

Porsche customer teams achieve podium results in both GT classes

This article reflects the status at the time of its publication. The content may since have become outdated.

24/01/2021 The Porsche customer team WeatherTech Racing has successfully concluded its first campaign with the Porsche 911 RSR in the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship.

Qualifying Race

Works driver Kévin Estre from France and the American Cooper MacNeil claimed the third podium step in the GTLM class at the qualifying event for the 24 Hours of Daytona. In the GTD category for vehicles complying with GT3 regulations, Pfaff Motorsports achieved an even better result: the Belgian works driver Laurens Vanthoor and his Canadian teammate Zacharie Robichon planted their Porsche 911 GT3 R in second place after a race lasting one hour and 40 minutes.

This was the first time that the grid line-up for the tradition-steeped 24-hour race in Florida was determined by a separate qualifying race. Consequently, the mood on the initially wet 5.73-kilometre racetrack was assertive and at times aggressive. Heavy rain about one hour before the start made conditions difficult early on. In the first half, clever strategies and strong performances proved decisive in a successful result for the amateur drivers.

MacNeil drove the first stint in the Porsche 911 RSR with the starting number 79. The experienced American kept out of any trouble and after about 30 minutes returned unscathed to the pits for a driver change, running in sixth place. The decision to pit early under safety car conditions was spot on. Estre even managed to take the lead of the fiercely-contested GTLM field until 15 minutes before the flag. A scheduled refuelling stop relegated the American customer squad, run by the Proton Competition team, to third place. The 911 RSR will take up the 24-hour race on 30 January from this grid position.

“We’re very happy with this result,” said Steffen Höllwarth, Head of Operations GTLM. “We weren’t the fastest in the qualifying race, but we worked our way up the order with clever tactics. These three days at Daytona were very informative.” The Canadian customer team Pfaff Motorsports used the same strategy in the GTD class. Robichon put in an inspired drive on the slippery track in the early phase at the wheel of the No. 9 Porsche 911 GT3 R and powered through to third place. Works driver Vanthoor made up more positions in the second half of the race and crossed the finish line just four seconds behind the class winners. Works driver Patrick Long and his American compatriot Ryan Hardwick achieved ninth place for Wright Motorsports after being shuffled down the starting grid and receiving a pit stop penalty.

“After the strong qualifying performance on Saturday with pole position going to Wright Motorsports, the Pfaff Motorsports customer team did a good tactical job and fought their way up to second place,” says Sebastian Golz, Project Manager Porsche 911 GT3 R. “This is a very good result for our Canadian partner. We're ready for the first highlight of the 2021 year at Daytona.”

Meanwhile, bad luck plagued the Hardpoint EBM team. Denmark’s Christina Nielsen ended up in the barriers with her 911 GT3 R after a shunt in the early phase. The subsequent repairs cost the No. 88 car two laps. Factory driver Earl Bamber from New Zealand took the flag in the GT3 car in 14th place. The TGM customer team opted against competing in the qualifying race. Under the difficult conditions, the squad, which tackles Daytona with four American amateur drivers, wanted to avoid any risk of damaging the No. 64 Porsche GT3 R and at the same time knowingly accepted starting from the last grid position on race day.

Endurance classic will take off on 30 January

The endurance classic in the city where the famous NASCAR racing series was founded will take off on 30 January at 15:40 local time (21:40pm CET). The season-opening round of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship can be viewed free of charge outside the USA and Canada on www.imsa.com.

Qualifying Race quotes

Kévin Estre (Porsche 911 RSR #79): "It's a great result for us. Third place was the most we could do today. The team implemented a perfect strategy, and we put in a flawless drive over the entire race. I'm thrilled for the WeatherTech Racing and my teammate Cooper MacNeil about this first outing. We also learned a lot in the qualifying race under changing conditions with wet tyres and slicks."

Laurens Vanthoor (Porsche 911 GT3 R #9): "This was a great practice session for the 24-hour race with our team. We're very pleased with second place and we'll gladly take that grid spot this coming weekend. On top of today's result, it's important that during the day we discovered where we can make improvements to our car for the endurance race. We'll now implement these findings."

Patrick Long (Porsche 911 GT3 R #16): "The qualifying race was really chaotic with heavy traffic and a slippery track at the beginning. Unfortunately, we misinterpreted the information from the race director and overtook during a safety car phase. We were one of many teams that were handed a penalty. I'm a bit disappointed, but I'm still proud of our team. We've learned a lot for the upcoming race."

Earl Bamber (Porsche 911 GT3 R #88): "The accident at the start was bad luck. This can happen in close fights on a wet track. Running two laps behind in a relatively short race meant there was no chance of catching up. We're now starting the big season opener from 14th place. It's not ideal, but it's not that critical in a 24-hour race either. What's more important is that the team is well prepared. In this respect, we've learned a great deal today."

Qualifying Race result

Result GTLM class
1. Sims/Tandy (GB/GB), Corvette C8.R #4, 49 laps
2. Taylor/Catsburg (USA/NL), Corvette C8.R #3, 49 laps
3. MacNeil/Estre (USA/F), Porsche 911 RSR #79, 49 laps

Result GTD class
1. Auberlen/Foley (USA/USA), BMW M6 GT3 #96, 48 laps
2. Robichon/Vanthoor (CDN/B), Porsche 911 GT3 R #9, 48 laps
3. Bortolotti/Ineichen (I/CH), Lamborghini Huracan GT3 #111, 48 laps
9. Long/Hardwick (USA/USA), Porsche 911 GT3 R #16, 47 laps
14. Bamber/Nielsen (NZ/DK), Porsche 911 GT3 R #88, 45 laps

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

Qualifying for the Qualifying Race

The Porsche customer team Wright Motorsports secured pole position for the qualifying race at Daytona (USA). Ryan Hardwick from America lapped the 5.73-kilometre sports car track in Florida in his No. 16 Porsche 911 GT3 R in 1:46.831 minutes, thus beating the strong GTD class competition. In the GTLM category, his compatriot Cooper MacNeil concluded his first qualifying session at the wheel of WeatherTech Racing's Porsche 911 RSR in sixth place. The experienced amateur racer improved steadily over the course of the session and slashed the gap to the competition cars driven predominantly by professionals.

The grid line-up for the 24 Hours of Daytona (30/31 January) will be allocated for the first time based on the results of a qualifying race. At the end of the so-called "Roar before the 24" – a three-day test at the start of the season – competitors will drive for 100 minutes. The final ranking of this competition determines the grid positions for the first IMSA race of the year.

Under cloudy skies and with temperatures of 16-degrees Celsius, drizzle set in at the start of the 15-minute qualifying session. All competitors, however, had opted for slicks. An incident in the first four minutes halted the session, which left only eight minutes to set a top lap time. Ryan Hardwick made the most of the situation, managed a clean run and topped the timesheets with around two minutes remaining. His rivals were unable to make a counterattack.

In his attempt at a flying lap at the wheel the No. 9 Porsche 911 GT3 R fielded by Pfaff Motorsports, Zacharie Robichon at times encountered heavy traffic. The Canadian concluded the session in sixth place. Denmark's Christina Nielsen planted the identical GT3 vehicle (No. 88) campaigned by the Hardpoint EBM squad on 11th place in the GTD class. Ted Giovanis (USA) claimed P18 in the No. 64 vehicle run by the TGM team.

Qualifying for the Qualifying Race quotes

Ryan Hardwick (Porsche 911 GT3 R #16): "Wow! I don't know what to say. This is the first time I've qualified on pole position in the IMSA series. Our Porsche was simply fantastic to drive in today's qualifying. We climbed to the top of the podium in Sebring at the end of last season. The team didn't rest on its laurels but continued to work hard and systematically. Now I'm really looking forward to the qualifying race and even more to the 24-hour marathon next weekend."

Cooper MacNeil (Porsche 911 RSR #79): "It was really tough. It started to rain, the temperature dropped and the session was red-flagged. I couldn't keep the tyres up to temperature, and so I had hardly any grip. Still, in the end, I managed a couple of decent laps. Let's see how far we can work our way up the order in the qualifying race."

Zacharie Robichon (Porsche 911 GT3 R #9): "We tackled the qualifying with the intention of checking

out our setup work from the tests – and, of course, driving as fast as possible. Unfortunately, the onset of rain made the challenge a lot harder than we'd hoped. Ultimately, I'm reasonably happy with our grid position. What's much more important than the starting position for the qualifying race is the fact that we as a team have again learned a lot over these few laps."

Qualifying for the Qualifying Race result

Result GTLM class

1. Farfus/Wittmann/Edwards/Krohn (BR/D/USA/FIN), BMW M8 GTE #24, 1:42.980 minutes
2. Eng/Glock/De Phillippi/Spengler (A/D/USA/CDN), BMW M8 GTE #25, 1:43.343 minutes
3. Tandy/Sims/Milner (GB/GB/USA), Corvette C8.R #4, 1:43.631 minutes
6. MacNeil/Bruni/Lietz/Estre (USA/I/A/F), Porsche 911 RSR #79, 1:45.336 minutes

Result GTD class

1. Long/Hardwick/Heylen/Bachler (USA/USA/B/A), Porsche 911 GT3 R #16, 1:46.831 minutes
2. Mann/Nielsen/Serra/Cressoni (GB/DK/BR/I), Ferrari 488 GT3 #21, 1:47.095 minutes
3. Sellers/Snow/Lewis/Caldarelli (USA/USA/USA/I), Lamborghini Huracan GT3 #1, 1:47.182 minutes
6. Robichon/Vanthoor/Kern/Campbell (CDN/B/D/AUS), Porsche 911 GT3 R #9, 1:47.323 minutes
11. Ferriol/Bamber/Legge/Nielsen (USA/NZ/GB/DK), Porsche 911 GT3 R #88, 1:47.963 minutes
18. Giovanis/Plumb/Plumb/Trinkler (USA/USA/USA/USA), Porsche 911 GT3 R #64, 1:57.513 minutes

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

MEDIA ENQUIRIES



Holger Eckhardt

Spokesperson Motorsports LMDh, GT, Customer Racing
+49 (0) 170 / 911 4982
holger.eckhardt@porsche.de

Link Collection

Link to this article
https://newsroom.porsche.com/en/2021/motorsports/porsche-imsa-weather-tech-sportscar-championsship-24-hour-race-daytona-usa-23462.html

Media Package
https://pmdb.porsche.de/newsroomzips/50cb7cc8-77a7-4f02-bf42-bd1f8e8f010a.zip

Dr. Ing. h.c. F. Porsche Aktiengesellschaft
Porscheplatz 1
70435 Stuttgart