



Porsche customer teams land in Sebring to close 36 hours of Florida

15/03/2022 WeatherTech SportsCar Championship, GTD Pro/GTD: Round 2

The preview

North American sports car racing has long opened its race season with traditional endurance icons the Rolex 24 At Daytona and the Mobil 1 Twelve Hours of Sebring. Porsche customer teams have regularly been at the top of the podium in the two legendary races collectively known as the “36 Hours of Florida”. Porsche has earned a record-setting 14 overall victories in the “36 Hours of Florida” since 1968. Having opened the 2022 IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship with a win in the GTD Pro class and victory in the GTD class at Daytona in January, the German sports car manufacturer’s Porsche 911 GT3 R race car is poised to fight for the final 12 hours at Sebring International Raceway on March 19 with four top-contenders, two each in the two GT classes.

WeatherTech, GTD Pro Class. 2 Porsche 911 GT3 R.

Two Porsche customer teams are entered in the new 11-car GTD Pro class for the 70th running of the Mobil 1 Twelve Hours of Sebring. Both have direct ties to wins here last season. Fresh off a 2021 GTD class championship and a season-opening victory at Daytona, Pfaff Motorsports fields the No. 9 Porsche 911 GT3 R for Porsche factory drivers Matt Campbell (Australia), Mathieu Jaminet (France) and Felipe Nasr (Brazil). The trio battled against fellow “works” drivers at Daytona to grab the Canadian team its first Rolex 24 title. Also in contention for the all-pro driver category is the No. 79 WeatherTech Racing Porsche 911 GT3 R. The Proton Competition-operated, 510-plus horsepower, red, white and blue Porsche will be shared by works drivers Julien Andlauer (France), Alessio Picariello (Belgium) and IMSA veteran Cooper MacNeil (Hinsdale, Illinois). WeatherTech and MacNeil were won the now retired GTLM class here in 2021.

WeatherTech, GTD Class. 2 Porsche 911 GT3 R.

The GTD class is identical in regulations to the GTD Pro class – both utilizing the Porsche 911 GT3 R race car homologated to international GT3-specifications. However, this longstanding class has a mandated Pro-Am style driver lineup. Two of Porsche-built, naturally aspirated, flat-six engine-powered 911s are entered by customer teams for the 12 Hours of Sebring this week. Wright Motorsports, who won the class to open the season at Daytona, puts 2021 Porsche Cup winner Jan Heylen (Belgium), 2021 IMSA WeatherTech GTD class champion Zacharie Robichon (Canada) and 2021 Michelin Pilot Challenge race winner Ryan Hardwick (Atlanta, Georgia) behind the wheel of the No. 16 Porsche 911 GT3 R race car. The 2021 Michelin Endurance Cup champions face a field of 16 other GTD machines including fellow Porsche privateer, HARDPOINT. The second-year Porsche team returns with its full-season driver line-up of racing veteran Katherine Legge (Great Britain) and team principal Rob Ferriol (Fayetteville, North Carolina). The duo will share the No. 99 with Stefan Wilson (Great Britain) as they did at the Rolex 24.

The two GTD classes are a mix-match of last year’s winners. It was a trio of Campbell, Jaminet and MacNeil who won the GTLM class together in Porsche 911 RSR-19 entered by WeatherTech Racing last March. Campbell and Jaminet have moved to the 2021 Sebring GTD class winning Pfaff program. Robichon, who was with Pfaff a year-ago, is now with Wright Motorsports who finished in second-place, to Pfaff, in the GTD class last season.

Michelin Pilot Challenge, GS Class.

The Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 RS Clubsport was unveiled at the Los Angeles Auto Show in November 2021. Two months later the naturally aspirated, 4.0-liter flat-six engine powered the new car to a one-two finish at the season-opening four-hour race at Daytona. Fourth-place and sixth-place were also the new mid-engine GT4-spec machine that is directly based on the road-going Porsche 718 Cayman GT4

RS. Nine of the 500-horsepower cars have been entered for the Alan Jay Automotive Network 120 on March 17. The two-hour race is scheduled to start at 4:25 p.m. ET/1:25 p.m. PT

McCann Racing, pole-winner in their debut at Daytona, will field the No. 8 for Andrew Davis (Athens, Georgia) and Michael McCann (Canton, Ohio). HARDPOINT debuts in the Michelin Pilot Challenge this weekend with the No. 22 of Nick Galante (Greenfield, Massachusetts) and Porsche Carrera Cup North America Presented by the Cayman Islands veteran Sean McAlister (Beverly Hills, California). The No. 22 RS1 Porsche premiered the mid-engine Porsche in style in January winning the race. Stevan McAleer (Scotland) stood on the top-step of the podium with Eric Filgueiras (Cocoa, Florida). However, as the "Green Machine" comes to central Florida, McAleer will be joined by Alexandre Premat (Henderson, Nevada). Team TGM had its best finish in recent years at Daytona when the No. 64 of team owner Ted Giovanis and Owen Trinkler (Nashville, Tennessee) chased the RS1 Porsche under the checkered flag for second-place. The pair returns for Sebring, with brothers Hugh Plumb (Unionville, Pennsylvania) and Matt Plumb (Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania) in the No. 46 team car. The siblings finished in sixth-place at Daytona. Matt Travis (The Woodlands, Texas) and Jason Hart (Flower Mound, Texas) continue their longstanding pairing in the No. 47 NOLASPORT Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 RS Clubsport.

Thomas Collingwood (Canada) will do double-duty at Sebring. He shares the No. 83 BGB Motorsports entry in Michelin Pilot Challenge with Porsche specialist Spencer Pumpelly (Atlanta, Georgia) and will race the No. 69 Porsche 911 GT3 Cup car – also readied by BGB – in the Pro-Am class of the Porsche Carrera Cup North America by the Cayman Islands. CarBahn with Peregrine Racing enters drivers Mark Siegel (Palo Alto, California) and Tyler McQuarrie (Danville, California) in the No. 93. The ninth Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 RS Clubsport set to race on the bumpy, multi-surfaced Sebring International Raceway is fielded by Black Swan Racing. Veteran Tim Pappas (Boston, Massachusetts) and Jeroen Bleekemolen (Belgium) will share the No. 540.

Drivers' comments before the race

Matt Campbell, Driver, No. 9 Pfaff Motorsports Porsche 911 GT3 R.

"I'm really excited for Sebring, it's actually one of my favorite tracks in the U.S. We were lucky enough to win the race last year, myself and Mathieu in GTLM. Obviously, we'd love to go for the double in the new GTD Pro category. But I really enjoy Sebring, it's the first ever track I raced on in the U.S. It's bumpy, it's challenging and obviously with the 12-hour race, it goes into the night. The track changes a lot and evolves. I really can't wait to get there and continue our momentum from Daytona."

Felipe Nasr, Driver, No. 9 Pfaff Motorsports Porsche 911 GT3 R.

"It was very special to get the win at Daytona in my first ever race with the team and it was the first ever 24 Hours of Daytona win as well for Pfaff. I can feel how special it was, how much they worked for it. It was just a unique moment, but we don't stop here and that's what I like about the guys. We are already pushing and searching for more speed and performance in the car for the second round at Sebring."

Julien Andlauer, Driver, No. 79 WeatherTech Racing Porsche 911 GT3 R.

"I am happy to be back at Sebring. I have been here one time before with the WEC series in 2019. I won the 1000 miles of Sebring that year with Proton. I love the track. It's completely different from any of the tracks in Europe. With many different surfaces and the bumps, it's a hard track to get the last tenths out of the car. I am also driving in the WEC race, so I will have a lot of track time this week. We have all of the ingredients to have a good race in the WeatherTech Porsche."

Cooper MacNeil, Driver, No. 79 WeatherTech Racing Porsche 911 GT3 R.

"The track is legendary and the win in 2021 was very cool as it was the last year for the Porsche 911 RSR to race in IMSA. The new Porsche 911 GT3 R showed its speed at the Rolex 24 winning in both GTD classes. We will need to have a clean run with no car issues and no driver mistakes to make it back on the top step of the podium this weekend."

Alessio Picariello, Driver, No. 79 WeatherTech Racing Porsche 911 GT3 R.

"I am happy to be back in the WeatherTech Porsche. After Daytona we had good speed in the car but lacked a little bit of luck with our electrical issue. We really want to bounce back at Sebring this weekend. I raced there in 2018 and finished fourth in the 12 Hour. I am ready to fight for a better finish. Last year the team won in the RSR, so hopefully we can have another good run at Sebring for WeatherTech Racing."

Jan Heylen, Driver, No. 16 Wright Motorsports Porsche 911 GT3 R.

"The Twelve Hours of Sebring is one of the biggest races of the year and definitely one of my favorite events of the season. It's a good atmosphere with fans camping out, and it's always an event I really look forward to. Coming off Daytona with the win, there's obviously a lot of good momentum on our side. We have a good track record at Sebring. Going into the event leading the championship puts a lot of healthy pressure on the team to perform. I know that we're always well prepared and I hope we can give the team, Porsche, Ryan, and 1st Phorm another win at Sebring. I can't wait to get the weekend started."

Katherine Legge, Driver, No. 99 Hardpoint Porsche 911 GT3 R.

"I love racing at Sebring, it's so challenging with all the bumps, and the track changes so much through the course of the 12 hour race. The fans here are also unique, and exploring the infield is a must-see experience for us! We were in position for a podium last year in the last five minutes and got that questionable penalty, so we are looking for redemption! We had a successful test here last month and hope that translates into some good speed this week. The team has been improving tremendously and gelling together I'm excited to see what we can achieve here."

Stefan Wilson, Driver, No. 99 Hardpoint Porsche 911 GT3 R.

Daytona was my first experience in GT3 racing and it was a huge learning experience for me. The racing was intense in the GT field, and I had an absolute blast out there. The Sebring 12 hour is another one of those bucket list events, a race that I've always wanted to compete in, and I'm just champing at the bit to get to Sebring and continue working with this amazing Hardpoint 99 crew. I am so hungry to deliver a good result for those that have supported me and helped me get this opportunity."

Nick Galante, Driver, No. 22 Hardpoint Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 RS Clubsport.

"Sebring has shown to be one of the toughest tracks to finally feel like I have the hang of it. On paper it looks so approachable, but she is a tricky beast with many complexities. Just when you feel like the car is going to make it to apex or perfectly track out, the surface changes, or you launch the car over a big bump and everything changes. I've got much respect for this beast. The Porsche has been tough to set up here. The Hardpoint team has been amazing at tackling a tough task in a short amount of time. I'm impressed with how Sean McAlister has dove into this team with his foot flat to the floor. I haven't had the luxury of a podium here since our win in 2017. I am eager to get one here this week, in this top-level GS class."

Sean McAllister, Driver, No. 22 Hardpoint Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 RS Clubsport.

"As we approach Sebring, the more excited I get. I'm someone who loves the layout and uniqueness of Sebring. It's fast, technical and bumpy and it probably has one of the most unconventional final corners of any track. At our recent test, we learned a lot about the car, and we explored setups that we both like. Now we just need to fine tune it. A podium at Sebring has eluded me for quite some time now. The goals for this week are to have a good debut in the series and hopefully secure a spot on that podium. With Hardpoint I definitely believe that is a possibility."

An overview of the drivers and teams

GTD-Pro class:

#9 Pfaff Motorsports – Campbell (AUS) / Jaminet (F) / Nasr (BR)

#79 WeatherTech Racing – Andlauer (F) / Picariello (B) / MacNeil (USA)

GTD class:

#16 Wright Motorsports – Hardwick (USA) / Heylen (B) / Robichon (CDN)

#99 Team Hardpoint – Legge (GB) / Ferriol (USA) / Wilson (GB)

Timing.

IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship.

Practice gets underway for all categories except the WeatherTech Championship on Wednesday,

March 16 with practice sessions. The first practice for the Mobil 1 Twelve Hours of Sebring is on Thursday, March 17 (Practice 1: 10:10 a.m. ET, Practice 2: 2:25 p.m. and Night Practice at 7:45 p.m. local time). A fourth practice (8:55 a.m.) and qualifying (9:20 a.m.) occur on Friday, March 18. On Saturday, March 19, a short warm-up will run at 8:00 a.m. ET. Later that same day, the clock will start for 12-hours of racing at 10:10 a.m. ET/7:10 a.m. PT.

Porsche Carrera Cup North America Presented by the Cayman Islands.

Thursday, March 17, Round 1: 9:15 – 9:55 a.m. ET, Round 2: 1:30 – 2:05 p.m. ET

Michelin Pilot Challenge.

Thursday, March 17, Alan Jay Automotive Network 120: 4:25 – 6:25 p.m. ET

FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC)

Friday, March 18, 1,000-Miles of Sebring: 12:00 – 8:00 p.m. ET

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