

Joshua Rogers and Kevin Ellis Jr. win at the season-opener

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10/01/2021 Two races, two different winners and plenty of action at the season-opening round of the Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup (PESC).

The race

On the digital version of Brazil's Autódromo José Carlos Pace, Australia's Joshua Rogers from the VRS Coanda Simsport team dominated the sprint race over ten laps at the wheel of his virtual Porsche 911 GT3 Cup. Britain's Kevin Ellis Jr. (Apex Racing Team) went on to clinch victory at the main race over double the distance. The reigning champion Sebastian Job (Red Bull Racing Esports) experienced a patch of bad luck at the first of ten rounds of the international Esports championship run on the iRacing simulation platform: After finishing the sprint race on twelfth place, the British sim racer had to retire

from the main event early with technical woes.

Joshua Rogers showed top form in yesterday's qualifying on Saturday and was rewarded with the best time and pole position for the first race of the season. With his compatriot and teammate Dayne Warren turning the second-fastest lap, the front grid row was firmly in Australian hands. The 2020 champion, Sebastian Job, was unable to qualify further up the grid than twelfth place. Porsche Junior Ayhancan Güven (VRS Coanda Simsport) achieved a top ten result at his maiden PESC outing. Rogers won the sprint to the first corner, settled in at the front of the pack and proceeded to control the race from there. Warren, however, stayed within striking distance and made several attempts to overtake the 2019 PESC champion. Four other VRS Coanda Simsport drivers, Mitchell DeJong (USA), Norway's Tommy Östgaard and the German Martin Krönke trailed closely behind. While viewers were treated to many thrilling tussles for positions and collisions, especially in the midfield, Joshua Rogers calmly brought home a convincing lights-to-flag victory. Positions two and three went to Warren and Östgaard. Martin Krönke took the flag in fifth as the fastest German. Sebastian Job had to settle for twelfth place, while Ayhancan Güven finished his debut race on 32nd after being shunted by another competitor.

Due to the reverse grid line-up of the first eight starters in the main race, as stipulated by the regulations, Alejandro Sánchez (MSI eSports) took up the race from the best position. This was thanks to the Spaniard's strong push in the sprint race, which catapulted him through the field from P14 to eighth place. Sánchez led the pack into the so-called Senna-S chased by Ellis Jr. and newcomer Charlie Collins (GB/VRS Coanda Simsport). Meanwhile, Joshua Rogers immediately launched a furious pursuit from eighth. The Australian gained several positions early on and was running in fourth after four laps. In lap five, Kevin Ellis Jr. snatched the lead from Sánchez, only for the Spaniard to then come under huge pressure from Collins and Rogers. Three laps later, the fierce duel between Rogers and Sánchez ended in a collision, with both drivers falling hopelessly behind. In the meantime, Ellis Jr., DeJong, Collins, US newcomer Zac Campbell (Apex Racing Team) and Krönke turned their laps at the front.

At this point, no fewer than three rookies were among the top ten. Just after the halfway mark, Sebastian Job had to throw in the towel with technical problems. With two laps to go, the fight for victory turned fierce: DeJong made one final attempt to get past the leading Kevin Ellis Jr. Both raced wheel-to-wheel through many corners, with Ellis Jr. ultimately taking the flag by a nose. Behind the pair, Redline driver Maximilian Benecke grabbed his chance: After impressive manoeuvres and a valiant chase, the German beat DeJong to second place in the photo finish. The American was defeated by a mere 23-thousandth of a second. Joshua Rogers concluded the race on 23rd ahead of Porsche Junior Ayhancan Güven.

Round two this coming Saturday in Barcelona

The action continues without pause in the Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup: This coming Saturday (16 January), round two will be contested on the digital version of the Circuit de Barcelona Catalunya. The Grand Prix circuit on the outskirts of the Spanish metropolis was on last year's calendar of the global Esports championship and treated fans to some action-packed racing. At that time, Germany's

Maximilian Benecke won both the sprint and the main race driving for the Redline squad. The 4.655-kilometre circuit throws special challenges at sim racers, most notably in terms of driving and finding the ideal setup for their virtual Porsche 911 GT3 Cup. The mix of long straights and demanding corner combinations – several of which are driven blind – requires driving skill and a lot of experience. The sprint is contested over nine laps with sim racers covering twice that distance in the main race. Like at the season-opener, celebrity influencers will add to the Esports show in Barcelona. They will fight for victory in two All-Star races.

Comments after the race

Kevin Ellis Jr. (GB/Apex Racing Team): "The early phase was extremely turbulent with a lot of contact and incidents. Luckily, I remained unscathed and managed to set my pace at the front. Managing the tyre temperature is critical. At the end, things got really tight again and I had to pull out all stops. At the flag, it was a matter of millimetres – in my favour, fortunately."

Maximilian Benecke (D/Team Redline): "I started outside the top ten and finished in second place – unbelievable. After my fluffed qualifying, I headed into the race with fire in my belly. But I was careful and didn't get one scratch on my car. Perhaps I could've won. It was a thrilling and fun three-way battle among the frontrunners."

Mitchell DeJong (USA/VRS Coanda Simsport): "Third place is a decent result after a rather mediocre qualifying. Still, I'm a little disappointed. In the end, I tried everything; for a moment I was even in leading in the fight but it wasn't enough. It was fair at all times, even though we didn't give each other a millimetre."

Result

Interlagos, sprint race
1. Joshua Rogers (AUS/VRS Coanda Simsport)
2. Dayne Warren (AUS/VRS Coanda Simsport)
3. Tommy Östgaard (NOR/VRS Coanda Simsport)
4. Mitchell DeJong (USA/VRS Coanda Simsport)
5. Martin Krönke (D/VRS Coanda Simsport)

Interlagos, main race
1. Kevin Ellis Jr. (GB/Apex Racing Team)
2. Maximilian Benecke (D/Team Redline)
3. Mitchell DeJong (USA/VRS Coanda Simsport)
4. Zac Campbell (USA/Apex Racing Team)
5. Martin Krönke (D/VRS Coanda Simsport)

Points' standing after 1 of 10 championship rounds
1. Kevin Ellis Jr. (GB/Apex Racing Team), 64 points
2. Mitchell DeJong (USA/VRS Coanda Simsport), 60 points
3. Martin Krönke (D/VRS Coanda Simsport), 54 points

The preview

The Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup (PESC) revs up early in the New Year. This coming Saturday (9 January), the first of ten rounds of the international Esports championship will be contested on the iRacing simulation platform. 40 sim racers tackle the digital version on Brazil's Autódromo José Carlos Pace racetrack with their virtual Porsche 911 GT3 Cup. The 4.309-kilometre Grand Prix circuit on the outskirts of São Paulo is well-known to motor racing fans as the venue of gripping Formula 1 races. In 2014, the Porsche 919 Hybrid scored its maiden victory here. The racetrack is also dubbed "Interlagos" due to its location between two lakes. Unlike most other circuits, it is driven anti-clockwise.

For its third season, the Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup has once again attracted a top-class field of sim racers. Like in the past, the 40 grid spots for the virtual one-make series were in hot demand. Twenty new drivers will take on the top 20 seasoned specialists from last year, including reigning champion Sebastian Job from Great Britain (Red Bull Racing Esports) and the runner-up from Australia Joshua Rogers (VRS Coanda Simsport). The newcomers earned themselves a place on the grid in five qualifying heats. A prominent driver from "real" motorsport also joins this season's line-up: Porsche Junior Ayhancan Güven outperformed more than 4,500 competitors and proved that he is also one of the fastest in virtual racing. The 23-year-old Turkish is an experienced simracer and won the GTE class of the virtual 24 Hours of Le Mans in 2020. He contests both the PESC and the real-life Porsche Mobil 1 Supercup.

New regulations provide even more suspense

2021 brings some exciting new features for the Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup. The individual races are still contested on Saturday, however, they will now start later than previously: Free practice starts at 7:45 pm, followed by the qualifying. The two races will then start at 8:15 pm and 8:45 pm respectively to ensure prime time viewing in Central Europe. Moreover, the sprint and main races will now run over a distance of approximately 40 and 80 kilometres respectively instead of the previous race duration of 15 and 30 minutes. At Interlagos, for example, this means that the sim racers will kick off the season with races over 10 and 20 laps.

At the same time, the qualifying becomes more critical. Participants still earn points towards the championship in the qualifying, however, the fastest driver will now tackle the sprint race from pole position. Previously, the fastest eight qualifiers took up the race in reverse order. This reversed grid procedure will now be used in the main race based on the result of the sprint event: the winner of the sprint race takes up the main event from eighth place, with the driver on eighth place starts from pole.

Another novelty: From now on, prominent influencers from the world of Esports will showcase their talent in two All-Star races. Such celebrities include Dan Suzuki, Jardier, Maxime MXM, Emree, Heikki360ES and Jimmy Broadbent. The live stream starts at 6:30 pm with the All-Stars qualifier. The two influencer races get the green light at 6:45 pm and 7:10 pm respectively. From 7:45 pm, the PESC sim racers head out onto the virtual track for free practice.

Fans can watch the events live on Porsche's channels YouTube and Twitch. The races are also streamed on these two video platforms via iRacing. Further information on the Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup can be found on the Porsche Motorsport Hub, the Porsche Newsroom and the Twitter account @PorscheRaces.

The schedule (all times CET)

Saturday, 9 January
6:35 – 6:45 pm: Qualifying All-Stars
6:45 – 7:00 pm: Sprint race All-Stars
7:05 – 7:10 pm: Warm-up All-Stars
7:10 – 7:30 pm: Main race All-Stars
7:45 – 8:03 pm: Free Practice PESC
8:03 – 8:15 pm: Qualifying PESC
8:15 – 8:32 pm: Sprint race PESC
8:34 – 8:44 pm: Warm-up PESC
8:45 – 9:15 pm: Main race PESC

The 2021 racing calendar (number of laps sprint / main race)

Event	Date	Race track
Round 1	9 January 2021	Brazil: Interlagos (10/20 laps)
Round 2	16 January 2021	Spain: Barcelona (9/18 laps)
Round 3	30 January 2021	Italy: Imola (9/18 laps)
Round 4	6 February 2021	Great Britain: Silverstone GP circuit (7/14 laps)

Event	Date	Race track
Round 5	20 February 2021	USA: Road Atlanta (10/20 laps)
Round 6	27 February 2021	Canada: Montreal (10/20 laps)
Round 7	13 March 2021	Belgium: Spa-Francorchamps (6/12 laps)
Round 8	27 March 2021	Germany: Nürburgring Nordschleife, 24h version (3/4 laps)
Round 9	10 April 2021	France: Le Mans (3/6 laps)
Round 10	24 April 2021	Italy: Monza (7/14 laps)

MEDIA ENQUIRIES



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https://pmdb.porsche.de/newsroomzips/95bdf4ca-c0b1-4bff-9cba-b0b57884886d.zip

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