

Podium for Laurens Vanthoor and Earl Bamber with the Porsche 911 GT3 R

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17/11/2019 Porsche has finished on the podium at the FIA GT World Cup in Macau with two of Rowe Racing's 911 GT3 R.

Race

The works drivers Laurens Vanthoor (Belgium) and Earl Bamber (New Zealand) treated fans to a gripping fight in the Chinese metropolis and took the flag in second and third. The identical vehicles fielded by Absolute Racing driven by Kévin Estre (France) and Alexandre Imperatori (Switzerland) retired early on the fast street circuit.

At the start of the 18-lap main race, Vanthoor overtook his brand colleague Bamber and then set his sights on the leader. Despite putting in fast lap times, the Belgian found no way past the leading Mercedes. In the twelfth lap, Vanthoor's IMSA teammate from New Zealand passed him. Bamber put pressure on the eventual winner Raffaele Marciello, posting one record lap after the other and then made one final attempt in the last lap – in vain. Shortly before the flag, Bamber waited for his factory driver teammate to hand a well-deserved second place back to Vanthoor.

Bad luck plagued the Absolute Racing team in the fourth lap of the FIA GT World Cup. During a spirited chase through the field, the world sports car champion Estre crashed into the barrier in the fast Mandarin turn and had to retire. At the same time, his teammate Imperatori was also forced to retire as a result of damage after the two made contact with their 911 GT3 R, which is based on the high performance Porsche 911 GT3 RS road-going sports car. Until their early retirement, the pair had put in a strong drive with thrilling duels.

Comments on the race

Fritz Enzinger (Vice President Motorsport): "Congratulations to Mercedes. We tried everything, and we had an incredibly fast car for the race. Unfortunately, it wasn't quite enough for Porsche's maiden Macau win. At the end of the day, it was anything but a bad weekend for Porsche with two podium finishes on Saturday and Sunday. We're satisfied, but we still have a score to settle in Macau."

Sebastian Golz (Project Manager Porsche 911 GT3 R): "Our Porsche 911 GT3 R was the fastest car in the pack. We were able to close the gap to the leader, and we clocked the fastest lap time. Still, there was no way we could overtake on this narrow circuit. Two podium spots are okay. What makes me happy, though, is the fact that all four Porsche 911 GT3 R were fast. We had the performance. And our teams Rowe Racing and Absolute Racing did a terrific job."

Laurens Vanthoor (Porsche 911 GT3 R #99): "Earl and I tried everything to finally bring home the first Macau victory for Porsche. We were really not far off. I got off the line better than Earl and managed to pass him. I then went all-out for the lead spot but had no real chance to overtake. I knew that Earl is really fast here. That's why I let him pass me. Unfortunately he wasn't able to fight for the victory either. It's a shame but we all worked perfectly as a team and tried absolutely everything."

Earl Bamber (Porsche 911 GT3 R #98): "That was an exciting and intense race. Our car was really fast, particularly in the corners. Unfortunately we had no chance to overtake on the straights. Our team worked perfectly together. After Laurens had tried everything to get past the leader, he let me past to have a go and I tried as well to the flag. We weren't far off, I was on the bumper of the leading car but there was just no way past. Unfortunately we have to wait for our first Macau victory, but podium spots aren't bad either."

Alexandre Imperatori (Porsche 911 GT3 R #911): "Unfortunately our race was over early. Kévin touched the rear of my car while overtaking in the Lisboa turn and I hit the barriers on the left. The rear

of the car was damaged. I tried for another two laps but I lost a lot of time in the fast corners. It simply didn't make sense to continue so I had to park the car. It's a shame, but that's how it is in Macau: all or nothing. This time it was nothing."

Kévin Estre (Porsche 911 GT3 R #912): "My start was good and I managed to make up one position. I was then behind my teammate Alex. Unfortunately there was a misunderstanding and our cars made contact while overtaking. My car was fast and I wanted to get ahead. I took a big risk and I overdid it slightly in the Mandarin corner: I hit the inside of the kerb, veered too wide and landed in the barrier – and that was the end."

Race result

1. Raffaele Marciello (I), Mercedes-AMG GT3, 18 laps
2. Laurens Vanthoor (B), Porsche 911 GT3 R, + 3.818 seconds
3. Earl Bamber (NZ), Porsche 911 GT3 R, + 4.700 seconds
15. Kévin Estre (F), Porsche 911 GT3 R, + 14 laps
16. Alexandre Imperatori (CH), Porsche 911 GT3 R, + 14 laps

Full results at https://www.its-results.com/

Qualifying race

At the qualifying race in China's gamblers' paradise of Macau, the Porsche drivers have secured excellent starting positions for the FIA GT World Cup (17 November). At the 12-lap event on the 6.1-kilometre street circuit, works drivers Earl Bamber (New Zealand) and Laurens Vanthoor (Belgium) claimed positions two and three. The two Porsche 911 GT3 R fielded by Rowe Racing will tackle the main race from the first and second grid row. In the identical vehicle campaigned by Absolute Racing, Alexandre Imperatori (Switzerland) and Kévin Estre (France) achieved positions six and eight.

The qualifying race, which started 30 minutes late due to technical problems with the start lights, was punctuated by accidents and safety car phases. Bamber and Vanthoor took up the qualifying race from positions three and four and made up one place each in the first lap. The two reigning IMSA champions then proceeded to put the leader under pressure. In the final phase, the two works drivers posted the fastest lap times in their Porsche 911 GT3 R racers, which is based on the high performance 911 GT3 RS road-going sports car. The Guia Circuit, parts of which are only seven metres wide, made overtaking difficult.

World sports car champion Estre put in a spirited charge in the No. 912 vehicle. After an accident during practice which required the engine to be swapped out, the Frenchman had to start from the last grid position and made up nine positions over the course of the qualifying race. His teammate Imperatori (No. 911) put in a flawless drive to finish on sixth.

Quotes from the qualifying race

Sebastian Golz (Project Manager Porsche 911 GT3 R): "We had a clean and successful qualifying race. Our goal was to get all the cars further up the field. We achieved this – all four 911 GT3 R made up ground. It was very clear that our car has a lot of power. Now we'll focus totally on meticulously preparing for the main race and then go all-out. We now want to take the final step to the top."

Earl Bamber (Porsche 911 GT3 R #98): "That was a great race. I made up one position and now I can start the main race from the first grid row. This starting position gives me a good chance to win my first Macau race – but Laurens starts from third so anything is possible. Still, right now I'm simply thrilled about today's result. Two Porsche 911 GT3 R on the podium – it's a great day for us."

Laurens Vanthoor (Porsche 911 GT3 R #99): "We took a step in the right direction in the qualifying race, namely forwards. From third on the grid I expect I have good chances in the main race. Still, it's difficult for us to overtake on the long straights. Corners are our strong point, but you can't get past the other cars there. That's why it's important to get a really good jump off the line tomorrow."

Result qualifying race

1. Raffaele Marciello (I), Mercedes-AMG GT3, 12 laps
2. Earl Bamber (NZ), Porsche 911 GT3 R, + 0.866 seconds
3. Laurens Vanthoor (B), Porsche 911 GT3 R, + 1.538 seconds
6. Alexandre Imperatori (CH), Porsche 911 GT3 R, + 10.377 seconds
8. Kévin Estre (F), Porsche 911 GT3 R, + 11.720 seconds

Qualifying

The best Porsche 911 GT3 R takes up the qualifying race at the FIA GT World Cup in Macau (China) from third place. Works driver Earl Bamber (New Zealand) lapped the 6.1-kilometre Guia Circuit in the No. 98 vehicle in a time of 2:16.066 minutes. Laurens Vanthoor (Belgium), who also competes for the Porsche Rowe Racing team, planted the No. 99 sister car on fourth position. Driving for Absolute Racing, Alexandre Imperatori (Switzerland) and Kévin Estre (France) qualified on positions nine and 14 respectively.

The qualifying on the fast street circuit in Asia's gambling paradise was red-flagged twice. For Bamber and Vanthoor, who had turned the fastest laps in free practice on Thursday and Friday, these interruptions proved unfortunate. The two Porsche works drivers and the reigning IMSA champions were forced to abandon their flying laps.

The reigning World Sports Car Champion Estre experienced a difficult qualifying session. The

Frenchman, whose Porsche 911 GT3 R (No. 912) sustained damages in an accident during the second free practice, could only rejoin the action at a later stage after extensive repairs. His Absolute Racing teammate, Imperatori, secured a respectable starting spot with ninth place.

The qualifying race over twelve laps gets underway on Saturday, 16 November, at 13:05 hrs local time (6:05 hrs CET). The main 18-lap race takes off on Sunday, 17 November, at 12:25 hrs local time (5:25 hrs CET).

Qualifying quotes

Sebastian Golz (Project Manager Porsche 911 GT3 R): "That was a chaotic qualifying. The two Porsche 911 GT3 R fielded by Rowe Racing are well positioned on positions three and four, but more would have been possible. The split times on the fastest laps looked promising, but both red flags came out at the worst possible moment. So they remained in their second row positions. We are heading to race day feeling positive because, as the practice sessions have underlined, we have the necessary performance. I'm relieved that Kévin's car was back in action just in time after the accident. All four of our cars will start the qualifying race on Saturday."

Earl Bamber (Porsche 911 GT3 R #98): "Our car was really good in qualifying. The fact that our lap times were faster than the best results from the practice underscores this. Still, it wasn't quite enough for the top. I don't know where the others suddenly found the speed. P3 is a decent starting position for the qualifying race. I definitely have the chance to fight for victory from here."

Laurens Vanthoor (Porsche 911 GT3 R #99): "I'm not very happy. In the run-up to our qualifying in Macau there were a lot of delays so that our session started much later. The sun had almost set and the temperatures were lower than expected. This affected our car's balance. And I didn't get the best out of the car either. I made a minor mistake on every lap. Now Earl and I line up alongside each other on the second grid row. I hope we can make up ground at the start of the qualifying race."

Alexandre Imperatori (Porsche 911 GT3 R #911): "I'm disappointed, because a lot more would have been possible. My sector times were good and I was on clearly improving. Ironically, the red flag came out in the last corner and I had to abandon my flying lap. I simply didn't perform at my best at the limit on my second set of tyres. In some places I overdid it and touched the barriers – typical for Macau. Unfortunately, it was only good for ninth. There was definitely potential for a much better result."

Kévin Estre (Porsche 911 GT3 R #912): "I'm pleased that I was still able to take part in the qualifying after my accident. The Absolute Racing team did great work with the colleagues from Porsche Motorsport and Rowe Racing. Fifteen minutes after the start of the qualifying my car was back on its wheels. Unfortunately there were still a few components on the vehicle that didn't work perfectly. Under these circumstances, I couldn't achieve more. I hope I can still work my way up the order in the qualifying race."

Qualifying result

1. Raffaele Marciello (I), Mercedes-AMG GT3, 2:15.669 minutes
2. Dries Vanthoor (B), Audi R8 LMS, 2:15.972 minutes
3. Earl Bamber (NZ), Porsche 911 GT3 R, 2:16.066 minutes
4. Laurens Vanthoor (B), Porsche 911 GT3 R, 2:16.195 minutes
9. Alexandre Imperatori (CH), Porsche 911 GT3 R, 2:16.934 minutes
14. Kévin Estre (F), Porsche 911 GT3 R, 2:17.940 minutes

Full results on https://www.its-results.com/

Preview

Four Porsche 911 GT3 R racers will tackle the 2019 FIA GT World Cup in Macau (China) on 17 November. The customer squads Rowe Racing and Absolute Racing each field two GT3 vehicles at the world's toughest road race. World sports car champion Kévin Estre (France) and his works driver colleagues Earl Bamber (New Zealand) and Laurens Vanthoor (Belgium) take on the special challenge at the high-speed street circuit. Alexandre Imperatori from Switzerland rounds off the line-up at Macau.

The drivers

Factory drivers Earl Bamber and Laurens Vanthoor will man the cockpits of the two Porsche 911 GT3 R fielded by Rowe Racing. The Belgian won the spectacular road race in 2016 after an intense two-way fight with his current teammate Bamber. World sports car champion Kévin Estre travels to Macau riding high on the back of his overall victory at the 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps. The Frenchman drives one of Absolute Racing's Porsche GT3 R. Swiss racer Alexandre Imperatori competes in the sister car of the Asian customer squad.

The Porsche 911 GT3 R

The 911 GT3 R fielded by Porsche customer teams was newly developed for the 2019 season and is also based on the road-legal 911 GT3 RS. Improvements in the areas of aerodynamics and kinematics were systematically implemented from the insights garnered from the many race outings of its predecessor. The six-cylinder engine in the rear of the GT3 racing vehicle produces over 368 kW (500 hp). The GT3 vehicle from Weissach underlined its enormous potential with its victory at the 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps in 2019, amongst other events.

Comments prior to the race

Fritz Enzinger (Vice President Motorsport): "The FIA GT World Cup is always a real highlight at the end of the motorsport season. The high-speed circuit, the famous corners and the backdrop of large casinos and hotels create an impressive setting. We're turning up with a particularly strong line-up this year and, as such, there can be only one goal: a Porsche 911 GT3 R should win the Macau road race."

Sebastian Golz (Project Manager Porsche 911 GT3 R): "We have two strong customer teams and four very fast ace drivers competing. The signs look good for a successful performance. We've become more and more familiar with the new Porsche 911 GT3 R over the course of the year and we've celebrated many successes around the world. The car has what it takes to lead the field at the sprint on the tight and fast Macau circuit. The qualifying on Friday and the qualifying race on Saturday represent two key events on the way to a good result in the main race."

Kévin Estre (Porsche 911 GT3 R): "Macau is one of my all-time favourite venues to go racing. For me, the circuit is in the same league as the Nordschleife and the Mount Panorama Circuit at Bathurst. After a two-year break, I'm finally returning to the Guia Circuit. I'm super excited. I haven't driven for Absolute Racing yet, but I'm very familiar with the Porsche 911 GT3 R. Our car has notched up a raft of successes around the world, and I hope to add another accolade to the list in Macau."

Earl Bamber (Porsche 911 GT3 R #98): "I had a very fast car last year, especially in the race, but there was no chance to overtake on this tight and fast circuit, which prevented me from getting to the very front. This year we need to do everything we can to achieve a better grid position in qualifying. The Porsche 911 GT3 R will help us with this. I'm looking forward to competing for Rowe Racing with Laurens. We'd like to add another chapter to our #BamThor story. I'm really excited about this."

MEDIA ENQUIRIES



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