

Porsche defends championship lead with podium finish in Sebring

17/03/2024 The Porsche Penske Motorsport factory race team's Daytona-winning Porsche 963 has wrapped up the Mobil 1 Twelve Hours of Sebring on the podium. After a thrilling race in Florida, the "works" drivers Felipe Nasr (Brazil), Dane Cameron (Glen Ellen, California) and Matt Campbell (Australia) crossed the finish line in third place with the No. 7 race car. The No. 6 sister car was plagued with bad luck, ultimately finishing only ninth after an incident. Another *675 HP* hybrid prototype fielded by Proton Competition finished in eighth place. In the GTD-Pro class, AO Racing's Porsche 911 GT3 R narrowly missed out on a podium finish in the penultimate lap. Wright Motorsports secured third place in the GTD category with its 911.

Atlanta. The first nine hours of round two of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship season were contested under blue skies and high temperatures of near 90 degrees Fahrenheit. All teams in the top GTP class opted for the same strategy: to conserve tires for the crucial stints at the end of the race. After the first quarter of the 12-hour endurance classic, Dane Cameron moved into the lead for the first time at the wheel of the No. 7 race car. However, during an additional pit stop to fix a faulty seat insert, the team lost ground again. At that moment, the sister car was on the spot and swept into the lead.

The excitement, however, was short-lived. While lapping a slower car, Frédéric Makowiecki (France) nudged a GT vehicle. Shortly afterwards, a tire puncture forced him to drive slowly back to the pits for almost an entire lap of the 3.74-mile (6.02 kilometer) circuit – costing him a total of two laps. Despite a strong effort, the team was not able to close the gap and crossed the finish line in ninth place.

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In the meantime, the 24 Hours At Daytona winners in the No. 7 car reclaimed the lead. However, as temperatures dropped after dark, performance waned slightly compared to the competition. When the race went green for a final 24-minute sprint after the eleventh safety car phase, Felipe Nasr (Brazil) lost all chances to claim his second win of the season. The Brazilian secured third place and added to the team's point tally from the season-opening victory.

"That was a hard-fought podium finish for our Porsche Penske Motorsport works team," summed up Thomas Laudenbach, Vice President Porsche Motorsport. "Congratulations to Acura. They had the fastest car in the decisive final phase. We couldn't quite match the pace of the leaders in the cooler temperatures during the closing stages of the race. Now it's time to analyze those results and draw relevant conclusions for future races. My congratulations also go to our Wright Motorsports customer team. They achieved a podium finish in the GTD class with the Porsche 911 GT3 R after an immaculate performance."

"It was definitely a difficult race for us. Initially, we were hampered by minor setbacks, but we systematically fought our way back," summarizes Urs Kuratle. The Director Factory Motorsport LMDh adds: "Then tire damage threw our number 6 a long way back. Number 7 at least finished on the podium – that was good. Others, however, did better still. Our customer teams put in strong drives but unfortunately were not rewarded correspondingly."

"We're on the podium with our car again, which is something our entire team can be proud of," explains Jonathan Diuguid, Managing Director Porsche Penske Motorsport. "Our cars were simply not fast enough today compared to some of our rivals. We'll have to take another close look to find the reasons for that. It's a shame that our number 6 lost two laps quite early on due to the tire damage. Unfortunately, things like this sometimes happen in motorsport through no fault of our own."

The customer teams in the GTP class set a fast pace at times with their Porsche 963 but were ultimately unable to harvest for their effort. Proton Competition's No. 5 entry fell from fourth to eighth place in the last 10 minutes. The identical car fielded by JDC-Miller MotorSports retired with a technical defect after an impressive performance in the early stages.

GT classes: Wright Motorsport's Porsche 911 GT3 R on the GTD podium:
The Porsche customer teams contesting the two GT categories experienced varying degrees of

success. In the GTD-Pro class, AO Racing's Porsche 911 GT3 R affectionately named "Rexy" was on course for victory for long stretches, only to have a penalty relegate it back to ninth place on the penultimate lap. In the GTD category, the Wright Motorsports squad celebrated a podium finish after a flawless performance. Third place went to the two Americans Adam Adelson (Las Vegas, Nevada) and Elliott Skeer (San Diego, California), as well as Belgian Jan Heylen. The cars campaigned by Andretti Motorsports and High Class/MDK Motorsports finished eighth and twelfth respectively.

After the second round of the season, Porsche maintains the lead in the GTP-class standings for manufacturers, drivers and teams. The 12-hour race in Sebring counts towards the IMSA Michelin Endurance Cup, as do the endurance races in Daytona, Watkins Glen, Indianapolis and at Road Atlanta. Porsche shares first place in this championship with Cadillac and Acura. Round three of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship will be contested on April 20 at the spectacular street circuit in Long Beach, just outside of Los Angeles.

Matt Campbell, Driver, No. 7 Porsche Penske Motorsport Porsche 963:
"Following our Daytona win now a third place at Sebring; it could hardly get any better. We squeezed the maximum out of what was ultimately a difficult weekend for us. Despite being a little slower than the competition over long stretches today, we still brought home a lot of points. That was a tough piece of work. Given today's circumstances, third place is a result that we can be proud of."

Frédéric Makowiecki, Driver, No. 6 Porsche Penske Motorsport Porsche 963:
"Initially, there was contact with an Acura from the GTD class. I couldn't figure out which side of the track the driver wanted to drive on. I veered to the inside then there was a big thump on the left-hand side. That was probably the cause of the tire damage a little later. This incident robbed us of all our chances – a real pity."

Alessio Picariello, Driver, No. 5 Proton Competition Porsche 963:
"This weekend was anything but easy for me. I had very little track time before the race. With that in mind, this Saturday was more of a test day for me. Throughout my stints, I got more and more familiar with the car and the track. Considering our difficult starting position and our limited experience with the Porsche 963, our lap times were respectable. Unfortunately, a better result wasn't possible."

Laurin Heinrich, No. 77 AO Racing Porsche 911 GT3 R:
"The race got off to a great start – we immediately realized that we were right on the pace. We were particularly strong during the heat of the day. That was when I put in a triple stint. It was tough but it worked out well. I managed to extend my lead at the front. Four hours before the flag, however, we were caught out by an unfortunate safety car phase. From there on, it was all downhill. I fought like a lion in the final phase and had several contacts – more than likely there isn't a single panel on the car that isn't scratched. Unfortunately, I had to accept a 20-second penalty at the end because I bumped a Corvette. Ninth place is a shame."

Adam Adelson, No. 120 Wright Motorsports Porsche 911 GT3 R:
"I'm at a loss for words. My teammate Elliott and I are absolute IMSA rookies and started at Sebring for

the first time today. Thanks to Jan Heylen, we managed to climb the podium – simply incredible! I can't even describe my emotions, but I can say one thing with certainty: Let's do it again!"

Race results

GTP class:
1. Taylor/Deletraz/Herta (USA/CH/USA), Acura #40, 333 laps
2. Bourdais/Van der Zande/Dixon (F/NL/NZ), Cadillac #01, +0.891 seconds
3. Nasr/Cameron/Campbell (BR/USA/AUS), Porsche 963 #7, +8.898 seconds
8. Andlauer/Bruni/Picariello (F/I/B), Porsche 963 #5, +44.807 seconds
9. Jaminet/Tandy/Makowiecki (F/UK/F), Porsche 963 #6, -2 laps
11. Hanson/Van der Helm/Westbrook (UK/NL/UK), Porsche 963 #85, -155 laps

GTD-Pro class:
1. Hawksworth/Barnicoat/Kirkwood (UK/UK/USA), Lexus #14, 316 laps
2. Serra/Rigon/Calado (BR/I/UK), Ferrari #62, +0.121 seconds
3. Perera/Pepper/Bortolotti (F/RSA/I), Lamborghini #19, +2.983 seconds
9. Heinrich/Priaulx/Christensen (D/UK/DK), Porsche 911 GT3 R #77, +37.121 seconds

GTD class:
1. Ward/Ellis/Dontje (USA/CH/NL), Mercedes-AMG #57, 314 laps
2. Lacorte/Sernagiotto/Fuoco (I/I/I), Ferrari #47, +0.646 seconds
3. Adelson/Skeer/Heylen(USA/USA/B), Porsche 911 GT3 R #120, +2.244 seconds
8. Andretti/Chavez/Hargrove (USA/USA/CDN), Porsche 911 GT3 R #43, +30.475 seconds
12. Li/Fjordbach/Bachler (CHN/DK/A), Porsche 911 GT3 R #86, +42.199 seconds

Full results on https://imsa.alkamelsystems.com.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES



Luke Vandezande

Product Spokesperson 911 and 718 Boxster/Cayman, Motorsport and Brand Heritage
470-363-5001
luke.vandezande@porsche.us

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Dr. Ing. h.c. F. Porsche Aktiengesellschaft
Porscheplatz 1
70435 Stuttgart