

Porsche customer teams win both GT classes at Daytona

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30/01/2022 Porsche customer teams have left an indelible mark on the 24 Hours of Daytona. The 911 GT3 R fielded by Pfaff Motorsports won the new GTD-Pro class after a gripping duel with KCMG. In a big showdown, the works drivers Mathieu Jaminet from France, Matt Campbell from Australia and Felipe Nasr from Brazil beat the crew of the customer squad from Hong Kong.

In the GTD category, Wright Motorsports clinched victory with the GT3 car from Weissach. Works driver Richard Lietz (Austria) shared the No. 16 vehicle with Jan Heylen from Belgium, Zacharie Robichon from Canada and American Ryan Hardwick. With these results, another great chapter has been added to Porsche's history as the most successful manufacturer at the endurance classic in Florida: 18 overall wins as a constructor and four as an engine partner, and now 80 class wins round off the Daytona statistics for the sports car manufacturer from Stuttgart.

In sunny but unseasonably cool temperatures for the US state of Florida, the 61-strong field took off on Saturday at 1:40 pm. In the early stages of the race, Porsche's strong customer teams gave a clear indication of their intentions and swapped places at the front of the GTD-Pro class for hours on end. With the field repeatedly reined in by incidents during the first twelve hours, no one was able to eke out a decisive lead. With a total of eleven full course yellows, the drivers spent almost four hours behind the safety car. The situation settled early on Sunday morning: a phase that finally put the Porsche 911 GT3 R into promising positions to fight for class wins.

The big showdown

Taking turns in the lead became the main focus for Pfaff Motorsports' No. 9 entry and the No. 2 car fielded by KCMG. However, the big showdown only came in the last of 17 safety car phases. After the final pit stop, Mathieu Jaminet rejoined the race with a 0.5-second advantage over Laurens Vanthoor. At the wheel of his blue and silver 911, the Belgian repeatedly pulled alongside the leader, treating spectators to a nail-biting show with multiple contacts and wheel-to-wheel battles. In the last three minutes of the 24-hour race, a breathtaking duel unfolded between the two customer squads that had racing fans leaping from their seats: in the penultimate lap, Vanthoor swept past Jaminet in a tough but fair move. The Frenchman refused to give up. In an extraordinary attempt to fend off the counterattack, Vanthoor spun in the final lap and finished in third place with his teammates Dennis Olsen (Norway), Patrick Pilet (France) and Alexandre Imperatori (Switzerland).

Over long stretches, various cars from different manufacturers alternated at the front of the GTD class. A clever strategy and brilliant driving performances ultimately paid dividends for Wright Motorsports' Porsche 911 GT3 R. In the last hour of racing, Jan Heylen successfully fended off attacks from his pursuers. On the podium, the Belgian celebrated the first GTD class victory for Porsche in five years with his teammates
Lietz, Hardwick and Robichon.

"Customer racing at a factory racing level – that's what we witnessed today at Daytona," said a delighted Sebastian Golz, Project Manager Porsche 911 GT3 R. "That finale has left me speechless. We can only emphasise how difficult this race was and the high level of professionalism of the teams running all seven vehicles. Victory in the GTD class and first and second in the GTD-Pro class! That's no picnic in a race with 35 GT vehicles. It's a well-deserved reward for the teams, the drivers and Porsche."

The No. 79 car of WeatherTech Racing had no say in the impressive finale in the new GTD-Pro class. The team lost ground early on with electrical defects. Later, their efforts were hampered by several penalties and off-course excursions. American Cooper MacNeil and his teammates Matteo Cairoli from Italy, Julien Andlauer from France and Belgian Alessio Picariello ultimately achieved eighth place. The TGM customer squad crossed the finish line seventh in the GTD class after 24 hours without any major incidents. Hardpoint missed out on a potential top result due to multiple incidents and penalties and concluded the season-opener event in North America on P10. Three hours into the race, the Porsche 911 GT3 R campaigned by GMG Racing retired after an accident on Saturday afternoon.

Thanks to their successes in the two GTD classes, the teams and drivers of Pfaff Motorsports and Wright Motorsports lead the IMSA championship rankings. These two crews also top the leaderboard in the IMSA Michelin Endurance Cup, a competition encompassing the endurance races at Daytona, Sebring, Watkins Glen and Road Atlanta. Round two of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship is another classic: The 12 Hours of Sebring on 19 March. On the same weekend, the FIA World Endurance Championship WEC season kicks off on the former airfield, where the Porsche works team again fields two 911 RSR in the GTE-Pro class.

Drivers' comments on the race

Mathieu Jaminet (Porsche 911 GT3 R #9): "The last lap was certainly spectacular, but so was the unbelievable duel over the last two hours. I drove my heart out every single lap. I really gave it everything I had. Obviously, I know Laurens well, he's my team colleague at Porsche. I know how strong he is. He tried again and again, and our cars touched again and again. But I said to myself: 'He's not getting past me today!' In the last lap, we both ended up on the grass. Luckily I managed to avoid a spin. That was it. The KCMG colleague had a slightly faster car, but thanks to perfect teamwork and my teammates' outstanding drives, we ended up at the front. That was great promotion for motorsport and a perfect start to the season for us."

Matt Campbell (Porsche 911 GT3 R #9): "I can only shake my head in disbelief at this show. I'm full of adrenaline and emotions. It was exciting and exhausting to witness the duel from the pit wall. I take my hat off to Mathieu. He fought hard to achieve this victory for us. We won the 24 Hours of Daytona today – incredible!"

Felipe Nasr (Porsche 911 GT3 R #9): "I can't believe it. I join Porsche and win my very first race at the wheel of the Porsche 911 GT3 R. It's like in a fairytale. Mathieu and Matt did an incredible job, and so did the Pfaff Motorsports crew. I really wanted to win Daytona – and now it's happened. There'll be big celebrations tonight with my teammates and the squad."

Laurens Vanthoor (Porsche 911 GT3 R #2): "I had a clear goal: After my wins at the Nürburgring, Spa and Le Mans, I was determined to win the 24 Hours of Daytona and round off the quartet. I did everything I could to make this happen but unfortunately, it didn't work. I'll definitely replay the scenes from the last laps in my mind for a long time. I cried on the way back to the pit lane: I tried everything but didn't win. The better guys won today. That was Pfaff Motorsports. Congratulations to my team colleagues."

Richard Lietz (Porsche 911 GT3 R #16): "Not bad, right? Our car ran really well over the whole distance, the team did a perfect job. Our Porsche 911 GT3 R crossed the finish line without a single scratch – and that was the secret to our success. Our car was still fast at the end. A big thank you to our Wright Motorsports team and my teammates. It was great fun and left us wanting more."

Jan Heylen (Porsche 911 GT3 R #16): "We've tried our luck so many times at Daytona and often stood on the podium – but never as the class winners. Today everything came together. We finally scored our first victory at this great race. We're absolutely over the moon. The team more than deserves this. Thanks to Ryan Hardwick who put this group together. And also thanks to Porsche for the excellent support. I'm overwhelmed!"

Result GTD-Pro class

1. Campbell/Jaminet/Nasr (AUS/F/BR), Porsche 911 GT3 R #9, 711 laps
2. Pier Guidi/Calado/Serra/Rigon (I/GB/BR/I), Ferrari 488 GT3 #62, 711 laps
3. Vanthoor/Olsen/Imperatori/Pilet (B/N/CH/F), Porsche 911 GT3 R #2, 711 laps
8. Andlauer/Picariello/Cairoli/MacNeil (F/B/I/USA), Porsche 911 GT3 R #79, 673 laps

Result GTD class

1. Hardwick/Heylen/Lietz/Robichon (USA/B/A/CDN), Porsche 911 GT3 R #16, 707 laps
2. Lally/Potter/Pumpelly/Adam (USA/USA/USA/GB), Aston Martin #44, 707 laps
3. Andrews/Skeen/Davison/McAleer (AUS/USA/AUS/GB), Mercedes-AMG #32, 707 laps
7. Giovanis/Trinkler/H. Plumb/M. Plumb (USA/USA/USA/USA), Porsche 911 GT3 R #64, 697 laps
10. Ferriol/Legge/Wilson/Boulle (USA/GB/GB/USA), Porsche 911 GT3 R #88, 672 laps
21. Washington/Bachler/Sofronas/Bleekemolen (USA/A/USA/NL), Porsche 911 GT3 R #34, 88 laps

Interim report

Porsche customer teams have dominated the first two-and-a-half hours of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship season-opener. In the early stage of the 24 Hours of Daytona, the three Porsche 911 GT3 R fielded by WeatherTech Racing, KCMG and Pfaff Motorsports took turns at the top of the GTD-Pro class. In the GTD category, Wright Motorsports made up around ten positions and is now running with the leading group after the first two stints.

In bright sunshine and cool temperatures of around seven degrees Celsius, the 61-strong field took off on their long journey at 1:40 pm local time. Watched by thousands of spectators, works driver Mathieu Jaminet headed into the race on the Daytona International Speedway from position two in the GTD-Pro class. At the wheel of Pfaff Motorsports' No. 9 car, the Frenchman immediately launched his attack and swept into the lead after just a few minutes. Meanwhile, his compatriot Julian Andlauer steadily worked his way up the order in the No. 79 entry from WeatherTech Racing.

A great start to the race

After the first two scheduled pit stops during a caution phase, Andlauer had reached P2. After the restart, he overtook Jaminet and took the lead for a while. Thanks to KCMG's strong lap times and a perfect pit stop, Patrick Pilet also spent time at the front in his Porsche 911 GT3 R. In the GTD class, Ryan Hardwick (USA) and the Canadian Zacharie Robichon drove impressive stints. The blue No. 16 vehicle of the team from the US state of Ohio advanced up the field to second place.

"What a great start to the race," said a delighted Sebastian Golz, Project Manager Porsche 911 GT3 R. "The initial phase was a nail-biter. You can already see that there are many tough battles out there. We're currently setting the pace in the GTD-Pro class. All three teams are consistently running in the top five. Things are also going well in the GTD class. The aim here is to get the amateur drivers safely to the finish and stay in the lead lap." After the first hours, the Porsche 911 GT3 R racers campaigned by the customer squads TGM and Hardpoint hold steady midfield positions in the GTD class. GMG Racing had to retire early after an accident just before the three-hour mark.

Drivers' comments on the initial stage

Julien Andlauer (Porsche 911 GT3 R #79): "My first two stints were excellent. We ploughed through the field from P16. The low air temperatures aren't pleasant, but the sun warmed the asphalt nicely in the early stages. That made it much easier for us to warm the tyres. It's a great feeling to be at the front. Still, there are no trophies or points for this. It's only the last two hours of racing that count. Until then, there's only one goal: stay in the lead lap."

Mathieu Jaminet (Porsche 911 GT3 R #9): "Our car ran beautifully in the early stages. I managed to stay out of trouble during my first two stints and at times even pulled away at the front. Unfortunately, a yellow flag quickly closed that gap. The lead keeps changing. Everyone is trying to be very careful and not take any risks in the heavy traffic. After all, it doesn't matter if you're first, second or third in the early stages. I'm thrilled with the handling of our 911 GT3 R. It can continue like this until the big finale."

Patrick Pilet (Porsche 911 GT3 R #2): "We had to start from far behind, but our Porsche 911 GT3 R is well-balanced and enabled us to catch up. The team did a perfect job during the pit stops. Things are going really well. It was great fun in the car. We're now heading into the night. Temperatures will continue to drop – it's even expected to dip to around freezing point. I'm curious to see whether everyone manages to keep their tyres in the ideal operating window. I think we'll be okay in this regard."

Ryan Hardwick (Porsche 911 GT3 R #16): "We got a clean start but it was tough. I struggled to get the tyre temperature up because it's really cold in Daytona this year. The first laps on fresh rubber are tricky because there's very little grip. All in all, I found a good rhythm and managed to maintain my position. Then Zacharie put his foot down and charged through the field. The 911 GT3 R runs perfectly!"

The preview

Porsche customer teams head to the opening round of the 2022 IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship with big ambitions. A total of seven Porsche 911 GT3 R will line up on the grid to contest the tradition-steeped 24 Hours of Daytona. At the official test runs, the so-called “Roar Before the 24” last weekend, the teams and Porsche engineers came up with a good setup and achieved promising grid positions for the 500+PS vehicles. Consequently, expectations are high for the endurance classic in the US state of Florida.

New class structure shines the spotlight on the Porsche 911 GT3 R

The organisers of the North American sports car racing series have established a new class structure for the 2022 season. The former GTLM category, in which the Porsche 911 RSR has harvested exceptional successes in recent years, has been replaced by the new GTD-Pro class. This category is reserved for GT3 vehicles built to FIA GT3 technical regulations – which includes the Porsche 911 GT3 R. In this class, only professional racing drivers are eligible to share a car. The GTD class regulations, however, remain unchanged: at each race, the driver crew must include at least one amateur driver – and two at the 24 Hours of Daytona. The Canadian customer squad Pfaff Motorsports won this class in 2021 and will now tackle the GTD-Pro category.

The race and the racetrack

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 78 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.

“A total of 35 GT cars will race at Daytona. That's an impressive number,” explains Sebastian Golz, Project Manager Porsche 911 GT3 R. “It'll be exciting to see how the new regulations and classes evolve. With our seven customer teams and vehicles, we've been able to establish really strong combinations in the GTD-Pro and GTD classes. The basic speed and the double podium result in the qualifying race underline that we have created a solid basis at the ‘Roar Before the 24’, which we'll now continue to build on.”

“Dealing with tyre pressure will be new and interesting,” adds Golz, with regard to the changed regulations for the 2022 season. “The minimum pressure that must be adhered to throws a new challenge at the engineers. The lower the tyre pressure, the better the performance. However, if it falls

below the specified limit, you get a penalty. So, in the race, we have to make sure we drive as close to the specified limit as possible at all times. It's a very thin line between top performance and a penalty."

Two Porsche customer teams experienced this first-hand at the "Roar Before the 24". As part of the test runs last weekend, a 100-minute qualifying race was held, which determined the grid positions for the 24-hour race. While the customer squads put in strong performances, WeatherTech Racing's tyre pressure was too low and it cost the squad the second place. A 40-second penalty relegated the team down to fourth place. As a result, Pfaff Motorsports was shuffled one position up the grid and now starts from the first grid row of the GTD-Pro class. In the GTD category, Wright Motorsports concluded the qualifying race on third but subsequently lost this result when the pressure in the Michelin tyres was found to be too low. The team from the US state of Ohio now takes up the 24-hour race from P11.

The customer teams and drivers

In the new GTD-Pro class, the customer teams Pfaff Motorsports and WeatherTech Racing field one Porsche 911 GT3 R each for the whole 2022 season. The Asian KCMG squad has entered one 500+PS vehicle from Weissach exclusively in the 24 Hours of Daytona. Works driver Laurens Vanthoor from Belgium joins forces with Frenchman Patrick Pilet, Norway's Dennis Olsen and Alexandre Imperatori from Switzerland in the No. 2 car for the team from Hong Kong. Three works drivers compete for Pfaff Motorsports: Matt Campbell from Australia, Mathieu Jaminet from France and Felipe Nasr from Brazil. For WeatherTech Racing, the Italian Matteo Cairoli, Julien Andlauer from France and Belgium's Alessio Picariello share driving duties with the American amateur racer Cooper MacNeil.

Four customer teams contest the GTD category. Porsche 911 GT3 R racing cars which comply with the GT3 regulations are also fielded in this class. Wright Motorsports makes a bid for the class win with the Austrian works driver Richard Lietz. In 2021, the team won the IMSA Michelin Endurance Cup, which includes the endurance classics in Daytona, Sebring, Watkins Glen and the "Petit Le Mans" on the Road Atlanta circuit. Klaus Bachler from Austria competes for GMG Racing with the seasoned Dutch driver Jeroen Bleekemolen and two American amateur drivers. Katherine Legge from Great Britain again takes on the challenge for the Hardpoint crew. The former DTM driver shares the cockpit with three ambitious part-time racing drivers. Four American amateur racers contest the event for TGM.

An overview of the drivers and teams

GTD-Pro class
#2 KCMG – L. Vanthoor (B) / Pilet (F) / Olsen (N) / Imperatori (CH)
#9 Pfaff Motorsports – Campbell (AUS) / Jaminet (F) / Nasr (BR)
#79 WeatherTech Racing – Cairoli (I) / Andlauer (F) / Picariello (B) / MacNeil (USA)

GTD class
#16 Wright Motorsports – Lietz (A) / Hardwick (USA) / Heylen (B) / Robichon (CDN)

#34 GMG – Bachler (A) / Bleekemolen (NL) / Washington (USA) / Sofronas (USA)
#64 TGM – Giovanis (USA) / H. Plumb (USA) / M. Plumb (USA) / Trinkler (USA)
#99 Team Hardpoint – Legge (GB) / Ferriol (USA) / Wilson (GB) / Boulle (USA)

Live streaming of the race

The 24-hour race of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship on the Daytona International Speedway gets underway on Saturday, 29 January, at 13:40 local time (7:40 pm CET). The entire race can be viewed live outside the USA and Canada on www.imsa.com. Live timing of all sessions is available at scoring.imsa.com.

The schedule (local time, CET -6 hours)

Thursday, 27 January
11:05 – 12:35: Free practice 1
15:20 – 17:05: Free practice 2
19:15 – 21:00: Free practice 3

Friday, 28 January
11:20 – 12:20: Free practice 4

Saturday, 29 January
13:40: Start of the 24 Hours of Daytona

Sunday, 30 January
13:40: Finish of the 24 Hours of Daytona

Qualifying race

Porsche customer teams have secured strong starting positions in the qualifying race for the 24 Hours of Daytona.

The 100-minute session run as part of the so-called “Roar Before the 24” on Sunday determined the grid spots for the season-opening round of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship. In the new GTD-Pro class, the Porsche 911 GT3 R shared by drivers Julien Andlauer from France and Alessio Picariello from Belgium claimed second place. Felipe Nasr (Brazil) and Mathieu Jaminet (France) planted the identical model fielded by Pfaff Motorsports on third. In the GTD category, American Ryan Hardwick and Belgium’s Jan Heylen were the fastest Porsche drivers, taking third place at the wheel of Wright Motorsports’ 911. The 60th running of the endurance classic in Florida takes off next Saturday, 29 January, at 1.40pm local time (7.40pm CET)

The qualifying race at Daytona marked a premiere for the North American championship and Porsche's successful customer squads. For the first time, the competition adopted the new IMSA classification structure. The former GTLM category, in which the Porsche 911 RSR has harvested exceptional successes in recent years, has been replaced by the new GTD-Pro class. This category is reserved for GT3 vehicles built to FIA GT3 technical regulations – which includes the Porsche 911 GT3 R. In this class, only professional racing drivers are eligible to share a car. The GTD class regulations, however, remain unchanged: at each race, the car must be shared by at least one amateur driver – and two at the 24 Hours of Daytona.

For the 100-minute qualifying race, only two drivers were required per vehicle. In sunny and cool conditions in Florida, two 911 GT3 R dominated the first half of the race at the front of the GTD-Pro field. In the No. 9 car, Mathieu Jaminet beat Alexandre Imperatori at the wheel of his pole-setting KCMG car in the first lap. The pair then commanded the two front spots until the scheduled pit stops at the halfway mark. While everything ran like clockwork for the Pfaff Motorsports squad, for the customer team from Asia, the petrol flowed too slowly into the tank and, as a result, KCMG lost about a minute. Ultimately, Patrick Pilet from France finished in tenth place. Meanwhile, in the final 30 minutes, Alessio Picariello battled for the lead but had to relinquish the top spot to the eventual winner, Lamborghini. WeatherTech Racing's Porsche 911 GT3 R finished in second place, ahead of the 500+ PS 911 campaigned by Pfaff Motorsports.

Catch-up in the GTD category

In the GTD category, Jan Heylen launched a strong charge through the field at the wheel of the Wright Motorsports entry. At half-time, the Belgian had taken the wheel from his teammate Ryan Hardwick (USA) and worked his way up the order to third place. In the race without a single caution phase, the 911 GT3 R racers fielded by Hardpoint, GMG Racing and TGM finished on positions 14, 15 and 19.

"All in all, this was a very successful start. The double podium result in the GTD-Pro class and the podium spot in the GTD category create a very positive mood within the Porsche family," concludes Sebastian Golz, Project Manager Porsche 911 GT3 R. "Most of the driver pairings and their teams met for the first time at this Daytona event. So far everything has gone really smoothly, the teamwork is exemplary. It's a great basis for the coming week when it really counts."

Drivers' comments on the qualifying race

Julien Andlauer (Porsche 911 GT3 R #79): "We stormed from P13 to second – not bad! It was so much fun. The car's balance was great in the cool conditions. Still, as great as this result is, it doesn't really mean much. What's more important is how we're placed next weekend. That's when we go for the big trophies."

Felipe Nasr (Porsche 911 GT3 R #9): "It was a fantastic experience for me because it's my first race outing in the Porsche 911 GT3 R. Mathieu did a great job and put us in first place. It immediately became clear: our No. 9 car is superbly balanced and has what it takes to compete at the top. It was also important for me to familiarise myself with the procedures. Things like driver changes at pit stops can be practised often and well, but they have to flow flawlessly when it matters most. It worked brilliantly today, and that makes me very happy."

Patrick Pilet (Porsche 911 GT3 R #2): "During the refuelling pit stop, the petrol didn't flow as planned and that cost us a lot of time. Still, I'm glad it happened in the qualifying race. Imagine if something like that happened in the 24-hour race. So with that in mind, I'm almost happy that this problem cropped up today. Otherwise, our car ran very well. We were fast and consistent throughout the test week, so we're in high spirits."

Jan Heylen (Porsche 911 GT3 R #16): "While third place looks good, I'm not at all sure if this reflects the true picture. My charge through the field seemed too easy. Sure, some colleagues didn't go all-out. But okay, I guess it's not yet serious. We got a clean run with a lot of overtaking – it was fun."

Qualifying race result

Result GTD-Pro class
1. Caldarelli/Bortolotti (I/A), Lamborghini Huracan GT3, 56 laps
2. Andlauer/Picariello (F/B), Porsche 911 GT3 R #79, 56 laps
3. Jaminet/Nasr (F/BR), Porsche 911 GT3 R #9, 56 laps
10. Imperatori/Pilet (CH/F), Porsche 911 GT3 R #2, 55 laps

Result GTD class
1. Auer/Ward (A/USA), Mercedes-AMG GT3, 55 laps
2. Holten/Miller (USA/USA), McLaren 720S GT3, 55 laps
3. Hardwick/Heylen (USA/B), Porsche 911 GT3 R #16, 55 laps
14. Wilson/Boulle (GB/USA), Porsche 911 GT3 R #88, 55 laps
15. Washington/Bachler (USA/A), Porsche 911 GT3 R #34, 55 laps
19. Giovanis/Trinkler (USA/USA), Porsche 911 GT3 R #64, 45 laps

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

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