

Porsche GT Team defends championship lead with podium result

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05/08/2019 The Porsche GT Team continues its series of podium results at round eight of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship: Laurens Vanthoor and Earl Bamber achieved third place after an immaculate drive in their Porsche 911 RSR at the Road America racetrack and thus have extended their lead in the drivers' championship even further.

In the race over two hours and 40 minutes, Patrick Pilet (France) and Nick Tandy (Great Britain) scored seventh place in the No. 911 sister car. In the manufacturers' classification, Porsche still holds a convincing lead. In the GTD class, Porsche Young Professional Matt Campbell (Australia) and his teammate Zacharie Robichon (Canada) brought home victory in the Porsche 911 GT3 R fielded by Pfaff Motorsports.

The race took off at midday in temperatures of around 25 degrees Celsius and sunshine. As the start

drivers, Vanthoor headed into the race from fourth on the grid with Pilet starting from sixth. The event on the 6.515-kilometre circuit in the US state of Wisconsin turned into a strategic gamble. Both vehicles pitted at different times to be prepared for eventual caution phases. Uncharacteristically, there were no yellow phases and the race ended without incident.

The Porsche GT Team managed to continue its impressive streak of podium results: so far this season, at least one of the two Porsche crews has climbed the podium at every round. Scoring third and seventh place at Elkhart Lake as well as with five victories under its belt, the Porsche GT Team has defended its lead in the manufacturers' classification. In the drivers' category, Bamber and Vanthoor have extended their lead by 14 points, with Tandy and Pilet maintaining second.

The race in the GTD class

Pfaff Motorsports claimed victory in the GTD class, in which customer teams field the Porsche 911 GT3 R. Porsche Young Professional Campbell and Robichon put in flawless drives to beat their 14 rivals. Porsche Young Professional Dennis Olsen (Norway), who shared a cockpit with Anthony Imperato (USA), achieved eighth place for Wright Motorsports. Park Place Motorsports got caught up in an accident and subsequently, the Porsche works driver Patrick Long (USA) and Patrick Lindsey took the flag in 15th.

The next round of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship will be held from 23 to 25 August on the Virginia International Raceway.

Comments on the race

Steffen Höllwarth (Programme Manager IMSA SportsCar Championship): "We knew that Road America would be one of the most difficult races of the year for us. So we're very pleased with this podium result. Porsche has managed to defend its lead and Laurens and Earl have extended the gap to their pursuers even further in the drivers' championship. The team now has two weeks off. Then we'll be back in full force in Virginia."

Earl Bamber (Porsche 911 RSR #912): "Third place on this racetrack is a great result for us. We haven't been particularly successful here in recent years. Still, we managed to further expand our lead in the drivers' classification. That was a tremendous effort from the whole team. Pitting as late as possible proved to be the key to success today."

Laurens Vanthoor (Porsche 911 RSR #912): "Road America is not our strongest circuit. We didn't have the pace to win. In this regard, we've achieved the maximum here. We came third on what is allegedly our weakest racetrack and finished in front of our toughest rivals. What's more, we have further extended our lead. That almost feels like a victory."

Patrick Pilet (Porsche 911 RSR #911): "Over the last six years, we've encountered on average four caution phases at this race in Elkhart Lake. For this reason, we had to split the timing of the pit stops to be ready for all eventualities. Unfortunately, our strategy didn't work out. Seventh place is disappointing. We lost several points in the drivers' standings to our teammates at the top, but we're still in second. Now it's time to take a vacation. We'll strike back in Virginia."

Nick Tandy (Porsche 911 RSR #911): "Both of our cars were on different strategies. Unlike our teammates, we pitted early in anticipation of a safety car phase, which never eventuated. I think that must have been the first time we've competed here without a single caution phase."

Matt Campbell (Porsche 911 GT3 R #9): "I'm thrilled about my first win in the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship. That was a really tough win. Zach did a fantastic job and put us in second place during his first stint. After I overtook the Lamborghini and moved into the lead, I had to conserve fuel yet still maintain my advantage. We did it. Our Porsche 911 GT3 R was perfectly setup for the track. Now it's time to celebrate."

Race result

GTLM class
1. Briscoe/Westbrook (AUS/GB), Ford GT, 77 laps
2. Hand/Müller (USA/D), Ford GT, 77 laps
3. Bamber/Vanthoor (NZ/B), Porsche 911 RSR, 77 laps
7. Pilet/Tandy (F/GB), Porsche 911 RSR, 76 laps

GTD class
1. Campbell/Robichon (AUS/CDN), Porsche 911 GT3 R, 75 laps
2. Sellers/Lewis (USA/USA), Lamborghini Huracan GT3, 74 laps
3. Foley/Auberlen (USA/USA), BMW M6 GT3, 74 laps
8. Olsen/Imperato (N/USA), Porsche 911 GT3 R, 74 laps
15. Long/Lindsey (USA/USA), Porsche 911 GT3 R, 52 laps

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

The qualifying

The Porsche GT Team has qualified on positions six and eight for the eighth round of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship at Road America. Due to a thunderstorm sweeping through Elkhart Lake (Wisconsin/USA), Laurens Vanthoor (Belgium) in the No. 912 car and Patrick Pilet (France) in the No. 911 vehicle delayed taking up Saturday's 15-minute qualifying session. Setting a time of 2.01.038 minutes, the driver crew Vanthoor and Earl Bamber (New Zealand) heads into Sunday's race from position six. Pilet lapped the 6.515-kilometre circuit in 2:01.836 minutes. He takes

up the race from the eighth grid spot with his teammate Nick Tandy (Great Britain).

The sun was still shining on the storied racetrack shortly before the start of the qualifying, when suddenly dark clouds gathered overhead, lightning flashed and raindrops began to fall. The predicted thunderstorm, however, passed by the track. The strategy for a slightly damp track that the team had put in place did not play out as expected. The two Porsche 911 RSR will now have to launch a pursuit through the field over 2:40-hour event. So far this season, at least one of the two Porsche crews has climbed the podium, and the Porsche GT Team has notched up five victories from seven races.

The qualifying session for the 15-strong GTD class field was shortened by five minutes due to the weather. In the red-flagged session, the Canadian Zacharie Robichon posted the fourth quickest time at the wheel of the Porsche 911 GT3 R fielded by the Pfaff Motorsports customer team. Anthony Imperato's vehicle campaigned by Wright Motorsports landed on P9. The owner of the Park Place Motorsports squad, Patrick Lindsey, planted his 911 on eleventh place.

Qualifying quotes

Steffen Höllwarth (Programme Manager IMSA SportsCar Championship): "Positions six and eight are certainly not a satisfactory outcome, especially in light of the fact that we were the fastest in all three practice sessions. It was critical to be out there with the right tyre pressure when the track offered the most grip. The others managed this a little better than us today. We're facing a major catch-up job tomorrow."

Laurens Vanthoor (Porsche 911 RSR #912): "My qualifying lap was really good. Our setup was better than in free practice. Although the track was a little damp, I managed to be six-tenths of a second faster than in the previous session. Still, it was only good enough for sixth."

Patrick Pilet (Porsche 911 RSR #911): "That qualifying wasn't easy for us. We went out in slippery conditions just after a short rain shower and therefore adjusted the tyre pressure a little too high. The first lap was fine, but then the tyres got too warm and didn't offer the grip we needed."

Qualifying result

GTLM class

1. Blomqvist/De Phillippi (GB/USA), BMW M8 GTE, 2:00.344 minutes
2. Gavin/Milner (GB/USA), Corvette C7.R, 2:00.663
3. Krohn/Edwards, BMW M8 GTE, 2:00.767
6. Bamber/Vanthoor (NZ/B), Porsche 911 RSR, 2:01.038
8. Pilet/Tandy (F/GB), Porsche 911 RSR, 2:01:836

GTD class

1. Keating/Bleekemolen (USA/NL), Mercedes-AMG GT3, 2:05.250 minutes
2. Sellers/Lewis (USA/USA), Lamborghini Huracan GT3, 2:05.663
3. Holton/Plumb (USA/USA), McLaren 720S GT3, 2:05.723
4. Campbell/Robichon (AUS/CDN), Porsche 911 GT3 R, 2:05,890
9. Olsen/Imperato (N/USA), Porsche 911 GT3 R, 2:06.432
11. Long/Lindsey (USA/USA), Porsche 911 GT3 R, 2:06.886

The preview

The Porsche GT Team heads to the storied Road America racetrack in the US state of Wisconsin this coming weekend (2-4 August) to contest round eight of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship. With five wins and a 24-point lead in the manufacturers' championship, the team is aiming for more podium results with its works drivers in the number 911 car, Patrick Pilet and Nick Tandy, as well as Earl Bamber and Laurens Vanthoor (No. 912). In addition to the factory squad's two Porsche 911 RSR contesting the GTLM class, three customer teams will field three Porsche 911 GT3 R in the GTD class. Aside from Park Place Motorsports und Pfaff Motorsports, Wright Motorsports aims to build on last year's success at Road America. Last year, John Wright's squad won there. As the winners of the previous round at Lime Rock, Pfaff Motorsports also travels to Elkhart Lake feeling confident.

The race

At 6.515-kilometres in length, the Road America racetrack, which was opened in 1955, is the longest track on the IMSA SportsCar Championship calendar. The racetrack is located two hours by car north of Chicago in Elkhart Lake, a town in the US state of Wisconsin with a population of around 1,000. Traditional road races were held here in the fifties. In 2015, Porsche celebrated a one-two victory in the GTLM class at Road America. Last year, Porsche's works driver Patrick Long (USA) and Christina Nielsen (DK) clinched victory in the Porsche 911 GT3 R campaigned by Wright Motorsports.

The Porsche drivers

The winners of the Sebring and Watkins Glen races, Patrick Pilet (France) and Nick Tandy (Great Britain), share the No. 911 Porsche 911 RSR. The pair currently ranks second in the drivers' classification. Their works driver colleagues in the No. 912 sister car, Earl Bamber (New Zealand) and Laurens Vanthoor (Belgium), lead the class after victories at Long Beach, Mid-Ohio and Bowmanville, Canada. In the GTD class, three Porsche 911 GT3 R will compete. The customer team Pfaff Motorsports (No. 9) tackles the race with Porsche Young Professional Matt Campbell (Australia) and Zacharie Robichon from Canada. Porsche works driver Patrick Long (USA) shares the cockpit of the No. 73 vehicle run by Park Place Motorsports with his compatriot Patrick Lindsey. The No. 91 Porsche 911 GT3 R campaigned by Wright Motorsports is shared by Porsche Young Professional Dennis Olsen (Norway) and Anthony Imperato (USA).

The schedule

The race over 2:40 hours takes off on Sunday, 4 August, at 2:35pm local time (9:35pm CEST) and can be viewed live outside the USA and Canada on www.imsa.com.

Comments before the race

Pascal Zurlinden (Director GT Factory Motorsport): "We're all excited about competing at the Road America racetrack. The course is very fast with several blind sections, which makes it really demanding for the drivers. We've haven't had a lot of success there in recent years. However, we'd like to earn as many points as possible and extend our championship lead even more."

Steffen Höllwarth (Programme Manager IMSA SportsCar Championship): "Road America is a real drivers' circuit. That's why everyone likes to race here. The course is one of the more traditional racetracks and the layout has remained unchanged since the fifties. In our setup, we need to find a good compromise between low downforce on the long straights and high downforce in the tight corners. After our mediocre performance last year, we still have a score to settle at this track."

Patrick Pilet (Porsche 911 RSR #911): "I have great memories of Road America. The course is one of my favourites on the IMSA calendar. It's a tricky course for Porsche, but we've enjoyed a strong season so far. I'm really looking forward to the race and I hope we can improve our points balance in the championship."

More comments in the press release (downloads).

This is the IMSA SportsCar Championship

The IMSA SportsCar Championship is a sports car race series that has been contested in the USA and Canada since 2014. The series originated from the merger of the American Le Mans Series and the Grand-Am Series. 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 Porsche 911 RSR runs in the GTLM class, and the Porsche 911 GT3 R contests the GTD class.

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