

Porsche customer teams look for overall IMSA win at VIR

20/08/2024 GT race cars will be the center attraction at the next round of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship: the IMSA Michelin GT Challenge at VIR, August 23 – 24. Porsche customer race teams will contend for overall victory in the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship, the Michelin Pilot Challenge and the VP Racing SportsCar Challenge. With the Porsche 911 GT3 R in the GTD Pro and GTD classes – including the GTD Pro points leading "Roxy" entry of AO Racing – and the Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 RS Clubsport in the two GT4-based race series, Porsche privateers are well placed to add to the brands success at the historic Alton, Virginia race track.

Alton, Virginia. For the first time this season, the GTD Pro and GTD classes will headline an IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship weekend. With no prototype classes in the field, the Michelin GT Challenge at VIR, round eight for the GT3-spec classes, will present the opportunity for three Porsche 911 GT3 R race cars to contend for the overall victory. The two-hour, 40-minute race at VIRginia International Raceway (VIR) features 23 cars spread over the two classes on the 3.27-mile, 17-turn road course in Alton, Virginia. Additionally, the Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 RS Clubsport will provide seven entries – five in Michelin Pilot Challenge and two in the VP Racing SportsCar Challenge

series – the opportunity for overall wins in the GT4-style support races at the historic southern Virginia race track.

“Whenever we get to have our customer teams in the spotlight it is a great opportunity to show Porsche at its best,” said Volker Holzmeyer, President and CEO of Porsche Motorsport North America. “We are at the point in the season where every lap counts. There is a great deal of pressure on the teams and the drivers, but we have been extremely impressed by how AO Racing, High Class Racing with MDK and Wright Motorsports have performed. We will continue to support them with every tool we have from engineering to quick responses from our parts department. These are the days that make champions, and these are championship caliber race teams.”

Spotlight on AO Racing, High Class Racing with MDK, and Wright Motorsports

The entries

Porsche customer teams are entered in both the GTD Pro and GTD classes. While racing identically built Porsche 911 GT3 R race cars, the two are differentiated by driver lineup; GTD Pro allowing full professional driver pairings while GTD uses a Pro-Am style approach. The Porsche 911 GT3 R is designed and built in Weissach, Germany and sold domestically through Porsche Motorsport North America (PMNA).

Unlike most tracks on the IMSA calendar, no driver competing in Sunday’s race in a Porsche has previously won a WeatherTech race or pole position at VIR. That has more to do with opportunity than talent as the Porsche entry list for the weekend is ripe with skilled pilots. In the GTD Pro class, “Roxy”, the fan favorite pink Porsche 911 GT3 R of AO Racing, has a pair of past Porsche Junior Drivers, Julien Andlauer (France) and Laurin Heinrich (Germany), behind the wheel of the No. 77. With three races remaining, the Illinois-based team currently leads the Team point standings in the class while Heinrich stands alone atop the GTD Pro Drivers’ rankings with two race wins this year (WeatherTech Raceway Laguna Seca and Detroit). Porsche leads the Manufacturer category for the class.

Full-season entrant High Class Racing/MDK Motorsports brings the No. 86 to VIR for the first time. The team, experienced in sports car racing but new to the GTD class, has gained on the competition over the course of the season with drivers Anders Fjordbach (Denmark) and Kerong Li (China). Campaigning a partial schedule, Wright Motorsports returns for the final trio of GTD class races. The No. 120 Porsche entered by the Ohio-based race team is in search of its first victory of the season but has two podiums (Sebring and Laguna Seca) to its credit already this year.

won a WeatherTech race or pole position at VIR

The race

The beautiful circuit near the southern border of the state has a long history with Porsche. In fact, a Porsche 550 RS driven by Bob Holbert won its class in the first race held at the track in 1957. Included in the tally of victories for Porsche is the first IMSA sports car race ever held. In 1971, Porsche legend Hurley Haywood (St. Augustine, Florida) and co-driver Peter Gregg celebrated Haywood's return from a tour of duty in Vietnam with a win the GTU class piloting a Porsche 914/6 for Brumos Racing. Porsche holds eleven race wins under IMSA sanction since 2002, including overall wins in 2006 and 2011 with a Porsche-powered Daytona Prototype race cars as well as 2015, 2019 and 2022 in Porsche 911-based race cars. Porsche is second for most wins among manufacturers at VIR.

The support

The Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 RS Clubsport will be the car of choice for customers of the German marque in two of the support events this weekend. In the IMSA Michelin Pilot Challenge, five of the road-car-based mid-engine Porsche sports cars are on the entry list led by the No. 28 RS1 entry of Stevan McAleer (Scotland) and Trent Hindman (Ocean Township, New Jersey). The pairing is fresh off back-to-back wins in the veteran team's black, white and red Porsche. The two-hour race, the Virginia is for Racing Lovers Grand Prix, is scheduled to take the green flag on Saturday, August 24 at 2:15 p.m. ET with coverage on IMSA.tv and the Peacock streaming app.

Two additional Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 RS Clubsport race cars will take part in the twin, 45-minute IMSA VP Racing SportsCar Challenge races to be held on Saturday and Sunday. Race one will take the green flag ahead of the Michelin Pilot Challenge on Saturday, August 24 at 12:20 p.m. ET. Race two will get underway on Sunday, August 25 at 8:40 a.m. ET. Both rounds can be found on IMSA.tv and the Peacock streaming app.

Where to watch

The main event of the weekend, the Michelin GT Challenge at VIR, will air live on USA Network beginning on Sunday, August 25 at 12:00 p.m. EST/9:00 a.m. PST. Flag-to-flag coverage will stream on Peacock while IMSA Radio will have the full race as well as post-race highlights live on IMSA.com, RadioLeMans.com and on Sirius XM channel 206 (Web/App channel 996).

Upcoming

These entries will join the GTP class – including the quartet of Porsche 963 hybrid prototypes – at the

final two rounds of the 2024 championship season. Up next is the first six hour of back-to-back endurance rounds when the full slate of cars returns to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway for the Battle on the Bricks, September 19 – 22. The season will close at Michelin Raceway Road Atlanta's 27th running of Petit Le Mans, October 10 – 12.

Driver quotes

Laurin Heinrich, Driver, No. 77 AO Racing Porsche 911 GT3 R:
"Heading to the last important part of the season, three races to go, as the championship leader you can feel the tension is rising but it is something great. In the end, it pushes us to perform even better. For me personally, doing my very first laps around Virginia is something really special. It is a track I have been driving on the simulator for years now. Going through the esses, down the hill, around the Oak Tree Corner for the first time in real life is going to be something really cool. It should be a track that suits us better than the previous ones. Being a GT only round, it is a bit of different dynamic. With no prototypes, it is a bit more of a sprint style. On a track like VIR, we will see some good racing. I am looking forward to it."

Adam Adelson, Driver, No. 120 Wright Motorsports Porsche 911 GT3 R:
"I'm super excited to be racing at VIR for the second time this year. It's my favorite track. I've always looked up to these IMSA weekends there. The weekends where they really put the GT cars on a pedestal… up where they deserve to be. These are such amazing vehicles. To be in the top-class racing at VIR is a dream come true to me."

Elliott Skeer, Driver, No. 120 Wright Motorsports Porsche 911 GT3 R:
"There is nothing better than GT racing in North America. To do it at a place like VIR truly represents old school GT racing at its finest. It is definitely going to be an incredible event. Having raced SRO there recently really makes me feel prepped and ready to go for what the IMSA WeatherTech fight can be. Definitely everything in my life is leading up to try to win an IMSA event and I can't think of a better one to try and get it at than VIR!"

An overview of the drivers and teams

GTD-Pro class (Porsche 911 GT3 R):
AO Racing No. 77: Laurin Heinrich (Germany) / Sebastian Priaulx (United Kingdom)

GTD class (Porsche 911 GT3 R):
High Class Racing / MDK Motorsports (No. 86); Anders Fjordbach (Denmark) / Kerong Li (China)
Wright Motorsports (No. 120); Adam Adelson (Los Angeles, California) / Elliott Skeer (San Diego, California)

The schedule (local time, EST)

Friday, August 23:
2:30 – 4:00 p.m. – Free practice 1

Saturday, August 24:
10:15 – 12:00 p.m. – Free practice 2
4:50 – 5:05 p.m. – Qualifying: GTD Pro / GTD

Sunday, June 23:
12:10 p.m. – 2:50 p.m. – Race: Two Hours, 40 minutes

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Image Sublines

Path: media/Images/img_1.jpg
Title: Preview, IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship, Race 8, Alton, Virginia
Subline: Brumos Racing Porsche 914_6 on the way to the race win at IMSAs first event

Path: media/Images/img_2.jpg
Title: Preview, IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship, Race 8, Alton, Virginia
Subline: Hurley Haywood and Peter Gregg celebrate the 1971 VIR class win

Path: media/Images/img_3.jpg
Title: Preview, IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship, Race 8, Alton, Virginia
Subline: The No 77 Porsche 911 GT3 R known as Roxy will seek an overall victory at VIR for AO Racing

Path: media/Images/img_4.jpg
Title: Preview, IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship, Race 8, Alton, Virginia
Subline: Adam Adelson and Elliott Skeer have two 2024 podium finishes but seeks it first GTD class win in the Porsche 911 GT3 R

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