

Joshua Rogers and Mitchell deJong clinch first and second at Spa

24/04/2023 The Porsche Coanda Esports works team has made a powerful comeback in the new ESL R1 sim racing championship with a one-two result at Spa-Francorchamps. Joshua Rogers and Mitchell deJong drove a commanding race on the Belgian Grand Prix circuit to clinch first and second place. Thanks to his second win in an ESL R1 finale, Rogers closes the gap to the series leader to four points. With this, the Australian has clearly underlined his title aspirations.

With its strong team effort at round seven of the ESL R1 sim racing championship, the Porsche Coanda Esports Racing squad made up for its bad luck last week: On the digital Formula 1 circuit of Spa-Francorchamps, three of the four works drivers reached the final. While Australia's Dayne Warren finished eighth, his fellow countryman Joshua Rogers took advantage of his inspired qualifying lap and drove from pole position to victory. His American teammate Mitchell deJong crossed the finish line mere fractions of a second behind him. Thanks to this result, Rogers now lies just four points adrift of the current championship leader Luke Bennett (United Kingdom), giving him excellent chances to stay in the fight for the title on the new "Rennsport" simulation platform.

Last Friday, all four Porsche Coanda Esports works drivers made it into the top 24. Dayne Warren and Mitchell deJong even managed to win their heats, with Mack Bakkum and Joshua Rogers each finishing in third place. The two Heroic drivers, Tuomas Tähtelä from Finland and Mikel Gade from Denmark, also qualified for the semi-finals with their privately-run 911 GT3 R.

The ESL R1 at a glance

In the ESL R1, twelve teams compete against each other. Each of these teams sends one of their four drivers to contest the four quarter-finals, where twelve drivers pit themselves against each other. Of that dozen, only the top six go through to one of the two semi-finals. This selection process is repeated: only the top six from both semi-finals are eligible for the finale, where the winner is decided from these top twelve.

After the qualifying, Warren started the first semi-final from second with deJong in fourth. Despite losing one position in the first lap, the Australian ultimately finished third ahead of his teammate. This was enough for both to go through the finals. Tuomas Tähtelä, however, just missed the cut-off in seventh place. Before the second semi-final, Rogers turned heads with a qualifying time of 2:14.282 minutes. Starting from pole position, he held on to his lead spot and drove to victory. Bakkum lined up on the grid in eighth place. The Dutchman put in a spirited fight for a top-six result but was unable to benefit from a penalty handed to a driver in front of him. However, thanks to Mikel Gade – who started from fifth and finished fourth – two Porsche 911 GT3 R again made it through.

Rogers also occupied the first grid spot for the final. DeJong lined up on the grid directly behind him in third with Gade in his rear-view mirror. Warren botched his qualifying lap and thus started from the 12th and last position. Just after the start, Enzo Benito attempted a bold attack on Rogers at the end of the two-kilometre-long Kemmel straight – but in vain. A few metres later, the Italian had to relinquish his second position to deJong. After seven laps, the Porsche Coanda duo converted their advantage into a one-two victory. Warren managed to work his way up to P8, while Gade celebrated fourth place.

The newly created ESL R1 series of the Electronic Sports League (ESL) is primarily aimed at factory teams and major esports organisations. It is based on the new sim racing platform “Rennsport”. Watched by the public, the world premiere took place in mid-February as a doubleheader event at the Intel Extreme Masters in Katowice, Poland. On 15 May, the last of six online races will be held on the Grand Prix Circuit of Hockenheim. Spectators can then watch the Spring Major Finale on 3 and 4 June at the Rennsport Summit in Munich. Adding to the attraction, the prize money purse is filled with a total of 225,000 euros.

Comments after the race

Philip Stamm (D, Team Principal Porsche Coanda Esports Racing):“We can be very happy with this final result. Joshua Rogers and Mitchell deJong did a great job, and for Mitchell, the ticket for the final round

in Munich should be in the bag. Despite his qualifying result, Dayne Warren still succeeded in working his way up the order to eighth place. We took home a lot of points for the team. Now we aim to repeat this performance at the next race in Hockenheim and get all four drivers into the final race."

Joshua Rogers (AUS, Porsche Coanda Esports Racing):"Obviously I'm excited! A one-two for the team on an ESL R1 Monday, with me in P1 is nice. We had problems in the last rounds with consistency, myself included. It's awesome to see how the whole team comes together. Now we can keep fighting for decent points, just at the right time of the season. We are trying to keep this momentum going."

Mitchell deJong (NL, Porsche Coanda Esports Racing):"I'm super pleased with how today went for me. We had a wonderful semi-final, I made it through to the final with 4th and qualified on P3. Second in the finale just behind Josh is such a relief. I earned crucial points, which will hopefully open the door to the season final in Munich."

Dayne Warren (AUS, Porsche Coanda Esports Racing):"I'm thrilled with third in the semi-finals but unfortunately my qualifying for the finals didn't go well and I had to start from the back of the grid. Still, after the first lap I was already in eighth place. Hopefully, I'll make it into the top 24, because only those competitors are eligible to contest the finale in Munich."

Results

Spa-Francorchamps (B), finale
1. Joshua Rogers, Porsche 911 GT3 R (AUS/Porsche Coanda Esports Racing)
2. Mitchell deJong, Porsche 911 GT3 R (USA/ Porsche Coanda Esports Racing)
3. Enzo Bonito, BMW M4 GT3 (I, Team Redline)
4. Mikel Gade, Porsche 911 GT3 R (DK/Heroic)
5. Marcell Csincsik, Audi R8 LMS GT3 evo II (CZ, R8G Esports)
6. Luke Bennett, BMW M4 GT3 (UK, Team Redline)

Team standings after 7 of 10 championship rounds
1. Luke Bennett (UK, Team Redline) 239 points
2. Joshua Rogers (AUS/Porsche Coanda Esports Racing) 235 points
3. Marcell Csincsik (CZ, R8G Esports) 218 points

MEDIA ENQUIRIES



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