

Porsche 911 RSR wins after a tactical masterstroke in California

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02/11/2020 The Porsche GT Team has scored its second straight win in the North American IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship. Belgium's Laurens Vanthoor and Earl Bamber from New Zealand reached the finish line first on the Laguna Seca Raceway and achieved the first victory for the Porsche 911 RSR on the storied Californian racetrack since the start of the factory campaign in 2014.

The race

The identical sister car driven by their works driver colleagues Nick Tandy from Great Britain and Frédéric Makowiecki from France finished in third place in the hotly-contested GTLM category.

A clever tactic was the key to securing the second consecutive win after the triumph a fortnight ago at

Road Atlanta. With air temperatures of around 30 degrees Celsius and an asphalt temperature of almost 50 degrees on the sand-covered course in the dunes of Laguna Seca, the main emphasis was on tyre management. During the morning qualifying session, the Porsche GT Team laid the foundation for two different strategies. Vanthoor planted the number 912 car on the second grid spot, while the number 911 entry turned only two laps in the qualifying session to run-in a set of tyres for the race – this, however, cost them a better starting position. The plan was that the vehicle driven by the Petit Le Mans winners Makowiecki and Tandy would make only two pit stops, with Bamber and Vanthoor's 911 going all-out and coming in for a service stop three times.

Third place for the Porsche 911 RSR #911

After the start, Vanthoor retained his second position and took the lead after an early first stop in lap 17. The so-called undercut calculated by the team had the optimum effect. The Belgian held on to the lead and handed the number 912 car off to Bamber after two swift stints. On the way to the first win for the defending GTLM champions, the New Zealander maintained his composure even during a brief full course yellow shortly before the flag. With a commanding performance, he brought the Porsche 911 RSR over the finish line in first place. The tactics for the number 911, however, meant that Tandy had virtually no chance on used tyres when the race went green again with just 13 minutes left on the clock. The British racer lost the third place that the crew had held for long stretches, after coming in fourth, just 4.716 seconds off claiming a podium result. However, the post-race technical inspection saw the No. 4 Corvette moved to the back of the GTLM class, resulting in the No. 911 car taking up third. On the same day that the customer team Proton Competition won the title in the European Le Mans Series, Porsche also had the most powerful car in the IMSA race.

At the penultimate round of the year, the customer squad Wright Motorsports safeguarded its chances of winning the GTD-class title. Works driver Patrick Long and his American compatriot Ryan Hardwick achieved sixth in the Porsche 911 GT3 R. In the overall classification, the team ranks second, just seven points behind the leader.

The 11th and final round of the 2020 IMSA season takes place on 14 November at the Sebring International Raceway. This will be the 68th edition of the 12-hour classic in Florida and, at the same time, marks the final factory outing of the two Porsche 911 RSR in the GTLM class of the North American sports car series.

Comments on the race

Pascal Zurlinden (Director Factory Motorsport): "What a great day for Porsche and the successful customer teams. In the afternoon, Proton Competition claimed the title in the European Le Mans Series, at the same time, the two 911 GT3 R fielded by Herberth Motorsport scored a double podium result in the ADAC GT Masters – and now the IMSA victory. We've finally won at Laguna Seca, as well. This success is the result of perfect teamwork. Our strategists implemented a clever plan, the team did

quick pit stops and the drivers made the most of the 911 RSR's potential. Congratulations everyone!"

Steffen Höllwarth (Head of Operations IMSA Championship): "We were determined to win today because Laguna Seca was a blank spot on the map. We've now managed to tick that off. We made a deliberate decision to use different strategies so that we could be prepared for all eventualities given the high temperatures. This worked perfectly with our number 912 car, but not with the sister car, unfortunately. It's a shame that Nick couldn't hold on to the podium position after the safety car phase. At that point, he was running on the most worn tyres by far, so he was handicapped. Still, we're delighted about the tremendous final result."

Laurens Vanthoor (Porsche 911 RSR #912): "That was a real team effort – everyone played their part perfectly – particularly our pit crew. Since we had to make three pit stops, the refuelling times were shorter than in a normal race. That meant that our lads had to complete the wheel changes flawlessly in record time. It worked very well, as you saw at the first pit stop when I was able to take the lead. This is the first win of the season for us in the 912 car. It's the second in a row for Porsche. We're finally achieving the results we deserve with the new 911 RSR."

Earl Bamber (Porsche 911 RSR #912): "We've been waiting for a victory since the summer of last year. It finally worked. We won the race thanks to our strategy and the perfect job of all involved. Just one week after our victory at the 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps, we're now at the forefront of the IMSA series. It can continue like this at the season finale in Sebring."

Further comments to the race you can find in the press release.

Race result

Result GTLM class
1. Vanthoor/Bamber (B/NZ), Porsche 911 RSR #912, 113 laps
2. Garcia/Taylor (E/USA), Chevrolet Corvette C8.R #3, 113 laps
3. Tandy/Makowiecki (GB/F), Porsche 911 RSR #911, 112 laps
4. Krohn/Edwards (FIN/USA), BMW M8 GTE #24, 112 laps
5. Spengler/De Phillippi (CDN/USA), BMW M8 GTE #25, 112 laps

Result GTD class
1. Farnbacher/McMurry (D/USA), Acura NSX GT3 #86, 108 laps
2. Auberlen/Foley (USA/USA), BMW M6 GT3 #96, 108 laps
3. Parente/Goikhberg (P/RUS), Acura NSX GT3 #57, 108 laps
6. Long/Hardwick (USA/USA), Porsche 911 GT3 R #16, 108 laps

Full results and championship standings at imsa.alkamelsystems.com.

The preview

The Porsche GT Team has a big goal for the penultimate round of the 2020 IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship. The North American factory squad is eager to win the 2:40-hour race on the tradition-steeped Laguna Seca Raceway with the Porsche 911 RSR for the first time. The famous venue close to the Pacific Ocean is the only North American road racing track on which Porsche has not scored a victory since 2014. The Porsche GT Team fields two 911 RSR in the hotly contested GTLM category. The driver crew Nick Tandy (Great Britain), Earl Bamber (New Zealand) as well as Laurens Vanthoor (Belgium) not only scored victory at Petit Le Mans but recently won the 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps in Belgium. In the GTD class, the customer squad Wright Motorsports campaigns a Porsche 911 GT3 R.

“For years, we have had some unfinished business at the Laguna Seca racetrack which we'd now like to settle. Our latest-generation Porsche 911 RSR should suit the special characteristics of this circuit better than its predecessors. After our victory at Road Atlanta, we're heading to the race weekend in California with high expectations and huge motivation,” says Pascal Zurlinden, Director Factory Motorsport. The Laguna Seca Raceway in the dunes not far from the coastal city of Monterey is 3.601-kilometres long and features eleven turns. The most famous passage is the “Corkscrew”. In the history of this racetrack, the tight, spectacular and almost blind combination of curves winding down from the hillcrest has often been the scene of breathtaking manoeuvres.

Per lap, drivers have to cope with a 55-metre elevation change. Tyre wear and strategies were the key factors in the races on this track, which was built in 1957. “At Laguna Seca, the vehicle balance has to be perfect,” explains Steffen Höllwarth, Head of Operations IMSA Championship. “If understeer is even a touch too much, you lose a huge amount of time per lap. We expect the track to be dirty and slippery at the start of the race weekend. In the first sessions there is always a lot of sand on the track surface. Grip conditions change significantly up to the start of the race, so we have to take this into account in the setup.”

The Porsche GT team drivers

The Petit Le Mans winners Nick Tandy and Frenchman Frédéric Makowiecki share driving duties in the No. 911 Porsche 911 RSR. The pair won the previous round at Road Atlanta with the young Australian works driver Matt Campbell. The reigning GTLM driver champions Earl Bamber from New Zealand and Belgium's Laurens Vanthoor share the cockpit of the No. 912 sister car. In the manufacturer's classification, Porsche ranks third after nine of eleven rounds.

The customer team

In the GTD category, Wright Motorsports fields the Porsche 911 GT3 R with the starting number 16.

Works driver Patrick Long joins forces with his American compatriot Ryan Hardwick in the cockpit. Wright Motorsports currently lies second in the GTD category and, just two points shy of the leader, has a good chance in the fight for the title.

Drivers' comments prior to the race

Frédéric Makowiecki (Porsche 911 RSR #911): "I'm really excited about the upcoming race, because the track is legendary – and not just because of the Corkscrew, but also the overall layout. We'll have to wait and see how well the new Porsche 911 RSR suits the quirks of this circuit. We've been fast on short circuits so far this year, so I'm heading into the penultimate race of the season with high hopes and expectations.

Laurens Vanthoor (Porsche 911 RSR #912): "Travelling to Laguna Seca is always an absolute highlight for me. You land in San Francisco with a view of the Golden Gate Bridge, then you drive along the Pacific coast towards Monterey and finally there's the wonderful drive into the highlands not far from the ocean – it's simply fabulous for a California fan like me. We've never been particularly successful on this circuit so far, but I'm feeling confident that this will change with the new Porsche 911 RSR."

Live streaming of the race

Round ten of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship at the Laguna Seca Raceway takes off on Sunday, 1 November, at 1:05 p.m. local time (10:05 p.m. CET). The 2:40-hour race can be viewed outside the USA and Canada on www.imsa.com.

The schedule (local time, CEST: -8/-9 hours)

Saturday, 31 October (Californian summertime)
08:00 – 09:00 am: Free practice 1
12:00 – 01:15 pm: Free practice 2

Sunday, 1 November (Californian wintertime)
08:30 – 08:45 am: Qualifying GTD
08:55 – 09:10 am: Qualifying GTLM
01:05 – 03:45 pm: Race
12:40 – 10:40 pm: Race

The Porsche 911 RSR

The Porsche 911 RSR (2019 model year) celebrated its debut in the IMSA SportsCar Championship at

the 24 Hours of Daytona in January. Compared to its extremely successful predecessor model, the Weissach engineers made improvements to the car, most notably in areas such as drivability, efficiency, ergonomics and serviceability. About 95 per cent of all components are new. The 911 RSR is powered by a 4.2-litre, six-cylinder boxer engine.

This is the IMSA SportsCar Championship

The IMSA SportsCar Championship was founded in the USA and Canada in 2013 after the merger of the American Le Mans Series and the Grand-Am Series. A year later the new sports car race series, which is organised by the International Motor Sports Association (IMSA), was contested for the first time. Sports prototypes and sports cars start in four different classes: GTLM (GT Le Mans), GTD (GT Daytona), Dpi (Daytona Prototype international) and LMP2 (Le Mans Prototype 2). The new Porsche 911 RSR is fielded in the GTLM class, and the Porsche 911 GT3 R contests the GTD class.

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