

IMSA: Brilliant strategy and a lot of bad luck

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19/03/2017 At the 12 Hours of Sebring the new Porsche 911 RSR was on course for a podium result until shortly before the finish. Then, however, a tyre defect and a drive-through penalty put an end to Patrick Pilet's spectacular charge.

In fact, thanks to a sound race strategy and a strong performance from the pilots, even a maiden victory was within reach. Then, however, a tyre defect and a drive-through penalty put an end to Patrick Pilet's spectacular charge. The Frenchman had fought his way through the field in the 510 hp race car with the starting number 911 and was poised to snatch the lead. After 334 laps on the Sebring International Raceway, the legendary airfield circuit in the heart of Florida, the Porsche works driver and his teammates Dirk Werner (Germany) and Frédéric Makowiecki (France) ultimately had to settle for seventh place in the GTLM class. In the second 911 RSR fielded by the Porsche GT Team, Kévin Estre (France), Laurens Vanthoor (Belgium) and Richard Lietz (Austria) took the flag in eighth place.

The 65th edition of the 12 Hours of Sebring, which started in summer temperatures of over 25 degrees Celsius, treated fans to gripping racing from start to finish, particularly in the strongly represented GTLM class, which was packed with drama. Before the final pit stop the field was still running close together. Right up until this time, Porsche's strategy to setup the 911 so that it would perform at its best in the cooler hours of the evening unfolded brilliantly. But during a tyre change, an impact wrench suddenly gave up the ghost, resulting in a longer pit stop than planned for the number 911 car. As a consequence, Patrick Pilet fell down the field from second to fifth place.

Patrick Pilet: Breathtaking overtaking manoeuvres and fastest race lap

The Frenchman, who had started into the season with a second place with his teammates at the 24 Hours of Daytona, refused to give up. Putting in breathtaking overtaking manoeuvres and turning the fastest race lap, he battled his way up the order in a very short time to retake second place and was lying within striking distance of the leader. His spirited final charge, however, came to an abrupt end 33 minutes before the finish: Due to a tyre defect he had to come in for an unscheduled pit stop, and after the front left tyre was changed he then accelerated and drove over the hose of the impact wrench. The drive-through penalty that he received for this destroyed all hopes of clinching his second podium result of the season.

In the GTD class, the best Porsche 911 GT3 R finished on sixth place. One of the pilots driving Park Place Motorsports' 500 hp customer sports racer, which Porsche had designed for worldwide GT3 series on the basis of the 911 GT3 RS production sports car, was Jörg Bergmeister (Germany). His works driver colleague Michael Christensen (Denmark), the class winner at Daytona with Allegra Motorsports, crossed the finish line in tenth place.

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