Out On Top. Porsche 911 RSR Finishes One-Two, Wright Takes GTD Win In IMSA Finale.

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Out On Top. Porsche 911 RSR Finishes One-Two, Wright Takes GTD Win In IMSA Finale.

The Porsche GT Team swept the top two steps of the podium in its final outing in the GTLM class of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship at the Mobil 1 Twelve Hours of Sebring. Meanwhile, Wright Motorsports also earned its first win of the year in the season-finale at Sebring International Raceway on Saturday, November 14. In the dramatic twelve-hour race in Sebring, Florida, Britain's Nick Tandy, Frédéric Makowiecki (France) and Earl Bamber (New Zealand) scored the victory with the No. 911 Porsche 911 RSR-19. Bamber added double to his trophy case by also clinching second-place in the No. 912 sister car he shared with Laurens Vanthoor (Belgium) and Neel Jani (Switzerland). In the GTD class, the customer program of Wright Motorsports took the first win of the year for the Porsche 911 GT3 R on the historic Sebring International Raceway circuit with North America's only Porsche factory driver Patrick Long (Manhattan Beach, California), Ryan Hardwick (Atlanta, Georgia) and Jan Heylen (Belgium) behind the wheel of the No. 16.

The wins represent the 73rd and 74th class victories at Sebring, extending the German marque's manufacturers victory record at the track. Porsche also holds the overall record with 18 race wins.

In an eventful twelve-hour race, the decision in the GTLM class went down to the final 15 minutes of the race. After the last of nine yellow flags slowed the field, Tandy had moved himself into the slipstream of the leading BMW. Shortly after the last restart, the frontrunner sustained tire damage in the aftermath of a collision between several GTD class cars. Tandy snatched the lead in his ca. 515 hp Porsche 911 RSR race car and held it through the checkered flag. For the British racer and his teammate Makowiecki, this was the third victory in a row at the esteemed Sebring endurance classic. It was also the third-straight win to close-out the 2020 IMSA season for the Porsche GT Team. Tandy/Makowiecki won at Petit Le Mans and Bamber/Vanthoor at the penultimate round at WeatherTech Raceway Laguna Seca. Bamber, who drove stints in both works cars at the season finale, crossed the finish line in second-place in the No. 912, just 9.025 seconds behind Tandy. The Porsche factory squad concluded the last season with the 911 RSR in the GTLM class third in the championship.

There was a huge celebration in the pits of the Porsche privateer team Wright Motorsports as well. Long, Hardwick and Heylen brought the 500+hp Porsche 911 GT3 R racer across the finish line in first-place. Despite a broken shock absorber, and an unplanned change of the brakes, the John Wright-led customer team maintained their composure in the fierce competition of the Pro-Am style class to take their first win of the season. The Batavia, Ohio-based operation wrapped-up the championship in second-place, just two points shy of the title.

Shortly before the race, the works team bid the loyal fans of the factory Porsche 911 RSR program farewell with a special "Thank You". Five GTLM Porsche race cars ranging across the 2016, 2018, 2019 and 2020 seasons turned three parade laps decked-out in the much-loved liveries of Brumos Racing, Mobil1, Coca-Cola, an early corporate livery and the special "Thank You" farewell wrap used by the Porsche GT Team in this year's race. To the delight of spectators, the drivers Laurens Vanthoor, Frédéric Makowiecki, Patrick Long, Jonathan Bennett and Cooper MacNeil performed full-throttle burn-outs on the frontstraight of the 3.74-mile, 17-turn race circuit. On Wednesday evening, Pascal Zurlinden (Director Factory Motorsport) and Head of Operations Steffen Höllwarth thanked all employees of the Core autosport squad at an emotional team event.

Pascal Zurlinden, Director Factory Motorsport.
"That's just crazy. There's no better way to wrap up a factory program. At the end of our IMSA campaign, we secured three wins in a row at Road Atlanta, Laguna Seca and now Sebring. That's phenomenal. Congratulations as well to our customer squad Wright Motorsports. And let's not forget our one-two success today at the WEC in Bahrain. There, too, we managed to celebrate another class win with a customer team. It was an incredibly successful day for Porsche Motorsport."

Steffen Höllwarth, Head of Operations IMSA Championship.
"I'm incredibly proud of the team. This weekend wasn't easy for us. Because of the upcoming farewell, the mood was different than usual, but everyone coped just fine. We weren't the fastest in the field, but we were the ones who made the least mistakes – and that's how things like this happen. Suddenly you find yourself at the front. After three straight wins at Sebring, I'd say that this track has become our turf. Now it's time to celebrate!"

Frédéric Makowiecki, Driver, No. 911 Porsche GT Team Porsche 911 RSR-19.
"I can't believe it! This is the third win in a row for Nick and me at this 12-hour classic. It's a very special and unforgettable achievement. We may not have been the fastest today, but at such moments, that's precisely the time to throw our hat into the ring. We worked flawlessly, the crew did a perfect job and as such we virtually forced our luck. I'm over the moon."

Nick Tandy, Driver, No. 911 Porsche GT Team Porsche 911 RSR-19.
"Our third straight win at Sebring, plus a double victory for Porsche – at the last outing of our works team no less! It doesn't get better than that! Despite all the rejoicing, I feel very sad at the same time. We've scored so many incredible victories over the past few years and I've grown very close to the team. We'll party hard tonight – so hard, in fact, that unfortunately we'll have to postpone the loading of equipment into the trucks until tomorrow."

Earl Bamber, Driver, Nos. 911 and 912 Porsche GT Team Porsche 911 RSR-19.
"It feels somehow very strange to be called on to the podium as the winner and runner up at the same time. You don't get that every day. I contributed only in a minor way to the victory of number 911 car, my main task was to do the stints in 'my' number 912 car. Our 911 RSR could never match the pace of the sister car, but we still didn't give up. A one-two at the finale – there's no better way to bid farewell to a racing series. It'll remain in our memories forever."

Laurens Vanthoor, Driver, No. 912 Porsche GT Team Porsche 911 RSR-19.
"There's nothing better than such success at a farewell. This is a dream result for Porsche, of course. At the same time, I'm a little disappointed. Our No. 912 was never really up with the play in the race. We were very strong in the practice sessions, so we thought we'd have a good chance of winning. But at least it stays within the family."

Neel Jani, Driver, No. 912 Porsche GT Team Porsche 911 RSR-19.
"That was a perfect debut for me at the wheel of the 911 RSR. It's almost unbelievable that I was able to contribute to the one-two result for Porsche at the final factory outing in the IMSA series. This result makes me feel fantastic. I'm absolutely thrilled!"

Patrick Long, Driver, No. 16 Wright Motorsports Porsche 911 GT3 R.
"In the last few hours I saw a few scenarios with the championship implications and that the race might be up for grabs. It was difficult to battle with our issue [broken left-rear shock absorber] because the car would start bouncing and it was a high risk situation. But we bided our time, put ourselves in a position to capitalize and we executed. I am so proud of what this small organization has been able to achieve this year. 'Thank you' to everyone involved for putting us on the grid and giving us a chance to fight these big organizations. This is a big momentum booster as we move into our sophomore year next season."

Ryan Hardwick, Driver, No. 16 Wright Motorsports Porsche 911 GT3 R.
"We came into this race with one goal. We knew we had to win. It was the only shot we had. It didn't look like it was going to happen there for a while. We were dealing with a left-rear shock that wasn't working properly for most of the race and it was really, really tough to drive for all of us. Jan and Pat did amazing! They are the ones that brought it home. Our team was unbelievable. We never made a mistake in the pits, we did our job, we accomplished our goal and what we came here for. We fell just a little bit short in the end on the championship but we are really proud of this win. This is a big step for our program, 1st Phorm and Wright Motorsports. This was a really big historic day for us."

Jan Heylen, Driver, No. 16 Wright Motorsports Porsche 911 GT3 R.
"This is just unbelievable. To be here with this team and Patrick and Ryan is just unbelievable. I don't' think anyone knew this whole race we were driving around with a broken damper. I have no words. I couldn't be happier. This is one of the big ones. Pat did an amazing job. That last stint was unbelievable. Super happy!"

Porsche Expansion. Team Hardpoint EBM Enters IMSA with Porsche 911 GT3 R.

Under the banner of the previously announced joint venture between Team Hardpoint and Earl Bamber Motorsport (EBM), Team Hardpoint will return to principal Rob Ferriol's roots for the 2021 IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship GT Daytona (GTD) season. In addition to the recently unveiled 2021 Porsche Carrera Cup North America program, Team Hardpoint EBM will enter a Porsche 911 GT3 R in a full-season 2021 effort with Ferriol and current Porsche factory driver Earl Bamber taking driving duties.

Bamber's record behind the wheel of a Porsche is impeccable. The New Zealand-native and Team Hardpoint EBM co-principal is the 2019 IMSA WeatherTech GT Le Mans class champion, a two-time winner of the 24 Hours of Le Mans and the 2017 FIA World Endurance Championship point champion. Bamber became available when the Porsche GT Team reached the conclusion of its successful IMSA run following the 2020 season.

Ferriol began his racing career as a member of the Porsche Club of America (PCA), participating in club racing and track day events around the United States, then moved to IMSA's Porsche GT3 Cup Challenge USA by Yokohama series just two seasons ago. The lessons learned in those two seasons of one-make racing with the Porsche 911 GT3 Cup race car helped lay a foundation for the move to the GTD class, and, after a rookie season behind the wheel of an Audi R8 LMS GT3, will see him return to those Porsche roots in 2021.

Team Hardpoint EBM became the first team to announce a joint venture for a multi-car customer program in the recently unveiled Porsche Carrera Cup North America single make series on October 17. With the team's move to the Porsche 911 GT3 R in the WeatherTech series, Team Hardpoint EBM will now offer an incentive program for Team Hardpoint EBM drivers in the single-make Porsche championship.

Any Team Hardpoint EBM Carrera Cup driver who finishes the season in the top three of the point championship in the Pro or Pro-Am category will earn a free test day in the Team Hardpoint Porsche 911 GT3 R. For the ultimate prize, a Team Hardpoint EBM driver who wins the 2021 Pro category championship in Porsche Carrera Cup North America will also earn a paid seat with Team Hardpoint EBM in the 2022 Rolex 24 At Daytona.

The 2021 IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship season opens with the Roar Before the 24 test, January 22 – 24, 2021 and the Rolex 24 At Daytona just one week later, January 28 – 31. The current schedule for the 2021 Porsche Carrera Cup North America marks the opener at Sebring International Raceway, March 17 – 20.

Earl Bamber, Driver/Team Principal, Team Hardpoint EBM Porsche 911 GT3 R.

"It's really exciting to see the partnership between Team Hardpoint and Earl Bamber Motorsport expand into GTD. As a team owner, I'm very proud to see all of our hard work come to fruition. As a driver, I'm thrilled to stay in IMSA next year. I love the tracks, I love the competition and I love the fans. I'm going to do my best to get Rob and Team Hardpoint EBM some wins in 2021."

Rob Ferriol, Driver/Team Principal, Team Hardpoint EBM Porsche 911 GT3 R.
"This is an exciting chapter not just for Team Hardpoint EBM, but also for me personally. I've loved Porsches since long before I could afford one. When my business started to see some success a few years ago, the first gift I bought myself was a used Porsche 911. The first time I was on a racetrack, and the first time I went racing – both Porsches. So to have this opportunity to not only expand the Team Hardpoint EBM partnership into the WeatherTech series, but also share driving duties in the Porsche 911 GT3 R is a dream come true. When Porsche announced that the IMSA GTLM program was coming to a close, I was among the many Porsche enthusiasts who were losing their rooting interest. Hopefully, Earl and I can give those very passionate fans another Porsche to root for next year."

Will Bamber, Team Manager and co-principal, Team Hardpoint EBM.
"There's nothing better than throwing it all out there and backing your own product. Porsche has done that and we're right behind them. With our joint venture Team Hardpoint EBM, it's exciting to have that whole pyramid contained with our team. Porsche allows us to do that. We believe that we should be reinvesting back into the sport and in our own customers, to give them an opportunity forward beyond the trophy at the end of the year. Earl and I coming up, as young guys, both got opportunities. We had to push for it, but it was done by reward and merit and you just need that chance sometimes. Through the team car in GTD, we can do that. It's something we've been trying to do globally and it should be an exciting program for all young drivers who are trying to make it as a professional."

Global One-Two. Porsche Earns Top-Two Spots at the WEC Season Finale.

The Porsche GT Team wrapped-up the 2019/2020 season of the FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC) with first and second-place finishes in the LMGTE-Pro category at the Bahrain International Circuit. Kévin Estre (France) and Michael Christensen (Denmark) took the green flag in the eight-hour race from pole position and crossed the finish line in first-place. Their teammates, Richard Lietz (Austria) and Gianmaria Bruni (Italy), fought their way from fourth-place at the start to finish in second-place. For the German sports car manufacturer, this is the third victory out of eight WEC races with the newly developed ca. 515 hp 911 RSR-19. Fourteen months ago, Porsche won the season-opening round at Silverstone in Great Britain – on that occasion, Lietz/Bruni took the flag ahead of Estre/Christensen. In August, the French-Danish duo reciprocated with a victory at the Spa-Francorchamps six-hour race.

In a banner day, Porsche won both GT classes (LMGTE-Am and LMGTE-Pro) at the final round of the season. Porsche brand ambassador Jörg Bergmeister (Germany), Porsche Mobil 1 Supercup winner

Larry ten Voorde (Netherlands) and Egidio Perfetti (Norway) claimed victory in the LMGTE-Am class for the Team Project 1 customer squad.

Like the two work teams in the LMGTE-Pro category, Porsche split the strategy of the two 911 RSR on the 3.36-miles (5.412-kilometer) Bahrain International Circuit, which is known for its particularly abrasive asphalt. Estre and Christensen tackled the qualifying each with new Michelin tires and secured pole position. Lietz and Bruni, however, shared one set of new tires. Starting the race in fourth-place, they were the fastest of the three vehicles who had implemented the same tactic. Their advantage in the race was an additional set of fresh Michelin tires at their disposal.

Accordingly, tire strategy proved paramount at the eight-hour race. The race began with hot air and track temperatures in the daytime and ran into the cooler night. Start driver Estre immediately took the lead. The No. 92 Porsche only relinquished this position once – when coming in for the first refueling stop – the sister car only had to change two tires, making the pit stop shorter. The third pit stop, which was brought forward as a result of a full course yellow situation, did not run as expected for the No. 91 car. When the race resumed quicker than anticipated, the hoped-for advantage evaporated. When the safety car was deployed for its one and only outing at the halfway point of the relatively incident-free season finale, the 911 RSR driven by Lietz und Bruni caught-up with the leaders. On the cooling asphalt, the pair moved into second-place behind Estre and Christensen with a good three hours to go and ultimately rounded off the one-two result for Porsche.

Porsche finished second in the GT manufacturers' championship of the FIA World Endurance Championship.

Two Porsche teams also climbed the podium in the LMGTE-Am class, in which five 2017-spec 911 RSR competed. Bergmeister, ten Voorde and Perfetti claimed victory. Porsche Junior Jaxon Evans (New Zealand), Germany's Marco Holzer and Khaled Al Qubaisi (United Arab Emirates) planted the 911 RSR fielded by Dempsey Proton Racing in third-place in their class. In addition, positions five, six and seven in the GTE-Am class went to Porsche customer teams.

Fritz Enzinger, Vice President Porsche Motorsport.
"We managed to conclude the debut season of our latest 911 RSR as we began it in Silverstone, which now feels like an eternity ago: with a one-two result in the FIA WEC. With a total of three victories in its maiden season, we've clearly showcased the potential of this racing vehicle. For this, I'd like to thank everyone involved here in Bahrain as well as those back at our workshop in Weissach."

Alexander Stehlig, Head of Operations, FIA WEC.
"A fantastic race – all in for Porsche! Pole position, first and second-places in the Pro category and first in the Am class, what more do we want? The balance of the cars was super and, unlike the others, we didn't have any problems. We've experienced a long, tough year with several setbacks. This makes it all the more wonderful that we can head into the winter break with this success. It was 'summa cum laude' effort from the entire team. We'll take this motivation with us and do our utmost to build on this performance at Sebring next year."

Kévin Estre, Driver, No. 92 Porsche GT Team Porsche 911 RSR.
"This was a very important success for Porsche. Unfortunately, we were out of contention for the championship but we knew this before the weekend. We defended first-place at the start and led the field on almost every lap – although our huge advantage shrunk due to the safety car phase at halftime. After that, we had to work hard to eke out an advantage again. There were several different tire strategies. The sister car kept a fresh set more for the race; we wanted to drive on the tires as consistently as possible through the race. Ultimately, things got pretty exciting again between us. I'm very, very proud of this team."

Michael Christensen, Driver, No. 92 Porsche GT Team Porsche 911 RSR.
"It's terrific that we can end the season with a double victory. We did pretty well here in Bahrain last December, but we were hampered by a technical problem. We've now settled that score. It's wonderful that the year has ended like this."

Gianmaria Bruni, Driver, No. 91 Porsche GT Team Porsche 911 RSR.
"First and second – what a fantastic weekend for Porsche. After the 24 Hours of Le Mans, this result comes just at the right time. The team made a great comeback. Our strategy worked well, Richard drove a great race and I, too, had some gripping duels on the track, where I managed to overtake several cars."

Richard Lietz, Driver, No. 91 Porsche GT Team Porsche 911 RSR.
"A wonderful race, I'm happy for the Porsche Team. First and second; we did everything right with a great strategy. I'm very proud of the way we tackled this weekend. Saving a fresh set of tires for the race was the key factor. The fact that we could then bring this result home safely for the team is ok, because that's what racing is about."

Jörg Bergmeister, Driver, No. 56 Team Project 1 Porsche 911 RSR.
"What can I say? I assured Egidio before the race that we'd win here. He and Larry did a great job. My stint in the middle of the race was actually pretty easy. The Porsche was running well, perfect teamwork – a well-deserved victory."

Larry ten Voorde, Driver, No. 56 Team Project 1 Porsche 911 RSR.
"Incredible – my second class win in the WEC – and again in Bahrain of all places! I want to thank Egidio Perfetti and Jörg Bergmeister for allowing me to drive with them. I pushed hard. After making contact while lapping another car, it got really tight for us towards the end. The wonderful end to a mega season."

Jaxon Evans, Driver, No. 88 Dempsey-Proton Racing Porsche 911 RSR.
"Words fail me right now. My debut in the WEC was great fun. We knew after the free practice that we had a fast car. In qualifying, we saved a set of fresh tires. It's wonderful that we made it onto the podium."

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