

Porsche defends championship lead with podium finish in Long Beach

19/04/2026 The factory team of Dr. Ing. h.c. F. Porsche AG successfully defended its lead in the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship. In the 100-minute sprint race in Long Beach, France's Kévin Estre and Belgium's Laurens Vanthoor secured another podium result with a third-place finish.

Daytona and Sebring winners Felipe Nasr from Brazil and France's Julien Andlauer came home in fourth place. On the street circuit just outside Los Angeles, both factory Porsche 963 cars competed in Apple Music design.

Under the Californian sun, the 28 starters delivered an exciting 100-minute race. The Long Beach street sprint was marked by five caution periods due to on-track incidents. These repeatedly bunched up the field and created intense battles for position. Traffic management between GTP prototypes and GTD class cars also required strong situational awareness. Unlike many of their rivals, the Porsche factory drivers avoided major damage to their cars. Only the No. 6 car required minor front-end repairs during a pit stop, completed without time loss. The damage occurred in a contact during the opening phase but had no impact on performance. Estre and Vanthoor were rewarded with third place, while

Andlauer and Nasr crossed the line just behind them in fourth in the No. 7 Porsche 963.

“It was a good day for our team. We are satisfied with the results,” explains Urs Kuratle, Director Factory Motorsport LMDh. “Our drivers did an excellent job and kept it clean on the street circuit – that was the key to success. We scored valuable points, and the collaboration within Porsche Penske Motorsport worked flawlessly. Congratulations to our customer team JDC-Miller MotorSports. Sixth place is a strong result. Porsche factory driver Laurin Heinrich made an impressive debut there.”

In the overall standings, Porsche, the Porsche Penske Motorsport team, and factory drivers Nasr and Andlauer all retained their championship leads. Round four of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship will take place on May 3 at Laguna Seca in Monterey, California.

Customer team JDC-Miller MotorSports opts for bold strategy

In the top GTP class, customer team JDC-Miller MotorSports chose an alternative race strategy: the No. 5 Porsche 963 pitted under the first full-course caution after just five minutes. Factory driver Laurin Heinrich took over from Dutch driver Tijmen van der Helm, completed the remaining 95 minutes and posted the fastest lap time of the race. The German charged through the field to finish sixth, at times even running within reach of the podium positions.

In the GTD class, the AO Racing Porsche 911 GT3 R, nicknamed “Roxy,” worked its way up to seventh place during the race but lost several positions shortly before the finish. Britain's Harry King and Denmark's Mikkel Pedersen ultimately finished 13th. The identical Weissach-developed car from Wright Motorsports crossed the line in 15th place.

Further information

Photos from Long Beach: Porsche at the street race
Full results and standings: Alkamelsystems
Apple Music partnership: All about the special livery
Long Beach statistics: The Grand Prix in numbers

Driver quotes after the race

Laurens Vanthoor (Porsche 963 #6): “If someone had offered me third place before the weekend, I would have gladly taken it. I’m very satisfied with this result. We scored a lot of points. The race was anything but easy – but once you’re celebrating on the podium, that no longer matters. Our long-term goal is clear: winning the championship.”

Felipe Nasr (Porsche 963 #7): “Third and fourth place is a great result for our team. Once again, we

maximized our potential today. The pit crew delivered perfect stops, and the strategy was spot-on. We're still leading the championship and are already looking forward to the next race at Laguna Seca."

Laurin Heinrich (Porsche 963 #5): "What a race! We started from the back and took a strategic gamble during the first caution. It paid off – finishing sixth feels like a strong result and a great start to my new chapter with JDC-Miller MotorSports."

Harry King (Porsche 911 GT3 R #177): "Our team did a great job, and the pit stop was flawless. Unfortunately, it still wasn't enough for a top-10 finish, which is disappointing. But we're looking ahead now. We'll be back in the GTD Pro class for the next race and will do everything we can to achieve a better result at Laguna Seca."

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Image Sublines

Path: Porsche defends championship lead with podium finish in Long Beach/Images/img_1.jpg
Title: Urs Kuratle, Director Factory Motorsport LMDh, IMSA, Long Beach, USA, 2026, Porsche AG
Subline: Urs Kuratle, Director Factory Motorsport LMDh

Path: Porsche defends championship lead with podium finish in Long Beach/Images/img_3.jpg
Title: Felipe Nasr (BRA), Porsche Penske Motorsport (#7), IMSA, Long Beach, USA, 2026, Porsche AG
Subline: Felipe Nasr

Path: Porsche defends championship lead with podium finish in Long Beach/Images/img_4.jpg
Title: Laurin Heinrich (DEU), JDC-Miller MotorSports (#5), IMSA, Long Beach, USA, 2026, Porsche AG
Subline: Laurin Heinrich

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