

Zac Campbell wins the feature race at the PESC season opener

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04/02/2023 Season five of the Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup has kicked off with the defending champion Diogo C. Pinto clinching first place in the sprint race. Victory in the feature race went to Zac Campbell. Charlie Collins achieved second place at both races on the Hockenheimring.

Race

Zac Campbell has won the season opener of the Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup (PESC). In the 18-lap feature race, the American fought his way through the field from third place on the grid to cross the finish line first on the digital version of the Hockenheimring. His British teammate at VRS Coanda, Charlie Collins, came a close second. In the sprint race over half the distance, defending champion Diogo C. Pinto from Portugal emerged as the winner. Season five of the PESC opened on the German

Grand Prix circuit. The one-make cup is contested with the virtual Porsche 911 GT3 Cup on the iRacing simulation platform. The 30 competitors tackle ten rounds in a bid for prize money totalling 200,000 US dollars.

Somewhat out of the blue, Jordan Caruso dominated the qualifying on the 4.574-kilomere Formula 1 circuit. Driving for the Altus Esports squad, the Australian was the first to earn points towards the TAG Heuer Pole Award. As the end of the season, the winner of this award receives a TAG Heuer Connected Watch in the special Porsche Edition. Caruso, however, lost his lead in the sprint race in the first of nine laps: At first, UK driver Charlie Collins from the VRS Coanda team took the lead, only to be overtaken by title defender Diogo C. Pinto (Team Redline). The Portuguese sim racer crossed the finish line first with Collins close on his bumper. In a last-ditch effort over the final metres, Caruso reclaimed third place from the Spaniard Alejandro Sánchez (Stormforce Racing ART). The 2020 PESC champion Sebastian Job (Oracle RedBull Racing Esports) scored fifth place. Lasse Bak from Denmark claimed eighth place as the best newcomer. Thanks to the reserve grid line up for the top eight in the sprint, the rookie from the FYRA SimSport team tackled the feature race from pole position.

In the feature event, Bak won the sprint to the first corner and initially enjoyed a stint at the front. However, on lap four of 18, he had to relinquish the lead to a fiercely attacking Zac Campbell. Before this, the American had ploughed his way past Alessandro Bico (Williams Esports) from Italy and Sebastian Job. Job attempted to follow suit with a spirited overtaking move but slid on the grass in the arena section of the Hockenheimring and lost ground. Campbell proceeded to eke out a slight advantage over his pursuers to take the flag half a second ahead of Charlie Collins. Third place went to Bico followed by Caruso, Pinto and the Frenchman Yohann Harth (Apex Racing Team). Bak came seventh as the best rookie.

Content creators from the sim racing scene tackle the All-Stars race

Casey Kirwan opened the new All-Stars season of the Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup with a victory in the sprint race. The young American had already won the qualifying session and started the short 17-minute race from pole position. There, he immediately took the lead and skilfully defended it against Tony Kanaan. At the finish line, Kirwan was almost three seconds ahead of the Brazilian real-life IndyCar champion and Indy500 winner, who had to settle for second place ahead of Spain's Borja Zazo.

For the 17-lap feature race at the Hockenheimring, content creators from the sim racing world lined up in reverse order of the previous race result. Accordingly, Kirwan started from the 14th and last position. His charge to catch up saw him fight his way up to fourth place.

Jaroslav "Jardier" Honzik came out on top. On the last lap, the Czech benefitted from a collision in the hairpin between Oliver "Basic Ollie" Furnell, who had held the lead up until that point, and his pursuer Emily "Emree" Jones. The Briton still finished second, with the Australian wrapping up the season opener in third place.

Preview: Magny Cours hosts the next PESC race in two weeks

In just 14 days, the Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup continues with a premiere: Round two of the season kicks off on 18 February on the digital Grand Prix circuit of Magny Cours in France. The flat Circuit de Nevers, the real version of which measures 4.411 kilometres, was on the Formula 1 calendar for the last time in 2008. It features nine right-hand and eight left-hand corners. The track surface is extremely sensitive to temperature. The most striking sections of the circuit include the fast "Grande-Courbe" at the end of the short start-finish straight. This lefthander flows smoothly into the sweeping "Estoril" righthander, from which the drivers have to carry maximum momentum for the high-speed passage leading to the slow "Adelaide" hairpin. The PESC sprint race runs over nine laps with the feature race covering twice that distance.

Comments on the race

Zac Campbell (USA/VRS Coanda): "Words can't describe how great it is to be working with a teammate like Charles Collins. We've worked very hard on the set-up of the Porsche 911 GT3 Cup over the past few days. As part of the Porsche Coanda Esports factory team in the virtual Le Mans Series, we came up with a lot of ideas over the winter on how to further optimise the processes on the iRacing simulation platform. I'm very happy with the outcome, it makes a marked difference. First and second place, that's a fantastic result."

Charlie Collins (UK/VRS Coanda): "To be honest, I just tried to stay behind Zac – as soon as I got into second place, I knew I couldn't catch him today. I also think it's pretty cool to be competing alongside my brother Bryn in the Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup. There have never been siblings in this series before. It still feels a bit weird, but it'll probably become more natural over the course of the season."

Alessandro Bico (I/Williams Esports):"I'm very happy about my very first podium result in this series. After my rookie season last year, we were able to identify potential for improvement in a number of areas. I then intensified my training, focusing precisely on these issues – that seems to have paid off. I did a good job in qualifying, so I could start far up front and find a good pace early on."

Results

Hockenheim, sprint race

1. Diogo C. Pinto (P/Team Redline)
2. Charlie Collins (UK/VRS Coanda)
3. Jordan Caruso (AUS/Altus Esports)
4. Alejandro Sánchez (E/Stormforce Racing ART)
5. Sebastian Job (UK/Oracle Redbull Racing Esports)

Hockenheim, feature race
1. Zac Campbell (USA/VRS Coanda)
2. Charlie Collins (UK/VRS Coanda)
3. Alessandro Bico (I/Williams Esports)
4. Jordan Caruso (AUS/Altus Esports)
5. Diogo C. Pinto (P/Team Redline)

Overall standings after the first of 10 rounds
1. Charlie Collins (UK/VRS Coanda), 73 points
2. Jordan Caruso (AUS/Altus Esports), 67 points
3. Diogo C. Pinto (P/Team Redline), 67 points
4. Zac Campbell (USA/VRS Coanda), 65 points
5. Alessandro Bico (I/Williams Esports), 54 points

Preview

Round five of the Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup kicks off this Saturday. The virtual one-make cup with the 911 GT3 Cup is one of the most demanding online racing series in the world. The 30 eligible sim racers will fight on the iRacing platform for valuable championship points and prize money totalling 200,000 US dollars. The 2023 season of the Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup (PESC) gets underway this Saturday (4 February) with a new qualifying format and a field of competitors focussed on 30 sim racers. 2023 marks the fifth year of the virtual one-make cup contested with the Porsche 911 GT3 Cup. The calendar of the international championship on the iRacing simulation platform again includes ten rounds. The digital Hockenheim Grand Prix circuit in Germany hosts the opening round of the season, with the finale held at the Autodromo Nazionale of Monza, Italy, in early June. In between, the esports series will be contested on tradition-steeped racetracks such as the Nürburgring-Nordschleife and the Circuit des 24 Heures in Le Mans as well as the modern and classic Formula 1 circuits of Magny-Cours (France), Austin (USA), Spielberg (Austria), Watkins Glen (USA) and Spa-Francorchamps (Belgium). The venue for round three of the season will once again be decided by the esports community via online voting.

“Sim racing is very important to Porsche Motorsport,” explains Nina Braack, Esports Manager at Porsche Motorsport. “Last year we established our own works team with Porsche Coanda Esports Racing. Our four works drivers have one thing in common: They all earned themselves a spot in the squad through great performances in the Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup. The virtual one-make cup made its debut in 2019. Now entering its fifth season, the series again features an impressive international line-up. With the fans, we can once again look forward to some action-packed racing.”

A compact grid line-up adds extra suspense

In the new season, 30 drivers from 15 countries will compete for a total prize pool of 200,000 US dollars. Championship points will continue to be awarded up to position 25 in the 30-minute feature races. This should also increase the incentive for gripping duels among the backmarkers.

Another important change is the overhauled qualifying format, which will still run over twelve minutes but is now divided into two groups. The first drivers to take to the track are those ranked sixth to 30th in the interim championship standings. For them, the pit lane exit light turns green for exactly one minute from around 8:00 pm (summer time: 9:00 pm), and each driver has just one attempt at a flying lap. 150 seconds later, the top five follow. Like in a "hyperpole" session, they each line up for the individual time trial at one-minute intervals. A special reward awaits the best qualifier at the end of the season: the winner of the TAG Heuer Pole Award can look forward to receiving a TAG Heuer Connected Watch in the special Porsche Edition.

Diogo C. Pinto has swapped his role of the hunter to that of the hunted: the Portuguese sim racer from Team Redline is ready to defend his title after a remarkably consistent performance last year. His rivals, however, are determined to prevent this – none more than Sebastian Job. The Briton was crowned champion in 2020. Last year, he was only narrowly beaten by Pinto. Now, the Oracle Red Bull Racing Esports driver aims to repeat his 2020 triumph. Among others, the two VRS Coanda sim racers Zac Campbell (USA) and Charlie Collins (UK) are also among the top contenders for the championship title. Cooper Webster should not be underestimated, either. The Australian won the rookie classification as the best newcomer in 2022. The number two driver for the Oracle Red Bull Racing Esports team now has his sights on the next prize.

Tuomas Tähtelä again qualifies for the PESC via the Contender Series

Only the top finishers in the previous year's Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup were guaranteed a coveted grid spot in the fifth season: they automatically qualified for the first 15 starting positions in the virtual one-make cup. The remaining 15 cockpits were awarded in a two-stage selection process. In round one, all racers registered with iRacing were eligible to take part in a special qualifying competition. In the second stage, the best 15 in the overall standings advanced to the so-called Contender Series. In six races throughout September and October of last year, they pitted themselves against the drivers who had finished the 2022 PESC season in positions 16 to 30. Additionally, wildcard invitations were extended to Brazilian Gustavo Ariel, Philippe Bouchard from Canada, William Chadwick (UK) and Germany's Christopher Dambietz. They had earned themselves the honour at local esports one-make cups. Ariel finished the Contender Series second behind the experienced winner Tuomas Tähtelä from Finland and made it into this year's Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup.

At the season-opening round of the Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup on 4 February at the

Hockenheimring, the sim racers will first contest a nine-lap sprint event from 8:15 pm (CET). The feature race over twice the distance begins at 8:38 pm. This schedule will generally apply to all other races this season. After daylight saving begins in the respective countries, one hour will be added to these times. Fans can watch the iRacing action live online via Porsche's channels on YouTube and Twitch.

Prominent influencers from the sim racing scene contest the All-Star Series

Well-known content creators from the esports racing scene, like Emily “Emree” Jones, the 2021 title winner, will again showcase their skills in the Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup support programme. Newcomers to the series are “Basic Ollie”, “Dave Cam”, “Lovefortysix” and “Keny500”. The Indy500 champion of 2013, Tony Kanaan from Brazil, is also among the participants again. Other Porsche Motorsport drivers from real racing, including the former Porsche Junior Laurin Heinrich from Germany, contest selected events.

The All-Star live stream begins at 7:00 pm (CET) with the qualifying session and sprint race. The following feature race gets the green light at around 7:29 pm.

Further information on the Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup can be found in the Porsche Newsroom, the Porsche Motorsport Hub, and on the Twitter account @PorscheRaces.

The 2023 racing calendar

04.02.2023 – Germany: Hockenheimring (9/18 laps)
18.02.2023 – France: Magny Cours (9/18 laps)
04.03.2023 – tba via online voting
19.03.2023 – USA: Austin (8/16 laps)
01.04.2023 – Austria: Spielberg (10/20 laps)
08.04.2023 – USA: Watkins Glen (11/22 laps)
22.04.2023 – Belgium: Spa-Francorchamps (6/12 laps)
06.05.2023 – Germany: Nürburgring-Nordschleife, 24h version (3/4 laps)
20.05.2023 – France: Le Mans (3/6 laps)
03.06.2023 – Italy: Monza (7/14 laps)

in brackets: number of laps for the sprint and feature race

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