

Porsche Coanda works driver Joshua Rogers defends series lead

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13/03/2023 Round three of the new ESL_R1 sim racing series threw challenges at the Porsche Coanda Esports Racing works team. Factory drivers Mack Bakkum and Joshua Rogers achieved positions eight and twelve in the final race at the Nürburgring. With this result, Rogers managed to hold on to his lead in the driver's classification.

After the two offline races in Katowice, Poland including a victory on the virtual Grand Prix circuit of Hockenheim, Joshua Rogers started the Eifel racetrack as the championship leader. In qualifying for his quarter-final race on Friday, the Australian laid the foundation for moving ahead as the second fastest and went on to take the flag in second place. Mack Bakkum clinched fourth in the quarter-final, which saw him advance into the semi-final, too.

In the semi-final, the two Porsche works drivers went up against each other. In qualifying, the

Dutchman turned the fifth fastest lap, with his teammate lining up alongside him on the third grid row. From the very first metres, a gripping wheel-to-wheel battle unfolded for the final ticket to the finale between the Australian and Maximilian Benecke from the MOUZ team. Points leader Rogers withstood the pressure from the German and defended his sixth place behind Bakkum. As a result, both Porsche 911 GT3 R made it into the heat of the final twelve.

There, Bakkum qualified eighth, with Rogers taking up the decisive eight-lap race from tenth place. However, he was handed a drive-through penalty due to a jump-start, which relegated him to the back of the field. His Dutch teammate succeeded in defending his position and crossed the finish line in eighth place.

For the other two Porsche Coanda Esports drivers, it was all over after the quarter-finals on Friday. After a close duel with the Dutchman Bono Huis (Mercedes AMG Esports) and the Norwegian Tommy Östgaard (Heroic), Dayne Warren finished only ninth. Mitchell deJong also narrowly missed out on advancing into the next heat: Feeling somewhat unwell, the American could only manage P11 in qualifying. His charge through the field yielded seventh place. The two privateer Porsche Esports teams FaZe Clan and Heroic also missed out on getting into the semi-finals.

The new ESL_R1 series of the Electronic Sports League is primarily aimed at factory teams and major esports organisations. It is based on the sim racing platform "Rennsport" and offers particularly realistic virtual reality experiences. The world premiere took place in mid-February as a doubleheader event with the Intel Extreme Masters in Katowice, Poland, and is followed by further five online races until mid-May. On 28 May, the participants at the Spring Major Finale at the Rennsport Summit in Munich will fight for the ESL_R1 champion crown and team title. The spring season is followed by the next round of races in autumn.

Comments after the race

Philip Stamm (D, Team Principal Porsche Coanda Esports Racing): "The first online weekend of the new ESL_R1 series was good. We experienced minor technical difficulties on Friday, but we were able to solve them over the weekend. It was our first time in the final with two Porsche – it's nice that we managed that. I'm also happy for Mack Bakkum, who was able to demonstrate his potential. Joshua succeeded in making it into the final again. All in all, it went well for us."

Mack Bakkum (NL, Porsche Coanda Esports Racing):"I'm quite happy with how things unfolded for me today. I started the semi-final with a good qualifying lap. Fifth place was enough to gain entry to the final. My performance there was also okay. This time we didn't have the car to get us into the fight for top places. So with that in mind, eighth place is okay for me."

Joshua Rogers (AUS, Porsche Coanda Esports Racing): "Not an ideal final day for me. In qualifying for the semi-final, I managed a solid lap with the Porsche 911 GT3 R, but it was only good enough for sixth on the grid. After a fantastic duel with Max Benecke I finished sixth and advanced into the final. The

qualifying there wasn't quite perfect either. As tenth, I started a bit too early unfortunately – and that pretty much signalled the end of my race. Still, I maintained my lead in the championship. I'll be pushing extra hard at the next races."

Result

Nürburgring (D), finale

1. Luke Bennett, BMW M4 GT3 (UK, Team Redline)
2. Nils Naujoks, BMW M4 GT3 (D, BMW M Team BS+Competition)
3. Nikodem Wisniewski, AMG GT3 Evo (PL, Mercedes-AMG Esports Team)
4. Kevin Ellis jr., Audi R8 LMS GT3 evo II (UK, Apex Racing Team),
5. Erhan Jajovski, Audi R8 LMS GT3 evo II (NMK, R8G Esports)
6. Felipe Baptista, BMW M4 GT3 (BR, FURIA)
8. Mack Bakkum, Porsche 911 GT3 R (NL/Porsche Coanda Esports Racing)
12. Joshua Rogers, Porsche 911 GT3 R (AUS/Porsche Coanda Esports Racing)

Drivers' standings after 3 of 10 championship rounds

1. Joshua Rogers (AUS/Porsche Coanda Esports Racing), 127 points
2. Kevin Ellis jr. (UK, Apex Racing Team), 123 points
3. Jiri Toman (CZ, R8G Esports) 122 points

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