Porsche 911 RSR wins after a tactical masterstroke in California

02/11/2020 The Porsche GT Team scored its second consecutive GTLM class win in the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship on Sunday, November 1. In the same race at Monterey, California's WeatherTech Raceway Laguna Seca, customer team Wright Motorsports moved into sole ownership of second-place in the GTD class point standings with one race remaining in the season.

It was Laurens Vanthoor (Belgium) and Earl Bamber (New Zealand) in the No. 912 Porsche 911 RSR-19 who achieved the first victory for the factory program on the storied Californian racetrack since the "works" team debuted in 2014. The pairing stayed in step with their teammates Nick Tandy (Great Britain) and Frédéric Makowiecki (France) who won the previous round of the North America's premier sports car racing championship. The identical ca. 515 hp sister car driven by Tandy/Makowiecki finished in fourth-place. North America's only Porsche factory driver, Patrick Long (Manhattan Beach, California) teamed with Ryan Hardwick (Atlanta, Georgia) to earn sixth-place in the GTD class with the No. 16 Wright Motorsports Porsche 911 GT3 R.

A clever tactic was the key to securing the win after the first triumph on October 17 in the Petit Le Mans at Michelin Raceway Road Atlanta. With air temperatures of approximately 86-degrees Fahrenheit (30 degrees Celsius) and an asphalt temperature of almost 122 F (50C) on the sand-covered course in the dunes of the Monterey Peninsula, the main emphasis was on tire management. During the morning qualifying session, the Porsche GT Team laid the foundation for two different strategies. Vanthoor planted the number 912 car on the second grid spot, while the number 911 entry turned only two laps in qualifying to run-in, or "scrub", a set of Michelin tires for the race – this long-range strategy, however, cost them a better starting position. The plan was that the vehicle driven by the Petit Le Mans winners Makowiecki and Tandy would make only two pit stops, with Bamber and Vanthoor's Porsche 911 going all-out and coming in for a service three times.

After the start, Vanthoor retained his second position and took the lead after an early first stop in lap 17. The "undercut" calculated by the team worked perfectly. The Belgian held on to the lead and handed the number 912 car off to Bamber after two swift stints. On the way to the first win for the defending GTLM champions, the New Zealander brought the Porsche 911 RSR across the finish line in first-place. The tactics for the No. 911 Porsche GT Team machine, however, meant that Tandy had virtually no chance on used tires when the race restarted with just 13 minutes left on the clock. The British racer lost third-place. Ultimately, he was only 4.716 seconds from claiming a podium result. However, a post-race inspection found a technical infraction with the No. 4 Corvette dropping it to the back of the standings and the raising the No. 911 machine to a third-place finish in the final scoring.

In the Pro-Am style customer class, Wright Motorsports continued its push for a first WeatherTech GTD class championship. The No. 16 Porsche 911 GT3 R driven by Long and Hardwick finished in sixth-

place after Long was involved in a melee not of his own making following the final yellow-flag period. The finish does allow the Ohio-based program to enter the final race of the year in Sebring, Florida holding second-place in the GTD team and driver standings. Wright Motorsports now has the lone full-season Porsche in the privateer class only seven points behind the championship leading Acura.

The second win of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship coincided with Porsche success around the globe. On the same day, the customer team Proton Competition won the title in the European Le Mans Series. This follows not only the German marque's record-extending 24-class victory at the Petit Le Mans and an October 24 – 25 victory in the 24 Hours of Spa.

The eleventh and final round of the 2020 IMSA season is scheduled for November 14 at the Sebring International Raceway. This will be the 68th edition of the Mobil 1 Twelve Hours of Sebring in Florida where Porsche is the most successful manufacturer with 18 overall and 72 class victories. It will also mark the final factory outing of the two Porsche 911 RSR in the GTLM class of the North American sports car series. The operation has scored class victories the last two years at Sebring with the No. 911 Porsche GT Team Porsche 911 RSR.

Comments on the race

Pascal Zurlinden (Director Factory Motorsport): "What a great day for Porsche and the successful customer teams. In the afternoon, Proton Competition claimed the title in the European Le Mans Series, at the same time, the two 911 GT3 R fielded by Herberth Motorsport scored a double podium result in the ADAC GT Masters – and now the IMSA victory. We've finally won at Laguna Seca, as well. This success is the result of perfect teamwork. Our strategists implemented a clever plan, the team did quick pit stops and the drivers made the most of the 911 RSR's potential. Congratulations everyone!"

Steffen Höllwarth (Head of Operations IMSA Championship): "We were determined to win today because Laguna Seca was a blank spot on the map. We've now managed to tick that off. We made a deliberate decision to use different strategies so that we could be prepared for all eventualities given the high temperatures. This worked perfectly with our number 912 car, but not with the sister car, unfortunately. It's a shame that Nick couldn't hold on to the podium position after the safety car phase. At that point, he was running on the most worn tyres by far, so he was handicapped. Still, we're delighted about the tremendous final result."

Laurens Vanthoor (Porsche 911 RSR #912): "That was a real team effort – everyone played their part perfectly – particularly our pit crew. Since we had to make three pit stops, the refuelling times were shorter than in a normal race. That meant that our lads had to complete the wheel changes flawlessly in record time. It worked very well, as you saw at the first pit stop when I was able to take the lead. This is the first win of the season for us in the 912 car. It's the second in a row for Porsche. We're finally achieving the results we deserve with the new 911 RSR."

Earl Bamber (Porsche 911 RSR #912): "We've been waiting for a victory since the summer of last year.

It finally worked. We won the race thanks to our strategy and the perfect job of all involved. Just one week after our victory at the 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps, we're now at the forefront of the IMSA series. It can continue like this at the season finale in Sebring."

Further comments to the race you can find in the press release.

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