Early out for Porsche Coanda Esports at round four of the ESL-R1 series

27/03/2023 The second guest appearance of the new sim racing series ESL_R1 on the virtual Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps came to an early end in the semi-finals for the Porsche Coanda Esports Racing works team. The previous points' leader Joshua Rogers and his works driver colleague Mack Bakkum were eliminated before the final race after being shunted out of contention by rivals.

As always in the new ESL_R1 series, the quarter-finals were held on the previous Friday. This was also the case on the virtual Grand Prix circuit of Spa-Francorchamps. All twelve teams compete with four drivers, each of whom tackles a quarter-final. From those twelve, the top six progress through to the semi-finals. There again, only the top six qualify for the final round of the top twelve.

Mitchell de Jong from America and his Australian Porsche Coanda Esports teammate Dayne Warren were denied the chance: both finished the quarter-finals in eighth place. Mack Bakkum performed better and ended up fourth, while Joshua Rogers repeated his winning form from the season opener in

Spa and then at Hockenheim, claiming first place in his quarter-finals.

Like at the Nürburgring, the two Porsche works drivers went head-to-head in their semi-final. Two other 911 GT3 R took part with the Dane Mikkel Gade (Heroic) and Ulas Ozyildirim (FaZe Clan) from Turkey at the wheel. While Ozyildirim turned heads in qualifying with the fourth fastest time, Rogers and Bakkum faced a more challenging task: they took up the race from positions seven and ten. In the first of seven laps, however, both became entangled in collisions caused by other competitors and were thrown far down the field – ultimately taking the flag in positions nine and ten. Gade finished eighth and only Ozyildirim reached the finals in sixth place. There, he concluded round four of the ESL_R1 championship in eighth place.

The new ESL_R1 series of the Electronic Sports League is primarily aimed at factory teams and major esports organisations. It is based on the new sim racing platform "Rennsport". The world premiere took place in mid-February as a doubleheader event with the Intel Extreme Masters in Katowice, Poland, and is followed by six online races until mid-May. The Spring Major Finale will be watched by spectators at the Rennsport Summit in Munich. This event has been postponed to 3 and 4 June 2023. The spring season is followed by the next round of races in autumn.

Comments after the race

Philip Stamm (D, Team Principal Porsche Coanda Esports Racing): "In this racing series, the qualifying performance on the weekend is important. We have some catching up to do there because we lost two cars on Friday and started in the danger zone today. Essentially, the level of driving at the top is very high, so everything has to come together perfectly. In terms of Balance of Performance, we've always been on the back foot and a bit disadvantaged. We have to see if we can find a little more performance."

Joshua Rogers (AUS, Porsche Coanda Esports Racing): "The race definitely wasn't ideal for me. I didn't quite get the qualifying lap I needed. As a result, I started on P7. The first-lap battle with Moritz Löhner was good fun. Unfortunately, in the last chicane, I was hit hard from behind and spun. I fell back to P10 and pushed hard to salvage any points. As always, we'll keep pushing for the next round."

Mack Bakkum (NL, Porsche Coanda Esports Racing): "The semi-final didn't quite go my way. Sadly, I finished on P10. I didn't quite manage to get a good qualifying lap. In the Porsche, you live and die in qualifying. It is really hard to overtake other cars. I knew I would lose places to the Mercedes at the start. It was quite a difficult race. A spin in the first lap set me back. After that, it was about bringing the car home. It's a bit of a disappointing weekend."

Results

Spa-Francorchamps (B), finale
1. Dáire McCormack, AMG-GT3 Evo (IRL, Mercedes-AMG Team Williams Esports)

2. Jiri Toman, Audi R8 LMS GT3 evo II (CZ, R8G Esports)
3. Kevin Siggy, BMW M4 GT3 (SLO, Team Redline)
8. Ulas Ozyildirim, Porsche 911 GT3 R (TR, FaZe Clan)
15. Joshua Rogers, Porsche 911 GT3 R (AUS/Porsche Coanda Esports Racing)
16. Mack Bakkum, Porsche 911 GT3 R (NL/Porsche Coanda Esports Racing)
20. Dayne Warren, Porsche 911 GT3 R (AUS/Porsche Coanda Esports Racing)
20. Mitchell deJong, Porsche 911 GT3 R (USA/Porsche Coanda Esports Racing)

Drivers' standings after 4 of 10 championship rounds
1. Jiri Toman (CZ, R8G Esports) 181 points
2. Marcell Csincsik (CZ, R8G Esports) 158 points
3. Joshua Rogers (AUS/Porsche Coanda Esports Racing), 140 points

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