



## Porsche customer teams target seven titles at IMSA Atlanta finale

08/11/2021 WeatherTech SportsCar Championship, GTLM: Round 10, GTD: Round 12

### The preview

Entering the final weekend of the 2021 IMSA race season, Porsche and its customer race teams are in the hunt for seven championship titles... and they will do so at their home track in North America. Michelin Raceway Road Atlanta will host both Friday's two-hour Michelin Pilot Challenge championship clincher on November 12 and Saturday's 24th Running of the Petit Le Mans for the WeatherTech SportsCar Championship, November 13. The German sports car manufacturer has contenders in both races and is, itself, up for Manufacturer honors in the GS class of Michelin Pilot Challenge and GTD class in the WeatherTech Championship at the Braselton, Georgia-area race track. Additional titles up for grabs on the home turf for Porsche Cars North America include Driver and Team honors in both of the top IMSA championships as well as the GTD Michelin Endurance Cup.

Porsche leads all manufacturers in the classic endurance race with 21 titles in the Petit Le Mans – including one overall accolade in 2015 – on the 2.54-mile, 12-turn track in north Georgia. A total of 39 Porsche-built race cars are entered across six class in three major championships at Michelin Raceway Road Atlanta during “Petit week”. Five customer cars for the German marque are entered in the Petit Le Mans (two in GTLM class, three in GTD), one in the Michelin Pilot Challenge and 32 Porsche 911 GT3 Cup race cars will fight for three class titles in the final weekend of the inaugural season of the Porsche Carrera Cup North America Presented by the Cayman Islands.

Pfaff Motorsports broke out to a victory in the second race of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar season, the Mobil 1 Twelve Hours of Sebring, in March. Since then, the “Plaid Porsche” has stayed near the front of the GTD pack with the No. 9 Porsche 911 GT3 R race car. However, a surge at mid-season has seen the Canadian-based program score wins at Road America – where Porsche swept the GT class victories – WeatherTech Raceway Laguna Seca and the most recent race at VIRginia International Raceway. The success moved the rear-engined Porsche 911 GT3 R into the lead of the GTD class Driver, Team and Manufacturer standings. A second-place finish on the streets of Long Beach is the lowest finish for the team since a fourth-place at Lime Rock Park in July. Led by Porsche factory driver Laurens Vanthoor (Belgium) and former Porsche one-make champion Zacharie Robichon (Canada) throughout the season, Porsche Test and Development driver Lars Kern (Germany) reprises his role in the No. 9 in Atlanta. The popular driver internationally recognized for his record laps of the Nürburgring in a variety of Porsche-built road cars, is in his third-year of racing with Pfaff.

With 350 points available for a GTD class win and 35-points for a pole position (as set by the Pro driver in the Pro-Am style lineup) the season will come down to a strong qualifying effort on Friday, November 12 and a stronger 10-hour race on Saturday. Pfaff, Vanthoor and Robichon hold 50-point advantages over the Paul Miller Racing Lamborghini driven by Bryan Sellers and Madison Snow. The Pfaff team's victory at VIR boosted its lead by an additional 18-points from the previous race. The success has given Porsche a 72-point gap ahead of Lamborghini in the Manufacturer standings (3077 – 3005).

Sitting in fourth-place of the GTD Team Championship, Wright Motorsports remains eligible to score the title as does Porsche factory driver Patrick Long (Westlake Village, California). Like Wright, Long is 279-points behind the leading Pfaff Porsche. Joining the longtime American “works” driver in the No. 16 Porsche 911 GT3 R racer will be Trent Hindman (West Long Branch, New Jersey) and Jan Heylen (Belgium). Long is tied for second-place with Bill Auberlen for most wins, three, by an active driver in the race (2005 – 2006 in GT2 class, 2007 in P2 class). Former Porsche factory driver Nick Tandy raced a Porsche to four victories here. Surprisingly, the Ohio-based Wright race team has never won the Atlanta endurance classic. Wright enters the final race of the season leading in the Michelin Endurance Cup by one-point. The title awards teams who excel at events of six-hours and longer. The race within a race awards points this weekend at the four, eight and ten-hour marks

Team Hardpoint closes-out the 2021 GTD class season in search of its first class victory. Athens, Georgia-resident Andrew Davis joins full-season regulars Rob Ferriol (Fayetteville, North Carolina) and Katherine Legge (United Kingdom) in the No. 88 Team Hardpoint Porsche 911 GT3 R for Saturday's finale.

Celebrating the final GTLM class race to be held, WeatherTech Racing has entered a second Porsche 911 RSR-19. Joining the full-season, two-time winning No. 79 machine of Cooper MacNeil (Hinsdale, Illinois), Mathieu Jaminet (France) and Matt Campbell (Australia) is the No. 97 to be piloted by the all-Porsche “works” driver lineup of Michael Christensen (Denmark), Kévin Estre (France) and Frédéric Makowiecki (France). Despite being internationally recognized for its successful, multi-car Porsche programs raced in the FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC), this is the first time that the Proton Competition-managed program will enter multiple cars in IMSA competition. The addition brings the class, making its final start before being removed from the championship structure in IMSA, to six-entries. WeatherTech Racing earned a class victory at the Mobil 1 Twelve Hours of Sebring in March with Campbell, Jaminet and MacNeil as well as a second win at Road America (MacNeil and Campbell) in August.

The full 10-hours of 2021 season finale will be aired live on television. NBC will show from the drop of the green flag at Noon ET through the first three hours of the race. At 3:00 p.m. ET, viewers can make one channel change to NBCSN and enjoy the final seven hours of coverage from Michelin Raceway Road Atlanta. Additionally, the live call by IMSA Radio can be found at IMSA.tv and on SiriusXM satellite radio at XM 202, Sirius/XM Internet 992. Live onboard footage of the No. 79 WeatherTech Racing Porsche 911 RSR-19 and the No. 9 Pfaff Motorsports Porsche 911 GT3 R can be found at IMSA.tv as well for viewers wishing to see the race from inside the cockpit of a Porsche 911 race car.

## Michelin Pilot Challenge.

A Porsche-built race car is also deep in the hunt for the GT4-spec GS class of the IMSA Michelin Pilot Challenge at Michelin Raceway Road Atlanta. The No. 16 Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 Clubsport of Atlanta's own Ryan Hardwick and Jan Heylen (Belgium) will seek the Team Championship for Wright Motorsports and the Manufacturer's title for Porsche. Heylen, with a string of podium finishes and back-to-back victories in the last two rounds – the first co-driving with Maxwell Root (San Diego, California) at WeatherTech Raceway Laguna Seca and the second helping Hardwick to his first Michelin Pilot Challenge victory at VIRginia International Raceway – has moved the Belgian now living in the United States into second-place in the Driver standings. Heylen is 30 points back from Bill Auberlen and Dillon Machavern (2360 – 2330) with 350 markers available for a win. Wright Motorsports stands the same amount behind the No. 95 of Turner Motorsports. Porsche is 60 points out of the lead currently held by BMW with two-hours of racing remaining in the year.

The Fox Factory 120 will air live on NBC TrackPass beginning at 1:10 p.m. ET. It will re-air on NBCSN, Tuesday, November 23 at 1:00 p.m. In addition, IMSA Radio will offer live coverage on IMSA.tv.

## The schedule (local time)

**Thursday, November 11**

9:20 am – 10:20 am: Free Practice 1

2:20 pm – 3:35 pm: Free Practice 2

6:30 pm – 8:00 pm: Free Practice 3

#### **Friday, November 12**

3:45 pm – 4:25 pm: Qualifying GT

#### **Saturday, November 13**

9:15 am – 9:35 am: Warmup

12:10 pm – 10:10 pm: Race

## **Drivers' comments before the race**

### **Cooper MacNeil, Driver, No. 79 WeatherTech Racing Porsche 911 RSR-19.**

"Together with Porsche we wanted to try and give the IMSA GTLM Class a proper send off. Porsche has been a consistent competitor in the class since its inception. The entry will give the field an even six cars and hopefully both of our WeatherTech Porsche entries will be a factor when the checker waves at 10:10 p.m. Saturday, November 13."

### **Michael Christensen, Driver, No. 97 WeatherTech Racing Porsche 911 RSR-19.**

"I am really looking forward to competing in the USA in the IMSA WeatherTech Championship again. I am looking forward to racing the WeatherTech Porsche RSR and see if we can get them another victory this year. Petit Le Mans is a very challenging race. Michelin Raceway Road Atlanta is narrow and makes for a fast and hectic race. People are excited and ambitious for the race which makes for some chaos on the track. We need to stay out of trouble and be ready to fight for the win late in the race."

### **Kévin Estre, Driver, No. 97 WeatherTech Racing Porsche 911 RSR-19.**

"I am glad to be competing at Petit Le Mans with Fred and Michael. I've driven a lot with Michael, and we've had a lot of success together. This will be my first time sharing a car with Fred, so that will be interesting. This will be my second Petit Le Mans, the first was in 2014 and it didn't go so well. I am looking forward to it. I don't have much experience at Michelin Raceway Road Atlanta, but I am glad to be back in the Porsche RSR with the Proton Competition guys and hope to win another big one for WeatherTech like we did at Sebring earlier in the year."

### **Frédéric Makowiecki, Driver, No. 97 WeatherTech Racing Porsche 911 RSR-19.**

"Petit Le Mans is a very special race, one of the best of the season. It is always a big fight. I've won it twice in GRLM last year in 2020 and my first in came in 2018. We will try to repeat this next week. This will be the first time all of us drive together in the Porsche RSR. We are motivated to have a good result. It is also special to be running the last race of the GTLM. The competition level will be high with BMW and Corvette. I am looking forward to the race."

### **Laurens Vanthoor, Driver, No. 9 Pfaff Motorsports Porsche 911 GT3 R.**

"I have been lucky enough to be in this position before. When I was younger, I would be terrified and stressed and thinking about everything too much. Now that I am getting older, I have more experience and I am better at dealing with it. Right now, I am quite relaxed, obviously some tension will build-up at the race, but there is not much you can do. There are so many factors that are out of your control. You can only do it to the best of your ability and work the best you can like we have been doing the last several races because we have been successful at those. We will see if that is enough. The work Pfaff has been doing the last several races has been incredible. The main strength is the atmosphere in the team, the way people work together. Everyone respects everyone. It makes us perform at a great level. Petit Le Mans is a tough race. Road Atlanta is a tough but exciting track. I love driving there. It is a big challenge but, in the race, in the dark, multi-class racing... it is kind of a hell out there. Two years ago, I won a championship there in the Coca-Cola Porsche 911 RSR so I hope I can do it this year in the 911 GT3 R."

**Lars Kern, Driver, No. 9 Pfaff Motorsports Porsche 911 GT3 R.**

"It's great to be back in the Plaid Porsche and leading the championship. Honestly, after our team's performance at Sebring, I knew if they proceed like this, we'll lead by the end of the year. It's a real special atmosphere at Petit Le Mans. For me, it's a bit like the Nürburgring 24 Hours, but with nicer weather! It's great to have the fans so close to the track, especially at turn two and three, which are beautiful."

**Zach Robichon, Driver, No. 9 Pfaff Motorsports Porsche 911 GT3 R.**

"If we look at the last few races, our mindset has been the right one and I don't see why we should change. The competition is too close to try and take a defensive approach. We need to go out there and keep performing at our best. We need to bear in mind that it is the end of the race that is going to be what matters. We have had a great stretch and if I could put it down to anything, it is teamwork. Everyone on the team is what has led us to be in this position. Everyone loves racing at Road Atlanta, it is one of the most fun tracks. It is quite late in the year so there will be a lot of darkness which will be exciting. Who doesn't love racing at Road Atlanta at night?"

**Patrick Long, Driver, No. 16 Wright Motorsports Porsche 911 GT3 R.**

"Great to be back at it with the finale at the Petit Le Mans. It is such a staple race for IMSA. It was also the first time I ever drove in an endurance sports car race as well [2003, TRG Porsche finishing GT class in fourth-place]. Great memories at this track but we have a job to do and that is to finish-up this season with another podium. The competition will be high, and the field will be stacked. I like our chances with our driver lineup with Jan back in the car. The team has been hitting its marks. It is going to be a great afternoon of racing with a little extra time in the dark so that will play into the strategy as well. We will need to be upfront all day if we want to be in a position to fight for a win so we will be executing on that plan. I am excited to get after it."

**Trent Hindman, Driver, No. 16 Wright Motorsports Porsche 911 GT3 R.**

"With Petit Le Mans being one of the marquee events on the IMSA calendar, it inherently brings the best out of every team that takes on the challenge. Ten hours on a short, balls to the wall racetrack like Road Atlanta is no easy task. The 1st Phorm/Wright Motorsports team has been a strong threat to win

every single race this year thanks to the quality of equipment underneath and execution of the team supporting us. We've got one more great opportunity to bring it home together in '21. I'd like to think the odds are overwhelmingly in our favor if we continue the job that we've been doing."

**Rob Ferriol, Driver/Team Principal, No. 88 Team Hardpoint Porsche 911 GT3 R.**

"Motul Petit Le Mans at Michelin Raceway Road Atlanta is such a great venue and event to end the season, much in the way the Rolex 24 is such a great way to start the season. The atmosphere is electric, fan turnout is always amazing, and the track itself is a blast to drive – there's nothing like coming down the hill into T12 full tilt in a Porsche 911 GT3 R! This year we've got two hometown heroes in the car between Katherine and Andrew, so I'm excited to see how we stack up when the fireworks go off Saturday night."

**Katherine Legge, Driver, No. 88 Team Hardpoint Porsche 911 GT3 R.**

"I am really looking forward to Petit. It's one of my favorite races on the schedule, and a great way to round out the season. It is my home race; a fantastic track and I love the format of the endurance races. With it being later in the year, it might add some temperature changes to the mix this weekend. It's fun to have Andrew back with Rob and I, and the three of us are dedicated to finishing strong in the No. 88 Richard Mille/GridRival Porsche 911 GT3 R."

**Andrew Davis, Driver, No. 88 Team Hardpoint Porsche 911 GT3 R.**

"I'm beyond excited to join Team Hardpoint once again, this time in my own backyard! I really believe in the program that Rob Ferriol has assembled, and it's truly an honor to be asked to return to the squad once again. Rob and Katherine are both great teammates. They create an open book environment which really helps me step in and perform my role to the best of my abilities. I can't wait to get back at it with this crew!"

Road Atlanta is a very special place for me, having grown up at the circuit since the age of four. Petit Le Mans has developed into an international event with a great deal of significance."

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

"Well, it all comes down to this final race for the Michelin Pilot Challenge championship. To think that our team has a shot to win the title at Road Atlanta is really humbling when you consider that we missed the first race at Daytona entirely. We have fought hard at every single race thereafter and have clawed our way all the way through the highly competitive GS class field to now have a shot at the overall championship. Personally, I couldn't wish for a better scenario than to compete for an overall championship at my home track, in front of so many friends and family from Atlanta. Our Wright Motorsports team has been in championship form all year, and we are all looking forward to this final race!"

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