5 February
18:30 – 18:45: Qualifying All-Stars
18:45 – 19:00: Sprint race All-Stars
19:05 – 19:30: Main race All-Stars
19:47 – 20:00: Qualifying PESC
20:00 – 20:15: Sprint race PESC
20:25 – 20:55: Main race PESC

** these times may vary slightly*

The 2022 racing calendar

05.02.2022 – Germany: Hockenheimring (9/18 laps)
19.02.2022 – Spain: Barcelona (9/18 laps)
05.03.2022 – tba after online voting
19.03.2022 – Great Britain: Silverstone Grand Prix circuit (7/14 laps)

26.03.2022 – Austria: Spielberg (10/20 laps)
09.04.2022 – Canada: Montreal (10/20 laps)
23.04.2022 – Belgium: Spa-Francorchamps (6/12 laps)
07.05.2022 – Germany: Nürburgring-Nordschleife, 24-hour version (3/4 laps)
21.05.2022 – France: Le Mans (3/6 laps)
04.06.2022 – Italy: Monza (7/14 laps)

(in brackets: number of laps for sprint and main race)

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Title: 911 GT3 Cup, 2022, Porsche AG
Subline: Laurin Heinrich's virtual GT3 Cup

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