



Porsche Penske Motorsport works team aims to defend championship lead

21/06/2023 Porsche Penske Motorsport travels to round five of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship as the leader of the team classification. In the 6 Hours of Watkins Glen in the US state of New York, the factory squad aims to extend its championship lead and propel Porsche to the top of the manufacturer's standings.

Preview

Porsche Penske Motorsport fields two Porsche 963 at Watkins Glen, with the customer team JDC-Miller MotorSports campaigning one identical hybrid prototype in the top GTP class. In the two GTD categories, four partner teams run a total of six Porsche 911 GT3 R.

After scoring top results at the Californian circuits of Long Beach and Laguna Seca recently, the works drivers Mathieu Jaminet from France and Nick Tandy from the UK moved to the top of the leaderboard in the drivers' classification. The pair in the No. 6 Porsche 963 is determined to defend their lead in the championship at Watkins Glen International. Felipe Nasr from Brazil and Australian Matt Campbell share driving duties in the sister car. The No. 7 entry secured the first pole position for Porsche Penske Motorsport in Laguna Seca. In the manufacturers' classification, Porsche currently ranks second. In the long and illustrious history of the race track in the Fingerlakes region of New York, the sports car manufacturer from Germany has achieved eleven overall victories.

"After the disappointment at Le Mans, we now want to continue the clear uptrend that we've demonstrated previously in the IMSA series," explains Thomas Laudenbach, Vice President Porsche Motorsport. "Our two Porsche 963 will be well prepared for the race and the driver pairings have already impressively displayed their ability. The North American endurance racing scene offers fans some gripping, balanced and spectacular racing at every event. I hope that we'll also be mixing with the main players at this fantastic show at Watkins Glen."

"We recently achieved some fantastic results in the sprint races of the IMSA series. Now it's time for another endurance event. We aim to shine there as well," states Urs Kuratle. The Director of Factory Motorsport LMDh adds: "Our team went testing at Watkins Glen a few weeks ago and has already set up the Porsche 963 to the special characteristics of this stunning parkland race track. Our goal is clear: we also want to take the lead in the manufacturers' championship."

"The team is completely focused on the task ahead at Watkins Glen. We want to continue fighting for the lead in the championship – especially after what happened at Le Mans," Jonathan Diuguid clarifies. The Managing Director of Porsche Penske Motorsport adds: "We learn something new at every race and we continue to improve the car and the team. Watkins Glen will be a huge challenge. The race is not as long as those in Daytona, Sebring or Le Mans, but the six-hour event should not be underestimated. We hope to benefit from our two days of testing at Watkins Glen and we look forward to heading into the second half of the season."

The race

The six-hour race has its roots in the Grand Prix Watkins Glen, which was contested on public roads for the first time in 1948. Eight years later, it switched to a purpose-built closed race track under the name Watkins Glen International. From 1961 to 1980, Formula One was contested regularly on the 3.4-mile (5.47-kilometer) course. At the same time, endurance racing became a regular fixture at the circuit, which features eleven turns and spectacular uphill and downhill passages. To date, Porsche has eleven overall victories at Watkins Glen.

The course nestles harmoniously into the forested and undulating landscape of the Finger Lakes, which lie close to the Canadian border and are extremely popular with tourists. Fast and flowing with dramatic elevation changes make it a favorite among drivers. Like on almost all North American tracks, Watkins

Glen has very few run-off zones. This adds to the thrill for drivers and spectators alike. Alongside long-distance races at Daytona, Sebring and the season finale at Road Atlanta, the six-hour event counts towards the IMSA Michelin Endurance Cup. This special classification includes the four longest races of the season.

The drivers

Mathieu Jaminet from France and Nick Tandy from the UK share the cockpit of Porsche Penske Motorsport's No. 6 car. The Englishman won the 24 Hours of Le Mans in 2015. In April, the pair clinched the maiden victory for the Porsche 963 at Long Beach. Scoring second at the previous race in Laguna Seca, Jaminet/Tandy moved to the top of the drivers' standings. The crew in the No. 7 sister car, Felipe Nasr from Brazil and Australian Matt Campbell, currently ranks sixth. Campbell achieved the first pole position for the Porsche 963 at Laguna Seca.

The customer teams

The Porsche 963 fielded by the customer team JDC-Miller MotorSports tackles the top GTP class. The squad from Minneapolis put in a strong drive at its debut in Laguna Seca and crossed the finish line in seventh place. The experienced German driver Mike Rockenfeller and the young Dutchman Tijmen van der Helm share driving duties in the yellow No. 5 hybrid prototype.

In the GTD-Pro class, Pfaff Motorsports fields one Porsche 911 GT3 R. The defending champion of the top GT category currently ranks third in the championship after a win in Sebring and podium finishes in Long Beach and Laguna Seca. The No. 9 racer from the Canadian squad is helmed by Austrian Klaus Bachler and Patrick Pilet from France. In the GTD category, three customer teams field a total of five GT3 cars from Weissach, Germany. The Laguna Seca class winners Kellymoss with Riley and the Wright Motorsports outfit each field two vehicles, with AO Racing running one car.

Porsche GT4 e-Performance demonstrates its potential at Watkins Glen

As part of the support program of the IMSA race weekend in Watkins Glen, spectators will not only be treated to two races of the hotly contested Porsche Deluxe Carrera Cup North America. In addition, Porsche brand ambassador Jörg Bergmeister will turn demo laps in the Porsche GT4 e-Performance on Friday (June 23) and Sunday (June 25). The overall Daytona winner and Le Mans class victor will push the all-electric test car delivering up to 800 kW (1,088 PS) to the limit. The aim is to underline the power of the potential customer racer of the future. The demo run of the impressive concept car is part of the GT4 e-Performance World Tour. The vehicle has already made appearances in Goodwood (United Kingdom), Leipzig (Germany), Austin, Los Angeles and Atlanta as well as at the Race of Champions in Sweden.

Overview of vehicles and drivers

GTP class (Porsche 963):

JDC-Miller MotorSports #5: Mike Rockenfeller (D) / Tijmen van der Helm (NL)

Porsche Penske Motorsport #6: Mathieu Jaminet (F) / Nick Tandy (UK)

Porsche Penske Motorsport #7: Matt Campbell (AUS) / Felipe Nasr (BR)

GTD-Pro class (Porsche 911 GT3 R):

Pfaff Motorsports #9: Klaus Bachler (A) / Patrick Pilet (F)

GTD-class (Porsche 911 GT3 R):

Wright Motorsports #16: Ryan Hardwick (USA) / Zacharie Robichon (CDN) / Jan Heylen (B)

Wright Motorsports #77: Alan Brynjolfsson (USA) / Trent Hindman (USA) / Maxwell Root (USA)

AO Racing #80: PJ Hyett (USA) / Sebastian Priaulx (UK) / Gunnar Jeannette (USA)

Kellymoss with Riley #91: Alan Metni (USA) / Kay van Berlo (NL) / Jaxon Evans (NZ)

Kellymoss with Riley #92: David Brule (USA) / Alec Udell (USA) / Julien Andlauer (F)

The schedule (local time, CEST -6)

Friday, 23 June

11:50 am – Noon: Demo laps GT4 e-Performance

4:30 pm – 6:00 pm: Free practice 1

Saturday, 24 June

8:00 am – 9:45 am: Free practice 2

1:20 pm – 1:35 pm: Qualifying GTD-Pro/GTD

2:10 pm – 2:30 pm: Qualifying GTP

Sunday, 25 June

8:00 am – 8:20 am: Warmup

8:30 am – 8:50 am: Demo laps GT4 e-Performance

10:40 am – 4:40 pm: "Six Hours of the Glen" race

Drivers' comments on the Watkins Glen race

Mathieu Jaminet (Porsche 963 No. 6): "I wasn't particularly happy with Le Mans. So, I'm pleased to quickly get back into the IMSA series in the Porsche 963. Nick and I are leading the IMSA drivers' championship. The main thing is that we get through the six hours at Watkins Glen in one piece and collect a lot of points. Our two-day test at the track was helpful. We gained important experience and data, but we still don't know where we stand compared to the opposition."

Matt Campbell (Porsche 963 No. 7): "I'm super excited about the race at Watkins Glen. A few weeks ago we conducted very successful tests there, and we made noticeable progress. Before this test, I'd only ever driven GT cars at Watkins Glen. I like the track. It's wonderfully fast and offers a lot of grip. It's even more fun with a prototype. I hope we can take home maximum points with our number 7 car."

Mike Rockenfeller (Porsche 963 No. 5): "The Watkins Glen course is fantastic to drive. I know the track and I can't wait to get back in the Porsche 963 for our second race in the car. We learned a lot at our debut in Laguna Seca, but unlike many others, we didn't test at Watkins Glen. So, we have to quickly work out a good setup in practice. If we finish the race cleanly and unscathed, then we should get a good result. I'm not expecting miracles though – we have to be realistic. In a way, the season is only just starting for me, because from now on I can focus fully on the IMSA series."

Klaus Bachler (Porsche 911 GT3 R No. 9): "We tested at Watkins Glen about a month ago. The track is super cool with plenty of grip – significantly more than the circuits in Long Beach and Laguna Seca. Watkins Glen is really fast and offers several overtaking opportunities. It's going to be fun because the LMP2 and LMP3 classes are back. With such a packed grid, it should be an action-packed six hours. We're currently in third place and are in the fight for the championship. So, we must be well prepared, make it safely over the race distance and score as many points as possible."

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Subline: Jonathan Diuguid, Managing Director of Porsche Penske Motorsport

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