Disappointing race debut for the new Porsche 963 at Daytona

29/01/2023 Major setbacks hampered the two Porsche 963 fielded by the Porsche Penske Motorsport factory squad at the 61st edition of the 24 Hours of Daytona. In the GTD category, the new Porsche 911 GT3 R had almost no chance due to an unfavourable Balance of Performance classification.

The new hybrid prototype impressed with a strong performance at its debut in the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship. However, both vehicles lost contact with the leading pack due to technical defects. Despite extensive repairs, the two driver crews in the GTP racing cars managed to score critical points in the North American championship. In the GTD category, the new Porsche 911 GT3 R had almost no chance due to an unfavourable Balance of Performance classification.

After a promising start with Nick Tandy and Felipe Nasr in the cockpits of the two Porsche 963, the works team suffered the first setback at 7:00 pm on Saturday: The replacement of the high-voltage battery threw the No. 7 down the field. As the race progressed, damage to the cooling system forced the vehicle back into the Porsche Penske Motorsport garage for repairs.

The No. 6 car, which in the early stages Tandy had catapulted from P9 on the grid to the leading pack, put in a strong performance. During the night, the Porsche returnee and his teammates Mathieu Jaminet from France and Dane Cameron from the USA even led the field at times. A spin by Tandy – the 2015 outright Le Mans winner in the Porsche 919 Hybrid – cost him three laps. On Sunday morning, the crew again launched an attack. Posting top lap times, the Porsche 963 ploughed its way back to within striking distance of the frontrunners, only to be robbed of all hopes for a top result by a gearbox problem. While the car shared by Tandy/Jaminet/Cameron had to retire early, the sister car driven by Matt Campbell (Australia), Felipe Nasr (Brazil) and Michael Christensen (Denmark) went on to take the GTP-class flag in seventh place after 24 hours.

“We’re disappointed, no question about it,” concludes Thomas Laudenbach. The Vice President of Porsche Motorsport adds: “After just over five hours, the No. 7 car was thrown out of contention for victory due to an issue with the high-voltage system. Later, our No. 6 suffered damage to the powertrain. We experienced several problems but at the same time, we were able to learn a great deal. The good thing is, we know where we now stand and what we need to work on. We'll now prepare systematically for the next race at Sebring in March.”

“Firstly, congratulations to Acura on winning the maiden race in the new GTP era,” declares Urs Kuratle, Director Factory Motorsport LMDh. “We were hoping for more, mostly because we managed to set a fantastic pace at times. I’d like to thank Multimatic and all other partners. It’s been a long road for us all and we’ve finally arrived at the start of the GTP class. This is tremendous for the entire racing scene. Of all weekends, we had to deal with a lot of damage this weekend. Thank you to my colleagues in Weissach and at the team bases in Mooresville and Mannheim for their tireless work. We deserved a better result however we’ve learned a lot, which we will now consistently implement.”

New Porsche 911 GT3 R in GT classes without realistic chances

The customer teams fielding the new Porsche 911 GT3 R in the GTD-Pro class already realised during the practice and qualifying sessions that they faced a difficult situation. In the GT classes, in which different manufacturers compete with a variety of vehicle concepts, the playing field is levelled out via a so-called Balance of Performance system. The governing body of the IMSA series did not succeed in achieving this at the season opener in Daytona: The new GT3 vehicles from Weissach were so severely handicapped in terms of engine performance that the seven vehicles contesting both categories had next to no chance of success.

As the defending GTD-Pro champions, Pfaff Motorsports reached the finish line in fifth place after a valiant effort from works driver Laurens Vanthoor (Belgium) as well as Klaus Bachler from Austria and the Frenchman Patrick Pilet. The identical vehicle campaigned by MDK Motorsports took the flag in sixth place. In the GTD category, Wright Motorsports’ No. 16 car finished the race in ninth as the best-placed Porsche.

“Our starting position was difficult due to the classification of our Porsche 911 GT3 R,” says Thomas

Laudenbach, describing the situation of the Porsche customer teams in the GT classes. “Regardless, all teams fought their hardest – and that deserves the highest respect. Pfaff Motorsports finished fifth in the GTD-Pro class, just one lap behind – hats off! That’s the best morale in sports. Even if we can’t be right at the front at times, we still don’t give up; instead, we fight to the end, take home the points and continue at the next race.”

“It was a turbulent start to the season, which we would’ve liked to conclude with a different result,” comments Sebastian Golz, Project Manager Porsche 911 GT3 R. “Everyone attempted to make the most out of the situation. Seven customer cars started, six saw the chequered flag – that alone is a great debut for the new 911 GT3 R. However, the result is of secondary importance this weekend and we were only able to do damage control. Our focus is now on the future. Sebring will be challenging. We’ll take all the experience we gained with the new car from Daytona and work with the organiser on an updated BoP.”

Round two of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship is contested on 18 March in Sebring (USA). The day before, the Porsche 963 makes its debut in the FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC) at the same venue.

Drivers' comments on the race

Nick Tandy (Porsche 963 #6): “This event was both fantastic and incredibly character-building. There were a lot of positives, but just as many negatives. Our pace was strong but we still have a lot of work to do. That’s probably normal with a new car in a new vehicle class, with a new team and new drivers. Still, disappointment is the main emotion at this point. Right now, we need to focus on the positive aspects as quickly as possible – and there is plenty to focus on!”

Felipe Nasr (Porsche 963 #7): “Unfortunately, several defects set us back – first the battery, then the cooling system. Our engine overheated and we had to return to the garage. We learned a lot in this race. We’ll certainly make progress and we many more insights than before. The team never gave up and neither did the drivers. It simply wasn’t enough to succeed this time. Hopefully, next time.”

Klaus Bachler (Porsche 911 GT3 R #9): “If somebody had told us before the race that we would finish fifth in the GTD-Pro class despite the BoP classification, I would’ve thought that was very cool. The team did a great job. We were still on the same lap as the leading cars at the finish. From that perspective, we can be very happy with the result. It was my first race with Pfaff Motorsports and I had to learn a lot. Now we’re heading into the season with a good points tally. I’m sure we can fight for a class win again at Sebring.”

Jan Heylen (Porsche 911 GT3 R #16): “I’m very proud of the Wright Motorsports team and everything we accomplished. The 24-hour race was very long for all of us, especially because we didn’t stand a real chance. Still, we finished in the top ten of our class and managed to score all-important points towards the championship. I hope things go better for us at Sebring.”

Race result

GTP class:
1. Blomqvist/Braun/Castroneves/Pagenaud (UK/USA/BR/F), Acura ARX-06 #60, 783 laps
2. Taylor/Albuquerque/Deletraz/Hartley (USA/P/CH/NZ), Acura ARX-06 #10, 783 laps
3. Bourdais/van der Zande/Dixon (F/NL/NZ), Cadillac V-LMDh #01, 783 laps
7. Campbell/Nasr/Christensen (AUS/BR/DK), Porsche 963 #7, 749 laps
DNF. Tandy/Jaminet/Cameron (UK/F/USA), Porsche 963 #6, 700 laps

GTD-Pro class:
1. MacNeil/Juncadella/Gounon/Engel (USA/E/B/D), Mercedes AMG GT3 #79, 729 laps
2. Garcia/Taylor/Milner (E/USA/USA), Corvette C8.R GTD #3, 729 laps
3. Hawksworth/Barnicoat/Conway (UK/UK/UK), Lexus RC-F GT3 #14, 729 laps
5. Bachler/Pilet/Vanthoor (A/F/B), Porsche 911 GT3 R #9, 728 laps
6. Kvamme/Estep/Magnussen/Hart /USA/USA/DK/USA), Porsche 911 GT3 R #53, 717 laps

GTD class:
1. De Angelis/Sörensen/James/Turner (CDN/DK/USA/UK), Aston Martin Vantage GT3 #27, 729 laps
2. Potter/Lally/Pumpelly/Thiim (USA/USA/USA/DK), Aston Martin Vantage GT3 #44, 729 laps
3. Iribe/Schandorff/Millroy/Kirchhöfer (USA/DK/UK/CH), McLaren 720S GT3 #70, 729 laps
9. Hardwick/Heylen/Robichon/Olsen (USA/B/CDN/N), Porsche 911 GT3 R #16, 723 laps
11. Brynjolfsson/Hindman/Root/Estre (USA/USA/USA/F), Porsche 911 GT3 R #77, 719 laps
14. Hyett/Jeannette/Priaulx/Tincknell (USA/USA/UK/UK), Porsche 911 GT3 R #80, 710 laps
16. Metni/van Berlo/Evans/Andlauer (USA/NL/NZ/F), Porsche 911 GT3 R #91, 699 laps
DNF. Brule/Udell/Davis/Bleekemolen (USA/USA/USA/NL), Porsche 911 GT3 R #92, 278 laps

Interim Report 2

The two Porsche 963 fielded by the Porsche Penske Motorsport works team head into the final phase of the Daytona 24-hour race with mixed prospects. During the night, the No. 6 car at times led the field, only to lose ground in the early morning hours. After sunrise, the vehicle is running three laps behind the leading group. After a battery change on Saturday evening, the sister car is 18 laps down on the leader. In the two GTD classes, the customer teams are struggling with the poor BoP classification of the new Porsche 911 GT3 R.

After the start, Felipe Nasr from Brazil quickly settled into the leading pack at the wheel of the No. 7 Porsche 963. The car, which the ex-Formula 1 driver shares with his works driver teammates Matt Campbell (Australia) and Michael Christensen (Denmark), lost significant ground at 7 pm local time. The Porsche Penske Motorsport crew had to replace the high-voltage battery on the new hybrid prototype, which took just 35 minutes. Nevertheless, the No. 7 car lost 20 laps to the leader and all chances of victory at the season-opening round of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship. As the sun

rose, the gap of the GTP car in eighth place was reduced to 18 laps.

At the wheel of the No. 6 sister car, Nick Tandy made good progress in the early phase. After tackling the race from P9, the British racer loomed large in Nasr's rear-view mirror as fourth in his class after just 15 minutes. Thanks to clever tactics and spirited drives from Tandy and his teammates Mathieu Jaminet from France and Dane Cameron from the USA, the No. 6 entry at times led the field during the night – only to suffer a setback. Tandy spun while lapping a rival in Turn 5 and damaged the car. The repairs cost three laps. At daybreak in Daytona, the hybrid prototype lies in sixth place.

"Having to replace the battery was unfortunate, but it solved the problem with our No. 7," reports Urs Kuratle, Director Factory Motorsport LMDh. "The performance is good. The Acura is certainly the fastest car in the field, but I see our Porsche 963 right behind it. Unfortunately, we and BMW suffered the most damage, Cadillac and Acura had significantly less. Nick Tandy's spin was also a shame. All in all, we lost too much time in the pits and the garage. We're hoping for the odd yellow phase so that we can at least make up some ground. We have to hope for a small miracle."

US debut for the new Porsche 911 GT3 R under difficult conditions

In the two GT classes, a total of seven new Porsche 911 GT3 R (Gen. 992) fielded by five customer teams contest the endurance classic. However, due to less than optimal Balance of Performance (BoP) ratings from the governing body, the nine-elevens tackling the fiercely competitive GTD-Pro and GTD classes have no prospect of major success.

"I'm very proud of the great job we're doing with our teams and drivers," states Sebastian Golz, with six hours remaining on the clock. The Porsche 911 GT3 R Project Manager adds: "Compared to the leaders, we're missing an average of two seconds per lap. Our only chance is to get through the race without any mistakes and take as many championship points as possible into the rest of the season."

With five hours of racing remaining, the No. 9 car campaigned by Pfaff Motorsports currently ranks fifth in the GTD-Pro class. In the GTD class, the No. 16 entry from Wright Motorsports is the best-placed Porsche 911 GT3 R on P12.

The 24 Hours of Daytona gets the chequered flag on Sunday at 1:40 pm local time (7:40 pm CET).

Drivers' comments about the race so far

Mathieu Jaminet (Porsche 963 #6): "The start of the race was action-packed. We managed to push to the front and everything was going well. But then Nick spun. I don't know if it was his fault or not – it's irrelevant. We lost a lot of ground. I drove three stints until sunrise. It was difficult to get the tyres over that distance. Our prospects aren't hopeless but we certainly could do with some caution phases to make up laps. We need luck and more performance for the rest of the race. We'll do our very best."

Interim Report 1

The official racing debut of the new Porsche 963 began on Saturday afternoon at Daytona International Speedway as the 2023 IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship began with the annual 24 Hours of Daytona. The two cars from Porsche Penske Motorsport started second and ninth in the new GTP class.

In front of a historic crowd, the 2023 IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship took the green on Saturday afternoon, along with the debut of Porsche Penske Motorsport, the Porsche 963 and the all-new GTP class in the 61st running of the 24 Hours of Daytona.

Nick Tandy was behind the wheel of the No. 6 for the opening stint of the 24-hour event, while Felipe Nasr drove the No. 7 during the first two hours of the event. Tandy was able to drive from ninth to third, showing strong pace in his 963.

“The race began really well,“ said Tandy. “For starting at the back of the field after not putting up a lap in qualifying, the car was handling really nice and gave me confidence. We made up some places and it was fun to battle with the other GTP cars. We found some areas of the race track where some cars are good and others not so much. It is really quite interesting. It was a clean, trouble-free run. We are in the race after a couple of hours. I am happy so far.”

Nasr raced in the top three for the first hour, but fell victim to a couple of technical issues that dropped him to the back of the GTP field. First, the No. 7 Porsche 963 lost power steering on the Daytona highbanks, which was quickly fixed with in-car adjustments. Then, Nasr lost rear drive, but got the car refired without losing a lap.

“The first stint was good. Pace was good and I was able to keep up with the leaders,” said Nasr. “With the tires we had, we were able to keep up with the leaders. Then we started to deal with some system issues, especially with the power steering and some hybrid issues. I had to be very patient to restart the system and get the car going again. Those were some issues we didn't hope for, but we made some changes on the mode switches that helped fix it. The car seems to be running ok now. It's a long race, and there is enough time to recover from that. The speed of the car is there, we just have to run trouble free.”

The 24 Hours of Daytona continues throughout the night, with it finishing up on Sunday afternoon at 1:40 pm ET (19:40 CET).

Qualifying

The two Porsche 963 fielded by the Porsche Penske Motorsport factory squad have wrapped up their first qualifying session in the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship with varying degrees of

success. In the GTD classes, the seven Porsche 911 GT3 R secured only mediocre grid positions.

Felipe Nasr from Brazil planted Porsche Penske Motorsport's No. 7 car on P2 – a mere 0.083 seconds off pole position. His brand colleague Nick Tandy, however, was hampered by bad luck in the No. 6 car. On the way to setting pole, the UK driver lost the rear of his 963 while braking for the Bus Stop chicane and hit the tyre wall. In the GTD classes, the seven Porsche 911 GT3 R secured only mediocre grid positions.

At the start of the 20-minute GTP qualifying, Tandy and Nasr initially waited in the pits with their two Porsche 963. After about seven minutes, the two hybrid vehicles headed out onto the 5.73-kilometre racetrack to chase top times. Both Porsche works drivers put in a strong drive and quickly positioned themselves among the frontrunners. On lap four, Tandy pulled out all stops: the outright Le Mans winner of 2015 set top times in the first two sectors and was on course for pole position – only to lose the rear of his Porsche 963 when braking for the last chicane. The vehicle shot over the grass and crashed into the tyre barrier. Despite damage to the front of the car, Tandy managed to drive slowly back to the pits – however, the stewards had already red-flagged the session. The IMSA regulations clearly state that the driver who caused a red flag in qualifying has their two fastest lap times voided. As a result, the No. 6 car will take up the race from the back of the GTP field.

When the qualifying session finally went green for the remaining two and a half minutes, Nasr again launched a blistering attack in the No. 7 car. With mere seconds left on the clock, the Brazilian catapulted his 963 to the front of the field, only to be pipped to pole by the No. 60 Acura in a last-ditch effort. The qualifying on Saturday marks the conclusion of the so-called "Roar" at Daytona. As part of the three-day test event, Porsche's two new hybrid prototypes covered a total of 1,541 kilometres in preparation for the season-opening round this coming Saturday and Sunday. Tandy shares the cockpit of the No. 6 Porsche 963 with his works driver teammates Mathieu Jaminet from France and Dane Cameron from the USA. Nasr drives the sister car with the Australian Matt Campbell and Michael Christensen from Denmark.

"Congratulations to Acura on securing the first pole position in the new GTP era," says Urs Kuratle, Director Factory Motorsport LMDh. "We're pleased with our qualifying result because we've clearly underlined that we're up with the play. When the session restarted towards the end, we didn't have enough time to get the tyres back up to the optimum temperature. Nick's accident is a pity for the crew of the No. 6 car but it's by no means an indication of how the race will pan out. 24 hours is a long time and a lot can happen – and we're part of the action!"

New Porsche 911 GT3 R qualifies among the backmarkers

In the GTD-Pro class, the new Porsche 911 GT3 R (Gen. 992) concluded its qualifying debut in eighth place. Works driver Laurens Vanthoor from Belgium turned seven qualifying laps and improved significantly over the course of the session. However, the vehicle fielded by the defending champions Pfaff Motorsports was unable to join the fight for pole position. In the GTD category, the six new

identical 415 kW (565 PS) GT3 vehicles from Weissach also struggled. Jan Heylen (Belgium) and factory driver Kévin Estre from France planted the two cars from Wright Motorsports on positions 14 and 18. Both cars fielded by Kelly-Moss with Riley take up the race from P19 and P20 of the GTD field. Lining up on the grid behind them are the vehicles from MDK Motorsports (P21) and AO Racing (P23).

“Our cars haven't been able to match the pace of the competition since the Roar began,” explains Sebastian Golz, Project Manager Porsche 911 GT3 R. “On the one hand, the Balance of Performance process is based on basic data such as the vehicle's weight, engine output and aerodynamics, which help determine the initial classification. On the other hand, what is taken into account is the data collected out on the circuit under comparable track and weather conditions. The organiser receives the data when the qualifying session is over so that the adjustment of the BoP process can begin. We work closely with the organisers and look forward to a balanced field for the race.” At the three-day “Roar Before the 24” in Daytona, the seven new Porsche 911 GT3 R turned 829 laps and covered a distance of 4,733 kilometres.

The 24 Hours of Daytona race weekend begins this Thursday, 26 January, with three practice sessions. The 61st running of the endurance classic in Florida gets underway on Saturday, 28 January, at 1:40 pm local time (7:40 pm CET).

Qualifying result

GTP class:
1. Blomqvist/Braun/Castroneves/Pagenaud (UK/USA/BR/F), Acura ARX-06 #60, 1:34.031 minutes
2. Campbell/Nasr/Christensen (AUS/BR/DK), Porsche 963 #7, 1:34.114 minutes
3. Taylor/Albuquerque/Deletraz/Hartley (USA/P/F/NZ), Acura ARX-06 #10, 1:34.198 minutes
9. Tandy/Jaminet/Cameron (UK/F/USA), Porsche 963 #6, no lap time

GTD-Pro class:
1. MacNeil/Juncadella/Gounon/Engel (USA/E/B/D), Mercedes AMG GT3 79, 1:46.784 minutes
2. Gunn/Riberas/Pittard (UK/E/UK), Aston Martin Vantage GT3 #23, 1:46.825 minutes
3. Hawksworth/Barnicoat/Conway (UK/UK/UK), Lexus RC-F GT3 #14, 1:46.923 minutes
8. Bachler/Pilet/Vanthoor (A/F/B), Porsche 911 GT3 R #9, 1:48.977 minutes

GTD class:
1. Ward/Ellis/Dontje/Auer (USA/D/NL/A), Mercedes AMG GT3 #57, 1:46.093 minutes
2. Schiller/Jefferies/Habul (D/UK/USA), Mercedes AMG GT3 #75, 1:46.312 minutes
3. Skeen/Grenier/Koch/Götz (USA/CDN/USA/D), Mercedes AMG GT3 #32, 1:46.705 minutes
14. Hardwick/Heylen/Robichon/Olsen (USA/B/CDN/N), Porsche 911 GT3 R #16, 1:48.942 minutes
18. Brynjolfsson/Hindman/Root/Estre (USA/USA/USA/F), Porsche 911 GT3 R #77, 1:49.358 minutes
19. Brule/Udell/Davis/Bleekemolen (USA/USA/USA/NL), Porsche 911 GT3 R #92, 1:49.373 minutes
20. Metni/van Berlo/Evans/Andlauer (USA/NL/NZ/F), Porsche 911 GT3 R #91, 1:49.507 minutes

21. Hyett/Jeannette/Priaulx/Tincknell (USA/USA/UK/UK), Porsche 911 GT3 R #80, 1:49.644 minutes
23. Kvamme/Estep/Magnussen/Hart (USA/USA/DK/USA), Porsche 911 GT3 R #53, 1:50.628 minutes

Full results at: http://imsa.alkamelsystems.com.

Drivers' comments after the qualifying

Nick Tandy (Porsche 963 #6): "First of all, I want to thank the team for putting a great car on the track for me today. The new Porsche 963 has never felt so good under such conditions with an open track and the proviso to go max attack. It was simply outstanding! I was on track to set a new personal best, I only had to get through the chicane – but it didn't work out. The left front wheel locked up under braking and I ended up in the dirt off the racing line. I tried to salvage the car before the second kerb but the rear kicked out. I lost control. Luckily the damage isn't too bad. I'll focus on the positives: the teamwork has been great over the last few days and the car is simply stunning. The 963 is a lot of fun to drive."

Felipe Nasr (Porsche 963 #7): "I'm happy with my fastest lap. It's incredible how much progress we've made over the weekend. We've now got a better understanding of the quirks of the car and the new tyres. Ultimately, our focus is now on the race and the preparation for it. Pole position would've been nice but we're looking at the big picture – which is the race this coming weekend."

Mathieu Jaminet (Porsche 963 #6): "We initially had some tricky issues to solve at the start of the Roar but our team worked on them systematically from session to session. As a result, we've made great progress in terms of vehicle balance and performance, which is the most important thing for a 24-hour race. I'm looking forward to the start of the season."

Laurens Vanthoor (Porsche 911 GT3 R #9): "We have a new car. And this version of the 911 GT3 R is also new for the IMSA management. So there's a lot to learn for all parties – also in terms of the classification. At the moment it's obvious that all of the GT3 Porsche are too slow. I gave it my best shot in qualifying – I can't do more. I have complete confidence in everyone involved that things will go in the right direction for the race."

Roar Before the 24

With a total of 61 cars on hand, including nine cars in the newly formed GTP class for LMDh cars, both Porsche Penske Motorsport 963s put their cars through the paces, showing good speed throughout the first day of testing.

The much anticipated debut of the Porsche 963 in competition was off to a roaring start on Friday

afternoon and evening, with both Porsche Penske Motorsport cars timing in in the top-five during the first day of practice at the Roar Before the 24 at Daytona International Speedway.

Both the No. 6 and No. 7 Porsche Penske Motorsport 963s began the day timing in the top-five in the first practice session, with Felipe Nasr (Brazil) turning in the second-fastest lap in the session, completing 24 laps in the No. 7. Mathieu Jaminet (France) was fifth on the speed charts after turning 20 laps in the No. 6.

The first day in running at the Roar

„Our first day in running at the Roar in preparation for the 24 Hours of Daytona was good. Days like today is why we are glad we are here for almost two week sometimes," said Jonathan Diuguid, Porsche Penske Motorsport Managing Director. „Both cars ran in both sessions, maybe not as smoothly as we would have liked them to, but the drivers are pretty happy with the speed and performance there. We have a few things we need to continue working on, but it was a good start here at Daytona."

During the evening session, the No. 6 experienced suspension issues, forcing the car to spend most of the session in the garage area and only completing just nine laps. Michael Christensen, driving the No. 7, was the fourth-fastest car on track after running 35 laps in the session.

The Roar Before the 24 continues on Saturday afternoon with three more practice sessions before Sunday's qualifying sessions.

Preview

After almost twelve months of preparation with the new hybrid 963 prototype, things are about to get serious for Porsche Penske Motorsport: On 20 January, the 2023 IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship season kicks off with the so-called "ROAR Before the 24". This three-day test at the Daytona International Speedway in the US state of Florida is used to set up the cars and to qualify for the 24-hour race. The endurance classic will be held from 28 to 29 January at the same venue. The new Porsche 911 GT3 R will also be showcased on an international stage at this event. Seven of the GT3 vehicles, based on the 992 generation of the 911, will tackle the American endurance classic.

After more than 30,000 test kilometres, the two Porsche 963 tackle their first race in the new GTP class of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship on the last weekend in January. As stated in the regulations, the new hybrid prototypes will fight for overall victory at the long-distance classic in Florida. At the World Center of Racing, the ca. 500 kW (680 PS) Porsche 963 will go up against rival vehicles from BMW, Cadillac and Acura. The newly developed Porsche 911 GT3 R also celebrates its race premiere. Five customer teams field a total of seven up to 416 kW (565 PS) GT3 racers in the GTD Pro and GTD categories.

“We’re very much looking forward to the Daytona season opener,” exclaims Thomas Laudenbach, Vice President Porsche Motorsport. “With the new Porsche 963, we’re finally back fighting for overall victories in the world’s biggest endurance events. Our Porsche Penske Motorsport squad and our drivers and specialists from the Weissach Development Centre have done absolutely everything to develop the 963 into a fast and reliable prototype. We’re curious to see how the competition will perform at Daytona, not only in the new top GTP class but also in the GTD categories with the new Porsche 911 GT3 R.”

The new Porsche 963 turned its first laps in January 2022 on Porsche’s test area in Weissach. The prototype then covered more than 30,000 kilometres on racetracks in Europe and North America. “We learned a lot from these tests and we experienced ups and downs in the process,” recalls Urs Kuratle. The Director Factory Motorsport LMDh adds: “We set ourselves the goal of reaching the 30,000-kilometre mark in the tests and we achieved this. We’ll use the ‘Roar’ at Daytona to continue tweaking the car as perfectly as possible for the race. We’ve worked hard towards putting ourselves in the best possible position for the start of the IMSA season.”

“Porsche Motorsport, the Penske team, Multimatic, Michelin and other partners have spent almost two years in a development phase,” says Jonathan Diuguid, Managing Director Porsche Penske Motorsport. “We’ve all pulled together to get the Porsche 963 as optimally prepared as possible for the upcoming challenge. We’ll go up against our rivals for the first time at the 24 Hours of Daytona. Before the lights turn green on race day Saturday, it’s difficult to predict how the scenario will unfold. We’ve done all we can to get the season off to a promising start. We’ll receive support at Daytona from our Porsche colleagues in the FIA World Endurance Championship WEC as well as our digital links to the Porsche Development Centre in Weissach and our European base in Mannheim.”

Seven new Porsche 911 GT3 R contest the GTD Pro and GTD classes

The new Porsche 911 GT3 R has completed around 24,000 test kilometres and three trial runs. As part of the test programme, in autumn 2022, the systematically modified GT3 vehicle from Weissach took part in three rounds of the Nürburgring Endurance Series (NLS), where it underlined its potential. “We’re facing a huge challenge. Our new GT3 racer contests its first official race on the big international stage at Daytona,” outlines Sebastian Golz, Project Manager Porsche 911 GT3 R, ahead of the opening round of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship. “An average speed of more than 190 km/h in the race as well as the unique track characteristics with its steeply banked turns put huge stresses on the cars at the very first race of the year. We’re very much looking forward to tackling this challenge with seven Porsche 911 GT3 R fielded by five strong partner teams.”

The race

The Daytona International Speedway in Florida, which opened in 1959, distinguishes itself from other tracks most notably by its steeply banked turns. The slope incline reaches up to 31 degrees in the oval

passages of the 5.73-kilometre racetrack. This requires a special vehicle setup. Porsche is by far the most successful manufacturer at Daytona. The Stuttgart automobile manufacturer has achieved 18 overall wins as a constructor and four as an engine partner, with a further 80 class wins rounding off this success record. The classic event has been contested on the combination of the tri-oval and the infield road course since 1966. For the 2023 season, the North American racing series features a changed class structure: The Porsche 963 contests the new top GTP category, with the 911 GT3 R competing in the GTD Pro and GTD classes. In addition, vehicles will also tackle the LMP2 and LMP3 categories.

The 24 Hours of Daytona also marks the start of the IMSA Michelin Endurance Cup. This long-distance classification awards points for the best-placed vehicles after six, twelve and 18 hours as well as when crossing the finish line. In addition to the season-opening round in Florida, the championship includes the 12 Hours of Sebring, the 6-hour race at Watkins Glen and the so-called “Petit Le Mans”. The IMSA season wraps up in mid-October with this ten-hour race on the Road Atlanta circuit.

The Porsche drivers and teams

Six works drivers share the cockpits of the two Porsche 963 fielded by the new Porsche Penske Motorsport team in the GTP class. Nick Tandy from England and Mathieu Jaminet from France are the regular drivers in the No. 6 car. The two seasoned professionals receive reinforcement at the endurance event in Daytona from the American Dane Cameron. Sharing driving duties in the No. 7 car for the 2023 season are Australia's Matt Campbell and Felipe Nasr from Brazil. Michael Christensen from Denmark supports the duo at the 24-hour race.

In the GTD Pro class, the defending champions from Pfaff Motorsports put their trust in an experienced line-up from the extended Porsche driver squad. Austria's Klaus Bachler contests the whole season as a regular driver with Frenchman Patrick Pilet. At Daytona, works driver Laurens Vanthoor from Belgium joins the crew in the No. 9 Porsche 911 GT3 R. In the GTD category, last year's winners from Wright Motorsports (No. 16) rely on Ryan Hardwick from the USA, Jan Heylen from Belgium, Zacharie Robichon from Canada and the Norwegian Porsche contract driver Dennis Olsen.

The French works driver Kévin Estre, among others, helms the second 911 (No. 77) fielded by the customer team from the US state of Ohio. The squad from Kelly-Moss with Riley celebrates its debut in the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship with two more Porsche 911 GT3 R. The successful team from the Porsche Carrera Cup North America has signed on Julien Andlauer from France, New Zealander Jaxon Evans, the experienced Dutch racer Jeroen Bleekemolen and his young compatriot Kay van Berlo. MDK Motorsports has a particularly prominent line-up for its GT3 racing car: Formula 1 driver Kevin Magnussen from Denmark shares the No. 53 cockpit with his father Jan and the Americans Mark Kvamme and Trenton Estep. AO Racing's entry is manned by British drivers Harry Tincknell and Sebastian Priaulx, among others.

An overview of the drivers and teams

GTP Class (Porsche 963):
#6 Porsche Penske Motorsport – Dane Cameron (USA) / Mathieu Jaminet (F) / Nick Tandy (UK)
#7 Porsche Penske Motorsport – Matt Campbell (AUS) / Michael Christensen (DK) / Felipe Nasr (BR)

GTD Pro Class (Porsche 911 GT3 R):
#9 Pfaff Motorsports – Klaus Bachler (A) / Patrick Pilet (F) / Laurens Vanthoor (B)

GTD Class (Porsche 911 GT3 R):
#16 Wright Motorsports – Ryan Hardwick (USA) / Jan Heylen (B) / Dennis Olsen (N) / Zacharie Robichon (CDN)
#53 MDK Motorsports – Trenton Estep (USA) / Mark Kvamme (USA) / Jan Magnussen (DK) / Kevin Magnussen (DK)
#77 Wright Motorsports – Alan Brynjolfsson (USA) / Kévin Estre (F) / Trent Hindman (USA) / Max Root (USA)
#80 AO Racing – PJ Hyett (USA) / Gunnar Jeannette (USA) / Sebastian Priaulx (UK) / Harry Tincknell (UK)
#91 Kelly Moss with Riley – Julien Andlauer (F) / Kay van Berlo (NL) / Jaxon Evans (NZ) / Alan Metni (USA)
#92 Kelly Moss with Riley – Jeroen Bleekemolen (NL) / David Brule (USA) / Andrew Davis (USA) / Alec Udel (USA)

The schedule (local time, CET -6 hours)

Friday, 20 January
11:00 am to 12:30 pm: Test session 1
4:15 pm to 6:00 pm: Test session 2

Saturday, 21 January
11:15 am to 12:45 pm: Test session 3
3:10 pm to 4:10 pm: Test session 4
6:30 pm to 8:30 pm: Test session 5

Sunday, 22 January
1:25 pm to 1:40 pm: Qualifying GTD-Pro/GTD
2:40 pm to 3:00 pm: Qualifying GTP

Thursday, 26 January
11:05 am to 12:35 pm: Free practice 1
3:20 pm to 5:05 pm: Free practice 2

7:15 pm to 9:00 pm: Free practice 3

Friday, 27 January
11:20 am to 12:20 pm: Free practice 4
6:25 pm to 6:45 pm: Free practice 5 (only GTP class)

Saturday, 28 January
1:40 pm: Start 24-hour race

Sunday, 29 January
1:40 pm: Chequered flag 24-hour race

Porsche's overall wins at the 24 Hours of Daytona

1968 – Elford/Neerpasch/Stommelen/Herrmann/Siffert – Porsche 907 LH
1970 – Rodríguez/Kinnunen/Redman – Porsche 917 K
1971 – Rodríguez/Oliver – Porsche 917 K
1973 – Gregg/Haywood – Porsche Carrera RSR
1975 – Gregg/Haywood – Porsche Carrera RSR
1977 – Graves/Haywood/Helmick – Porsche Carrera RSR
1978 – Gregg/Hezemans/Stommelen – Porsche 935
1979 – Field/Haywood/Ongais – Porsche 935
1980 – Merl/Joest/Stommelen – Porsche 935
1981 – Rahal/Garretson/Redman – Porsche 935
1982 – Paul Sr./Paul Jr./Stommelen – Porsche 935
1983 – Foyt/Ballot-Léna/Wollek/Henn – Porsche 935
1985 – Foyt/Unser/Wollek/Boutsen – Porsche 962
1986 – Holbert/Bell/Unser – Porsche 962
1987 – Holbert/Bell/Unser/Robinson – Porsche 962
1989 – Andretti/Bell/Wollek – Porsche 962
1991 – Jelinski/Haywood/Wollek/Pescarolo/Krages – Porsche 962
2003 – Buckler/Schrom/Bernhard/Bergmeister – Porsche 911 GT3 RS

Driver comments before the race

Nick Tandy (Porsche 963 #6): "After months of anticipation, we can finally get going now with the GTP class and the Porsche 963. We'll encounter an enormous grid line-up with all kinds of vehicles, so I expect there'll be huge international interest in this event. We're well prepared. In the search for performance and stability, our crew considered and worked on everything down to the tiniest detail. It's my first time fighting for overall victory at Daytona. I'm ready!"

Mathieu Jaminet (Porsche 963 #6): "Like us drivers, our entire squad and the development team have invested countless hours in developing the new Porsche 963. We're heading to the first race full of anticipation and respect. We don't yet know exactly what's in store for us. We'd like to reach the finish line with as few incidents as possible. If we manage this, we'll be ahead of the game, earn a lot of points and maybe big trophies."

Matt Campbell (Porsche 963 #7): "We've put so much work and effort into developing the Porsche 963 over the past months to get it ready to race. The new era in endurance racing has finally arrived. For me, the step into hybrid prototypes also marks the start of a new chapter. I can hardly wait to climb into the car and fight for overall victories."

Felipe Nasr (Porsche 963 #7): "We're racing at last! I can't think of a better event to launch the new era of endurance racing than the 24 Hours of Daytona. This is the first time the new prototypes will fight for overall victory in the GTP class in what will hopefully be a close and fiercely-fought competition. Personally, it'll be a truly thrilling moment when I turn the first race laps in our car. Matt, Michael and I will do everything within our power to quickly turn the Porsche 963 into a winner."

Klaus Bachler (Porsche 911 GT3 R #9):"The new season in North America kicks off with a classic. This race is a very special highlight for me: it's my first full season in the IMSA series and it'll be the first big race outing for our new Porsche 911 GT3 R. I'm delighted that after many successful tests, we're now going racing. We're well prepared for the big task ahead."

Laurens Vanthoor (Porsche 911 GT3 R #9):"I love racing in the USA and Daytona is one of my favourite racetracks. The classic event there is the only major 24-hour race in GT sport that I haven't yet won. Last year I fought for class victory at Daytona against the Pfaff car and was narrowly beaten in the final minutes. This year I want to win with Pfaff at the wheel its new Porsche 911 GT3 R."

Dennis Olsen (Porsche 911 GT3 R #16):"Last year's event was a gripping battle to the very last lap. That duel for class victory between the two Porsche 911 GT3 R is still a hit on social media today – simply epic! I'm competing for Wright Motorsports with Ryan, Zacharie and Jan this season. We have a strong team but we're up against many strong rivals. Wright Motorsports won its class in 2022. We want to repeat that."

Kevin Magnussen (Porsche 911 GT3 R #53):"I watched my father race at Daytona for many years and now we're tackling the race in a team together – that means a lot to me. I've contested the event for the last two years so I know it well. Now I have this wonderful opportunity in the Porsche of MDK Motorsports. After contesting Le Mans as a father-son team, this is now our second major 24-hour race together. It's going to be awesome!"

Kévin Estre (Porsche 911 GT3 R #77):"I don't know the Wright Motorsports team and my teammates that well at this stage so we'll have some work to do at the 'Roar' pre-event test. I haven't yet spent much time in the new 911 GT3 R but I firmly believe that my teammates and the engineers in Weissach have put a great car on the track. We want to reach the flag without making any mistakes and finish at

the front of the GTD class."

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Video

https://newstv.porsche.com/porschevideos/233684_en_3000000.mp4

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