



Wright Motorsports, Heylen and Porsche earn Michelin Pilot Challenge titles

12/11/2021 IMSA Michelin Pilot Challenge, GS Class

Consistency and a late-season push have secured Wright Motorsports and Jan Heylen (Belgium) the 2021 IMSA Michelin Pilot Challenge GS class Team and Driver championships. The success of the No. 16 Wright Motorsports Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 Clubsport also earned Porsche the Manufacturer Championship in the final race season for this road car-based racer. The new GT4-specification race car, the Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 RS Clubsport, to be campaigned beginning at the Daytona International Speedway in January 2022, will be unveiled to the world on Tuesday, November 16.

Despite missing the opening round at Daytona in January, the Ohio-based operation redoubled its efforts at the second race (Sebring International Raceway) in March with a podium finish. With Heylen as lead driver throughout the year, the team built on that consistent performance ultimately breaking out with a GS class win at WeatherTech Raceway Laguna Seca in September. Heylen was joined by the

team's fast young talent Maxwell Root (San Diego, California) who was recruited up from the Porsche Carrera Cup North America Presented by the Cayman Islands for the second time of the season, the first being at Sebring, when fulltime driver Ryan Hardwick (Atlanta, Georgia) was unable to race. Hardwick returned at the penultimate round, VIRginia International Raceway (VIR) in October. That marked the second win for the team, and the first for the driver combination of Hardwick-Heylen.

Entering the final round at Michelin Raceway Road Atlanta today, the No. 16 was in second-place in all categories. The key was to stay ahead of both the Turner Motorsports-entered BMW race cars. Hardwick qualified the car in third-place on the grid, positioning the team well from the start. As strategy and planning played out, the single Wright machine squared-off against the pair of BMWs. When both BMWs fell by the wayside with contact in sperate incidents, Heylen hung-on at the front of the field, crossing the start-finish line of the 2.54-mile, 12-turn in first-place giving the program its third race win of the season.

The turn of events on track erased a 30-point deficit in the Driver and Team standings and an even greater 60-point swing in Manufacturer points. Heylen wins the Driver title by 200-points, Wright the same amount for Team. Porsche adds to its trophy case with a 70-point win over BMW.

The 2022 race season will get underway at Daytona International Speedway with the traditional "Roar Before the 24" open test day, January 21 – 23. The first race of the season will take the green flag a week later at Daytona on January 28.

Comments after the race

John Wright, Owner, No. 16 Wright Motorsports Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 Clubsport.

"This has been an incredible season for Wright Motorsport in the Michelin Pilot Challenge. No matter what was thrown at us this year, we just stayed focused on consistency and execution. This is the end result of that commitment by every member of Wright Motorsports, Ryan, Jan, Max and everyone at Porsche. We're grateful to have partners like Porsche Motorsport North America, 1st Phorm, Mountain Motorsports, and Una Vida Tequila for being a part of our program. Each and every person in our program was a part of our success today."

Jan Heylen, Driver, No. 16 Wright Motorsports Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 Clubsport.

"It has been an unbelievable season with this team in all series. Big thank you to Ryan [Hardwick], to Porsche, to Wright Motorsports for putting this program together at the beginning of the season. It has been a super fun season, a few ups and downs but just really good hard racing and that is what we love doing. Definitely could not have done it without the team. They just come through every time. I couldn't be happier for everyone involved, all the partners, 1st Phorm. It is just an unbelievable day. For it to be here, at Ryan's home track, just makes it extra sweet."

Ryan Hardwick, Driver, No. 16 Wright Motorsports Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 Clubsport.

"It is hard to put into words what I am feeling right now. To even have an opportunity to race for a championship is something that most people never have. To ultimately win it, at my hometown track, is hard to describe. It came down to our team yet again; Wright Motorsports. We pulled off sensational strategy. The car was absolutely perfect. Jan Heylen is a warrior. He is a deserving driver champion. We thank all the support from 1st Phorm, we wouldn't be here without all the great people and family at 1st Phorm. Porsche put a huge trust in us to run this car in its final year. I have to thank Max [Root] for filling-in for me two times during the year. Without him, we wouldn't be in this position either."

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