

Imola win puts Joshua Rogers at the top of the leaderboard

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31/01/2021 Joshua Rogers from Australia has moved into the lead of the Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup (PESC) after winning the main race at the Autodromo Internazionale in Imola.

The race

In the sprint race on the virtual version of the Italian Grand Prix circuit, the 2019 PESC champion was narrowly beaten to the flag by arch-rival Sebastian Job. The British Red Bull Racing Esports driver took up the nine-lap sprint from pole position and crossed the finish line in first place at the wheel of his virtual Porsche 911 GT3 Cup. However, in the following main event over double the distance, Job, as the defending champion, spun off the track early in the race. Mitchell deJong (USA/Virtual Racing School), who took up round three of the PESC season run on the iRacing simulation platform as the

series leader, fell back to second place in the drivers' standings after scoring twelfth and seventh place.

Sebastian Job had won the qualifying – over three timed laps – with a gap of 0.196 seconds over Rogers, which handed him his first pole position for the sprint race this season. At the start, the British sim racer made the most of his advantage and held on to his lead after the start. Glued to his bumper right were Rogers (Virtual Racing School), Zac Campbell (USA/Rahal Letterman Lanigan Esports), Yohann Harth (France/Apex Racing Team) and Alejandro Sánchez (Spain/MSI eSports). Maximilian Benecke (Germany/Team Redline) gained one position in the first lap and was running in sixth place ahead of Charlie Collins (Great Britain/Virtual Racing School) and Kevin Ellis Jr. (Great Britain/Rahal Letterman Lanigan Esports). For the points' leader, DeJong, the weekend started badly: The American qualified a lowly 15th on the grid and had to launch a pursuit through the field. This would ultimately earn him twelfth place.

The top eight jostled in a pack over the entire nine-lap distance, separated by barely two seconds. Despite the slipstream duels, mistakes that would have allowed pursuers to overtake were rare. Accordingly, Job managed to turn his convincing lead into victory over Rogers. Only in the penultimate lap did Sánchez fall back to sixth place, then to eighth – which, in light of the reversed grid order for the main race, turned out to be a tactically clever move. Thus, the Spaniard took up the main event from pole position followed by Ellis, Collins, Harth and Benecke. Rogers lined up on the grid in seventh place, with the sprint winner Job right behind.

This time, the start did not go as smoothly. While Sánchez and Ellis managed to eke out a small lead, defending champion Job was shunted from behind in the first lap which sent him spinning from the track. The British sim racer rejoined the action far down the field in P32.

Meanwhile, Rogers pulled out all stops. The 2019 PESC champion returned from the first lap running in sixth place. After three laps he had overtaken Harth and Benecke, and was working on reeling in the leading pair. At the end of the seventh lap, he was within striking distance of Ellis Jr. Exactly at the halfway mark he catapulted out of his compatriot's slipstream and swept past. At the very same spot 4.909 kilometres later, it was Sánchez's turn. Rogers snatched the lead. The lead spot, however, was in hot contention. In the penultimate lap, the Spaniard made a renewed attempt and drove door-to-door with the Australian from the Tamburello turn to the Tosa hairpin. Rogers, however, called up his wealth of experience and defended his lead to the flag.

Fourth place went to Maximilian Benecke, but not without some stiff opposition from Zac Campbell. Behind them, Jamie Fluke (Great Britain/Apex Racing Team) finished in sixth, followed by the former points' leader Mitchell deJong, Dayne Warren (Australia/DirectForce Pro) and Yohann Harth. Jeff Giassi (Brazil/Apex Racing Team) rounded off the top ten. Sebastian Job saw the flag in 24th place and pocketed the last two championship points.

After the third of ten rounds, the new series leader Joshua Rogers (198 points) has built a gap to Mitchell deJong (161) and Dayne Warren (145). Trailing the leading trio are Maximilian Benecke (139), Kevin Ellis Jr. (127) and Alejandro Sánchez (126), who has made impressive progress after a patchy

start to the season. Sebastian Job (109) has shuffled down the order to rank seventh.

Round four next Saturday at the “Home of British Motor Racing”

In just one week, round four of the Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup will be contested: This coming Saturday (6 February), the virtual Silverstone Circuit hosts the global esports championship. The 5.891-kilometre Grand Prix circuit has been the venue of many motor racing events since 1947. The Porsche Mobil 1 Supercup, run as part of the Formula 1 support programme, has for many years thrilled spectators at the “Home of British Motor Racing”.

At Silverstone, the 40 sim racers contesting the Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup will tackle a seven-lap sprint race and a 14-lap main event. In the lead-up, well-known YouTubers from the esport world will pit themselves against each other in two All-Star races. For the first time, the All-Stars will drive the Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 Clubsport.

Comments after the main race

Joshua Rogers (AUS/Virtual Racing School): “In the beginning, I tried to catch the leading group. I probably should’ve been more careful with my tyres because, in the final laps, the rear tyres deteriorated noticeably. All in all, it was a great race and I’m thrilled with the result. I knew this race would be critical for the championship –especially when Sebastian Job got caught up in a collision at the start. On a circuit like Imola, it’s not actually advantageous to lead the field because your rivals can stick to you in your slipstream.”

Alejandro Sánchez (E/MSI eSports): “Josh Rogers and I had a terrific fight. I stuck close to his bumper so that I could make another attempt to get past him in the closing phase. On the penultimate lap, he made a minor mistake, I tried to pass him on the inside – but he exited the corner with more speed, and I didn’t want to risk losing safe points. Second place means I’ve progressed from tenth to sixth place in the overall standings.”

Kevin Ellis Jr. (UK/Rahal Letterman Lanigan Esports): “I tried to conserve my tyres and I waited to the right time to attack, but the track is so narrow. Even when Alejandro Sanchéz took a wider line ahead of me, there still wasn’t enough room. I remained calm and I’m delighted to earn the championship points for third place.”

Result

Imola, sprint race
1. Sebastian Job (GB/Red Bull Racing Esports)
2. Joshua Rogers (AUS/Virtual Racing School)

3. Zac Campbell (USA/Rahal Letterman Lanigan Esports)
4. Yohann Harth (F/Apex Racing Team)
5. Maximilian Benecke (D/Team Redline)

Imola, main race
1. Joshua Rogers (AUS/Virtual Racing School)
2. Alejandro Sánchez (E/MSI eSports)
3. Kevin Ellis Jr. (UK/Rahal Letterman Lanigan Esports)
4. Maximilian Benecke (D/Team Redline)
5. Zac Campbell (USA/Rahal Letterman Lanigan Esports)

Points' standings after 3 of 10 championship rounds
1. Joshua Rogers (AUS/Virtual Racing School), 198 points
2. Mitchell deJong (USA/Virtual Racing School), 161 points
3. Dayne Warren (AUS/DirectForce Pro), 145 points

The preview

Premiere in the Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup (PESC): This Saturday, Imola plays host to the global esports championship for the first time.

The storied Grand Prix circuit in Italy is the venue for the third of this season's ten rounds contested on the iRacing simulation platform. The tracks long straights offer the 40 sim racers ideal conditions for gripping slipstream duels at the wheel of their virtual Porsche 911 GT3 cars. Several of the corner combinations with such illustrious names as “Variante Tamburello”, “Tosa”, “Variante Alta” and “Rivazza” entice drivers to attempt bold outbraking manoeuvres. Like at the season-opening round in Interlagos, Brazil, the online gamers will race on the 4.909-kilometre Autodromo Internazionale in an anti-clockwise direction.

After the first two race weekends, the American Mitchell deJong (Virtual Racing School) leads the championship with 124 points. With 118 points, his teammate and 2019 champion, Joshua Rogers, follows hot on his bumper. At the two previous races, the Australian underscored his reputation as a qualifying ace by clinching pole position at both Interlagos and Barcelona. His compatriot from Down Under Dayne Warren (DirectForce Pro) currently ranks third in the series with 107 points. After a rocky start to the PESC year in Brazil, the defending champion Sebastian Job scored his first win of the season in Barcelona. Driving for the Red Bull Racing Esports squad, the British driver progressed up the points' ladder of the notoriously-competitive to seventh place.

At Imola, sim racers pit themselves against each other in a sprint race over nine laps followed by a main event over twice the distance. Round three also includes a free practice, qualifying and warm-up session. As part of the programme, influencers from the world of esports will showcase their skills at Imola. They contest two All-Star races at the wheel of the virtual Porsche 911 GT3 Cup. The live stream

begins at 6.30pm with the All-Star qualifying session. The two influencer races get the green light at 6.45pm and 7.10pm respectively.

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 and the Twitter account @PorscheRaces

The schedule (all times CET)

Saturday, 30 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)
Round 5	20 February 2021	USA: Road Atlanta (10/20 laps)
Round 6	27 February 2021	Canada: Montreal (10/20 laps)

Event	Date	Race track
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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