

Porsche claims a podium step with Wright Motorsports at Road Atlanta

06/09/2020 The Porsche customer team Wright Motorsports has claimed a podium result at the six-hour race of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship.

The race

Driving a Porsche 911 GT3 R, the American works driver Patrick Long, his compatriot Ryan Hardwick and Belgium's Jan Heylen secured third place in the GTD class at Road Atlanta. With fluctuating temperatures in the US state of Georgia, the Porsche GT Team struggled with poor tyre durability. Britain's Nick Tandy and his French teammate Frédéric Makowiecki achieved fourth in the GTLM class with the No. 911 Porsche 911 RSR. Their brand colleagues Earl Bamber from New Zealand and Laurens Vanthoor from Belgium came sixth in the No. 912 sister car.

Tandy had taken up the six-hour race from pole position and initially managed to defend his top spot in the fiercely competitive GTLM field. However, when temperatures dropped in the first part of the race,

it soon became apparent that the Michelin tyres on the Porsche 911 RSR were unable to offer the necessary grip over a full stint under such conditions. When the sun came out and conditions improved, the GTLM racer from Weissach was the fastest in the field over long stretches. Tandy and Makowiecki led the field in the No. 911 car until the final pit stop. As clouds gathered in the final phase, the asphalt temperature plummeted from 50 to 40 degrees Celsius and the performance again dropped off significantly. In his final stint, Tandy could no longer fend off his rivals' repeated attacks and he crossed the finish line in fourth place.

The crew in the No. 912 car experienced a disastrous day. In the chaos of the first racing lap, Vanthoor had to dodge several prototypes that became entangled in a collision at the start. As a result, the Belgian lost contact with the GTLM frontrunners. Badly deteriorating tyres forced Vanthoor to take an early first pit stop. Two drive-through penalties, an unplanned change of the brakes and repairs to the rear of the Porsche 911 RSR threw Vanthoor and Bamber three laps down the field. Ultimately, the reigning GTLM champions took the GTLM-class flag in sixth place.

In the GTD category, the customer squad Wright Motorsports scored its first podium result of this season. In qualifying, Jan Heylen had planted the Porsche 911 GT3 R on the third grid spot and retained this position in the first stint of the race. In the fierce competition of the GTD class, the vehicle dropped back to tenth place at one point. Thanks to flawless teamwork and an impressive performance from Heylen, works driver Patrick Long and local hero Ryan Hardwick, they were rewarded with the third podium step.

In the manufacturers' classification, Porsche ranks third after six races. In the drivers' championship, the two crews Makowiecki/Tandy and Bamber/Vanthoor are tied for points on fourth place. Round seven of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship takes off on 27 September at the Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course close to Lexington in the US state of Ohio.

Comments on the race

Steffen Höllwarth (Head of Operations IMSA Championship): “As expected, this race was a tough nut to crack. And as feared, we struggled with the temperatures. From the midway mark of the race we were leading with our number 911 car for quite some time, but ultimately we couldn’t maintain the pace. After two mistakes in the pits and a defect in the No. 912 car, the gap was so large that we simply couldn’t catch up. That’s disappointing. We’re now preparing meticulously for the next round so that we can strike back.”

Frédéric Makowiecki (Porsche 911 RSR #911): “I was so surprised at how our competitors were suddenly able to improve in the last stint. We simply couldn’t match such a fast pace. We tried everything, but in the end, we couldn’t do more than fourth. All in all, our performance is nothing to be ashamed of. We did a great job as a team – and that includes the mechanics, engineers, strategists as well as us drivers.”

Nick Tandy (Porsche 911 RSR #911): "It was almost the perfect weekend for us. We were ahead in free practice, in the lead in qualifying and also over long stretches of the race. Unfortunately, when the track conditions changed, we couldn't quite maintain the pace in the end. In fact, the competition even managed to improve. Obviously, the result is disappointing, but our performance has once again underlined that our maiden victory with the new Porsche 911 RSR is sure to arrive soon."

Further comments to the race you can find in the press release.

Race result

Result GTLM class
1. Spengler/De Phillippi (CDN/USA), BMW M8 GTE #25, 254 laps
2. Gavin/Milner (GB/USA), Chevrolet Corvette C8.R #4, 254 laps
3. Krohn/Edwards (FIN/USA), BMW M8 GTE #24, 254 laps
4. Tandy/Makowiecki (GB/F), Porsche 911 RSR #911, 254 laps
5. Garcia/Taylor (E/USA), Chevrolet Corvette C8.R #3, 254 laps
6. Vanthoor/Bamber (B/NZ), Porsche 911 RSR #912, 252 laps

Result GTD class
1. Farnbacher/McMurry/Michimi (D/USA/J), Acura NSX GT3 #86, 245 laps
2. Sellers/Snow/Lewis (USA/USA/USA), Lamborghini Huracan GT3 #48, 245 laps
3. Long/Hardwick/Heylen (USA/USA/B), Porsche 911 GT3 R #16, 245 laps

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

The qualifying

At round six of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship, the Porsche GT Team has claimed its fourth pole position of the season. Driving the No. 911 Porsche 911 RSR, Nick Tandy from Great Britain turned the fastest lap in the GTLM class at Road Atlanta setting a time of 1:16.167 minutes. His works driver teammate Laurens Vanthoor from Belgium planted the second works-RSR with the number 912 on position four. With this, Tandy added to his record in the North American sports car championship: The seasoned racing driver from Bedford has now secured a total of nine pole positions. In the GTD category, the Wright Motorsports customer squad takes up the six-hour race in the US state of Georgia from the third grid spot with the Porsche 911 GT3 R.

With an air temperature of 32 degrees Celsius and a track surface measuring 35 degrees, the two Porsche 911 RSR waited at the beginning of the qualifying session in order to get a free run and to conserve the tyres. After waiting for about five minutes, Tandy and Vanthoor joined the action on the track. For the first three laps, the two experienced works drivers drove cautiously to get the tyres to the ideal operating window. For the next three laps, they pulled out all stops – and fought for every last

thousandths of seconds. In the end, Tandy was just 0.014 seconds ahead of the second-quickest qualifier, with only 0.078 seconds separating Vanthoor from the top. Rarely have the time intervals in the GTLM-class qualifying been so close.

In the GTD class for vehicles complying with the FIA GT3 regulations, the Wright Motorsports customer team secured a solid grid position for the race. Belgium's Jan Heylen qualified the 911 GT3 R on P3. Heylen shares the cockpit of the No. 16 car with the American works driver Patrick Long and his compatriot Ryan Hardwick.

Round six of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship takes off on Saturday, 5 September, at 11.35 p.m. local time (5:35 p.m. CEST). In addition to the 24 Hours of Daytona, the Sebring 12-hour race and Petit Le Mans, the six-hour race at Road Atlanta counts towards the IMSA Michelin Endurance Cup.

Qualifying quotes

Steffen Höllwarth (Head of Operations IMSA Championship): “That was incredibly tight! Despite the notoriously fierce competition in the GTLM class, it’s never been this close. We’re delighted with pole position and we’ll take the extra motivation with us into the race day. We still have some homework to do before we start. In the practice sessions it was obvious that all competitors struggled to maintain a consistently fast pace over longer distances. It was the same for us. We’ll do some more work on the setup. In the race, the temperatures should be a little lower than on our first day today at Road Atlanta. Hopefully it’ll play into our hands."

Nick Tandy (Porsche 911 RSR #911): “After the first two free practices we worked intensely on the setup. That was a huge help. The car’s balance was great. Another factor was that we got the timing perfect for our qualifying attempt. We’re thrilled with pole position, but we don’t want to overestimate it. The key to a good result in the race is to maintain a strong pace in the second half of each stint. If the tyres reach their limit, that separates the wheat from the chaff. I’m very curious to see how things turn out over the course of six hours."

Laurens Vanthoor (Porsche 911 RSR #912): “I’m not particularly happy with the result. But that’s how it goes when the competition is that close. The car handled really well, and I managed to get a clean run, but ultimately I missed out by a hair’s breadth. We know exactly where we lost the fractions of seconds compared to the sister car. It’s obviously the setup. Now we’ll work with the engineers to tweak that before the start of the race."

Results

Results GTLM class
1. Tandy/Makowiecki (GB/F), Porsche 911 RSR, 1:16.167 minutes

2. Garcia/Taylor (E/USA), Chevrolet Corvette C8.R, + 0.014 seconds
3. Gavin/Milner (GB/USA), Chevrolet Corvette C8.R, + 0.045 seconds
4. Vanthoor/Bamber (B/NZ), Porsche 911 RSR, + 0.078 seconds
5. Spengler/De Phillippi (CDN/USA), BMW M8 GTE, + 0.086 seconds
6. Krohn/Edwards (FIN/USA), BMW M8 GTE, + 0.192 seconds

Results GTD class
1. Montecalvo/Bell/Telitz (USA/USA/USA), Lexus RC F GT3, 1:19.757 minutes
2. Snow/Sellers/Lewis (USA/USA/USA), Lamborghini Huracan, + 0.150 seconds
3. Long/Hardwick/Heylen (USA/USA/B), Porsche 911 GT3 R, + 0.163 seconds

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

The preview

The Porsche GT Team has big plans for the next highlight on the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship calendar: at the sixth round at Road Atlanta, in the US state of Georgia on 5 September, the squad is determined to clinch the first win of the season with the two new Porsche 911 RSR. At the previous three races, the GTLM-sports car from Weissach was well on course to score its first class win of the year in North America, only to have bad luck strike every time. The race on the storied circuit near the town of Braselton runs over six hours and is regarded as a critical rehearsal for the classic Petit Le Mans event, which is held at the same venue in October. In the GTD category, the Wright Motorsports customer team fields a Porsche 911 GT3 R.

Road Atlanta, just outside the capital of the US state of Georgia, holds special significance for Porsche. The 4.088-kilometre racetrack is the home turf of the factory squad. Porsche North America has its headquarters in Atlanta. In recent years, the Porsche GT Team has celebrated great successes at the fast circuit with its 12 turns. At the so-called Petit Le Mans, the traditional 10-hour race contested at Road Atlanta, the sports car manufacturer from Stuttgart has notched up a total of 20 class wins. In 2015, the Porsche 911 RSR scored a sensational overall victory in the rain – beating all prototypes.

Last year at Road Atlanta, the Porsche GT Team put in a strong performance with a pair of vehicles decked out in the Coca-Cola livery and made a clean sweep of all IMSA championship titles. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the upcoming six-hour race has been added to the calendar as a substitute for the Watkins Glen round and therefore counts towards the IMSA Michelin Endurance Cup. This series includes the endurance classics at Daytona and Sebring as well as both Road Atlanta races. The series returns to the track in America's south for Petit Le Mans.

The Porsche GT Team drivers

Works drivers Earl Bamber from New Zealand and Belgium's Laurens Vanthoor share driving duties in

the No. 912 Porsche 911 RSR. After five rounds, the reigning GTLM-champions rank second in the drivers' championship. Britain's Nick Tandy and Frenchman Frédéric Makowiecki helm the sister car with the starting number 911. The 2015 outright Le Mans winner from Bedford in the UK was one of the crew to clinch victory at Petit Le Mans five years ago. Back then, Tandy shared the winning car with his works driver teammates Patrick Pilet from France and Austrian Richard Lietz. In the manufacturer's classification, Porsche heads to round six ranking third, 14 points behind the leader.

The customer team

In the GTD category for vehicles complying with the FIA GT3 regulations, Wright Motorsports fields an Porsche 911 GT3 R. The cockpit of the No. 16 car is crewed by the American works driver Patrick Long and his compatriot Ryan Hardwick. Since Hardwick comes from the city of Atlanta, the upcoming event is a home race for the talented hobby driver. In the overall classification, the Porsche customer team Wright Motorsports currently lies in fifth place.

Comments prior to the race

Pascal Zurlinden (Director Factory Motorsport): "Although we've experienced bad luck at the last three races, we're heading to Road Atlanta feeling highly motivated. I'm absolutely sure that we'll soon achieve results that reflect the hard work of the team and drivers in the IMSA series, as well as the strengths of the Porsche 911 RSR. We'll do everything within our power to finally bring home the first win of the season at the long-distance race at Road Atlanta and to gain some essential ground in the championship."

Steffen Höllwarth (Head of Operations IMSA Championship): "Everything continues at high revs. We're feeling galvanised and we're really looking forward to the long six-hour distance. We've always been particularly strong at such endurance races, and Road Atlanta is one of the venues where Porsche has been very successful in the past. In the last three races, we weren't able to get the points that matched our efforts, unfortunately. But one thing is certain: the performance of the new Porsche 911 RSR is extremely good. We're always good for a win with this car. And that won't change at Road Atlanta. From now on, it's important that we reduce the gap to the top by achieving maximum success."

Nick Tandy (Porsche 911 RSR #911): "This race at Road Atlanta has a few new elements. For the first time, we're driving over six hours and there are only two of us sharing driving duties. That'll be interesting. I really hope that everything goes smoothly this time – then nothing can stand in the way of a win. The event is especially important because, over this weekend, all of the teams want to prepare for Petit Le Mans, which is held in October."

Live streaming of the race

Round six of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship at Road Atlanta takes off on Saturday, 5 September, at 23:35 local time (17:35 CEST). The race over six hours can be viewed outside the USA and Canada on www.imsa.com.

The schedule (local time, CEST: -6 hours)

Friday, 4 September
10.00 - 11:00 a.m. – Free practice 1
14:25 - 15:40 – Free practice 2
18:35 - 18:50 – Qualifying GTD
19:00 - 19:15 – Qualifying GTLM

Saturday, 22 August
11:35 – 17:35 – Race

The Porsche 911 RSR

The Porsche 911 RSR (2019 model year) celebrated its debut in the IMSA SportsCar Championship at the 24 Hours of Daytona in January. Compared to its extremely successful predecessor model, the Weissach engineers made improvements to the car, most notably in areas such as drivability, efficiency, ergonomics and serviceability. About 95 per cent of all components are new. The 911 RSR is powered by a 4.2-litre, six-cylinder boxer engine.

This is the IMSA SportsCar Championship

The IMSA SportsCar Championship was founded in the USA and Canada in 2013 after the merger of the American Le Mans Series and the Grand-Am Series. A year later the new sports car race series, which is organised by the International Motor Sports Association (IMSA), was contested for the first time. Sports prototypes and sports cars start in four different classes: GTLM (GT Le Mans), GTD (GT Daytona), Dpi (Daytona Prototype international) and LMP2 (Le Mans Prototype 2). The new Porsche 911 RSR is fielded in the GTLM class, and the Porsche 911 GT3 R contests the GTD class.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES



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