

Rain mayhem robs Porsche of hopes to claim first IMSA win of the season

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03/08/2020 A lap record in qualifying, pole position, and a commanding lead in the race: despite this, the dream of claiming the maiden victory for the latest generation of the Porsche 911 RSR in the IMSA SportsCar Championship at round four of this year's North American series remains unfulfilled.

The race

After a strong performance from the number 912 vehicle driven by Laurens Vanthoor (Belgium) and Earl Bamber (New Zealand), which culminated in a 20-second lead, torrential rain threw a spanner in the works about 50 minutes before the end of the 2:40-hour event. Bamber spun and slid from the track. At the wheel of the No. 911 Porsche, Frédéric Makowiecki (France) and Nick Tandy (Great Britain) at one point advanced to first place in the chaotic weather conditions, however, when the race

restarted behind the safety car the vehicle had to pit. In a last-ditch effort to fight for class victory from third place under difficult conditions, Tandy slid from the track in the rain with no visibility. He and Makowiecki finished on fourth, with the sister car on fifth.

Start driver Vanthoor took up the race in the No. 912 RSR from pole position and initially lost the lead to Jordan Taylor's Corvette. In lap 15, he reversed the order and quickly pulled clear of his pursuer. After ten consistently fast laps, he handed the 911 to Earl Bamber. The New Zealander extended the lead to a good 20 seconds and, thanks as well to late pit stops, seemed to be on track for a sure win. Then, with less than an hour left on the clock, the forecast rain set in – and turned into a downpour. Bamber was caught off guard by the sheer volume of water and spun into the gravel. While attempting to get out, the 911 RSR – missing a wing mirror but otherwise unscathed – lost two laps and ultimately crossed the finish line in fifth.

In the sister car, Frédéric Makowiecki had tackled the race from P6. The Frenchman also managed to conserve the tyres of his 911 RSR from lap ten and quickly moved up the order to lie in third place. The No. 911 car was the last in the GTLM class to pit for the first time after lap 28. Nick Tandy took over driving duties and rejoined the race in position four. In lap 31, however, the Briton had to let John Edwards' BMW pass. Tandy promptly turned from the hunted to the hunter, and was in hot pursuit when the sky opened up. Although the chaos had allowed the outright Le Mans winner of 2015 to move into the lead by the time the race was stopped, the No. 3 Corvette and the No. 24 BMW had already been shod with rain tyres. After the restart behind the safety car, Tandy had to make a pit stop and fell back to third. In his final attempt to fulfil the dream of a class win during the remaining seven minutes, he hit the wall on the last lap. As a safety measure, he was taken to the medical centre for a check.

In the GTD class for vehicles complying with the international GT3 regulations, start driver Ryan Hardwick and factory pilot Patrick Long (both USA) made the most of the wild weather. Putting in a double stint, Long worked his way up the order from tenth to seventh place. In the mayhem of the rain, at one point he manoeuvred his way up to fourth place in the GTD class at the wheel of the Porsche 911 GT3 R fielded by the Wright Motorsport customer team. Ultimately, he finished fifth in the GTD class.

Porsche travels to round five of the season contested at the Virginia International Raceway on 23 August ranking third in the manufacturers' classification just nine points from the top. Reigning champions Bamber and Vanthoor retain their second place in the drivers' standings with 120 points. Their brand colleagues Makowiecki and Tandy occupy fifth place with 113 points.

Comments on the race

Steffen Höllwarth (Head of Operations IMSA Championship): "The result is very disappointing. We managed to set fast lap times over the distance, so the long runs in the practice sessions paid off. We were very well positioned and were able to steadily work our way forward in the race. The number 912 car was leading when the sky opened up. Rain, hail, lightning; we got the lot. We decided to pit a little late. When 912 came in, all chances of winning were scuttled. After the race interruption, the 911 had

to pit briefly one more time to refuel and switch to wet tyres. In the last ten minutes, the race turned into a real thriller. Nick Tandy pulled out all stops. With two laps to the flag, he slid off the track in the extreme conditions and hit the barriers. Fortunately, nothing serious happened to him."

Frédéric Makowiecki (Porsche 911 RSR #911): "Our starting position for the race could have been better, but we managed to work our way up the order little by little. In the dry, we were in a position to fight for a podium spot. The rain made things incredibly difficult for everyone. Our focus is now on the next race in Virginia."

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

Race result

Result GTLM class
1. Garcia/Taylor (E/USA), Chevrolet Corvette C8.R #3, 60 laps
2. Gavin/Milner (GB/USA), Chevrolet Corvette C8.R #4, 60 laps
3. Krohn/Edwards (FIN/USA), BMW M8 GTE #24, 60 laps
4. Tandy/Makowiecki (GB/F), Porsche 911 RSR #911, 58 laps
5. Vanthoor/Bamber (B/NZ), Porsche 911 RSR #912, 58 laps
6. Spengler/De Phillippi (CDN/USA), BMW M8 GTE #25, 55 laps

Result GTD class
1. Montecalvo/Bell (USA/USA), Lexus RC F GT3 #12, 57 laps
2. Farnbacher/McMurry (D/USA), Acura NSX GT3 #86, 57 laps
3. Hawksworth/Telitz (GBR/USA), Lexus RC F GT3 #14, 57 laps
4. MacNeil/Vilander (USA/FIN), Ferrari 488 GT3 #63, 57 laps
5. Long/Hardwick (USA/USA), Porsche 911 GT3 R #16, 57 laps

Full results and championship standings at: imsa.alkamelsystems.com.

The qualifying

With a time of 2:00.590 minutes, qualifying driver Vanthoor also set a new lap record for the GTLM class (GT Le Mans) on the storied Road America racetrack. The sister car shared by Frédéric Makowiecki (France) and Nick Tandy (Great Britain) tackles the fourth race of the season from the sixth grid spot. In the GTD category (GT Daytona) for vehicles complying with the global GT3 regulations, the 911 GT3 R driven by Ryan Hardwick for the Wright Motorsport customer team posted the ninth quickest time in the final 15-minute session. The American shares the cockpit with his compatriot and Porsche works driver Patrick Long.

The Road America circuit, located a good two hours' drive north of Chicago in the US state of

Wisconsin, is based on a former road circuit and is considered the cradle of American sports car racing. At 6,515 kilometres, it is also the longest track on the IMSA calendar. Porsche last scored pole position in the GTLM class at Road America in 2015, that time by Vanthoor's current teammate, Earl Bamber.

Round four of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship takes off on Sunday, 2 August, at 11.05 a.m. local time (18:05 p.m. CEST). The race over 2:40 hours can be viewed outside the USA and Canada on www.imsa.com. So far this season, Porsche is the only manufacturer to have climbed the podium at every IMSA WeatherTech round. At Road America, the factory squad wants to secure its first win in this series with the latest generation of the 911 RSR. The aim is to defend the manufacturer, team and driver titles from 2019.

Qualifying quotes

Steffen Höllwarth (Head of Operations IMSA Championship): "We have mixed feelings after this qualifying. We're thrilled about pole position, especially since we didn't expect to top the timesheets – during practice we put more emphasis on endurance rather than a quick lap. But we did our homework. I think we can also get our number 911 car further up the field. The speed was there, but unfortunately, it didn't all come together for a fast time. It'll be a tough fight tomorrow. We're ready!"

Frédéric Makowiecki (Porsche 911 RSR #911): "The qualifying didn't go as I'd expected. We had the speed for pole position, but I made a mistake in Turn 12 and slid off in Turn 13. Now we'll prepare the car for Sunday's race. I think we'll be good for a podium result."

Laurens Vanthoor (Porsche 911 RSR #912): "In the first sessions we still had problems with the balance. But we sat down with the engineers and found a solution. The car then felt really good in qualifying. Everything worked. Pole position: great!"

Qualifying result

GTLM class

1. Vanthoor/Bamber (B/NZ), Porsche 911 RSR #912, 2:00.590 minutes
2. Taylor/Garcia (USA/E), Chevrolet Corvette C8.R #3, + 0.264 seconds
3. Gavin/Milner (GB/USA), Chevrolet Corvette C8.R #4, + 0.314 seconds
4. Spengler/De Phillippi (CDN/USA), BMW M8 GTE #25, + 0.565 seconds
5. Krohn/Edwards (FIN/USA), BMW M8 GTE #24, + 0.612 seconds
6. Makowiecki/Tandy (F/GB), Porsche 911 RSR #911, + 0.715 seconds

GTD class

1. Telitz/Hawksworth (USA/GBR), Lexus RC F GT3 #14, 2:06.251 minutes
2. Montecalvo/Bell (USA/USA), Lexus RC F GT3 #12, + 0.787 seconds
3. Fergus/Holton (USA/USA), McLaren 720S GT3 #76, + 1.014 seconds

9. Hardwick/Long (USA/USA), Porsche 911 GT3 R #16, + 2.018 seconds

The preview

At round four of the IMSA SportsCar Championship at Road America, the Porsche drivers will fight for the first win of the season with the 911 RSR. The North American factory squad fields two RSR racers in the GTLM class. Porsche is the only manufacturer by now to have climbed the podium at every IMSA WeatherTech round this season. At Elkhart Lake, the sports car manufacturer aims to bring home the first victory in the USA for the latest version of the 911 RSR. In addition to the two works cars from Weissach, a customer vehicle will tackle the race over two hours and 40 minutes: Wright Motorsports contests the GTE category with a Porsche 911 GT3 R.

Opened in 1955, Road America is the longest track on the IMSA SportsCar Championship calendar at 6,515 kilometres. The storied racetrack is located a good two hours by car north of Chicago in the community of Elkhart Lake and is considered the cradle of American sports car racing. Porsche last celebrated a one-two victory in the GTLM class at Road America in 2015.

The Porsche GT Team drivers

Works drivers Earl Bamber (New Zealand) and Laurens Vanthoor (Belgium) share driving duties in the No. 912 Porsche 911 RSR. The reigning GTLM-class champions have scored second place at the first two rounds of the season in Daytona. At Sebring, the pair claimed the third podium step after a spirited performance. In the drivers' championship, Bamber and Vanthoor rank second just one point off the lead. Their team colleagues Nick Tandy from Great Britain and Frenchman Frédéric Makowiecki concluded the 24-hour race at the end of January and the race over 2:40 hours in Daytona on 4 July in third place. In the overall classification, Porsche has advanced to second place after Sebring.

The customer team

At round four of the North American sports car series, the seasoned customer squad Wright Motorsports again fields an over 500-hp Porsche 911 GT3 R in the GTD category. The squad from the U.S. state of Ohio entrust the cockpit of the No. 16 car to works driver Patrick Long (USA) and his compatriot Ryan Hardwick. The team currently ranks third in the class for vehicles compliant with the GT3 regulations.

Comments prior to the race

Pascal Zurlinden (Director Factory Motorsport): "After the last race at Sebring, our team analysed what happened there in order to safely avoid collisions in the pit lane in the future. The incident robbed us of

a big chance to win. The Porsche 911 RSR was definitely very competitive. I'm sure we'll be strong at Road America, too. We want to score our first victory with the new car and reap the rewards of our hard work."

Steffen Höllwarth (Head of Operations IMSA Championship): "After the races at Daytona and Sebring, the next highlight on the IMSA calendar is here – the race at Road America is a real classic. The storied circuit with its fast corners blends into the hilly landscape beautifully. We have a strong overall package with the new Porsche 911 RSR. We'll do our utmost to reposition ourselves at the top of the championship and notch up our first victory in the USA with the new 911."

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

Live streaming of the race

Round four of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship at Road America takes off on Sunday, 2 August, at 11.05 p.m. local time (18:05 p.m. CEST). The race over 2:40 hours can be viewed outside the USA and Canada on www.imsa.com.

The schedule (local time, CEST: -7 hours)

Friday, 31 July
4.35 - 5:35 p.m. – Free practice

Saturday, 1 August
8:55 - 10:10 a.m. – Free practice
1:50 - 2:05 p.m. – Qualifying GTD
2:15 - 2:30 p.m. – Qualifying GTLM
2:40 - 2:55 p.m. – Qualifying DPi/LMP2

Sunday, 2 August
11:05 a.m. - 1:45 p.m. – Race

The Porsche 911 RSR

The new Porsche 911 RSR (2019 model year) celebrated its debut in the IMSA SportsCar Championship at the 24 Hours of Daytona in January. Compared to its extremely successful predecessor model, the car received improvements, most notably to areas such as driveability, efficiency, ergonomics and serviceability. About 95 percent of all components are new. The 911 RSR is powered by a 4.2-litre, six-cylinder boxer engine.

This is the IMSA SportsCar Championship

The IMSA SportsCar Championship was founded in the USA and Canada in 2013 after the merger of the American Le Mans Series and the Grand-Am Series. A year later the new sports car race series, which is organised by the International Motor Sports Association (IMSA), was contested for the first time. Sports prototypes and sports cars start in four different classes: GTLM (GT Le Mans), GTD (GT Daytona), Dpi (Daytona Prototype international) and LMP2 (Le Mans Prototype 2). The new Porsche 911 RSR is fielded in the GTLM class, and the Porsche 911 GT3 R contests the GTD class. The Porsche GT Team tackles the 2020 season in North America as the title defenders in the manufacturers', drivers' and team classifications.

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Image Sublines

Path: IMSA: Round 4/Images/img_1.jpg
Title: 911 GT3 R, IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship, Round 4, Elkhart Lake, USA, Race, 2020, Porsche AG
Subline: The 911 GT3 R fielded by the Wright Motorsport customer team finished fifth in the GTD class

Path: IMSA: Round 4/Images/img_2.jpg
Title: 911 RSR, IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship, Race, Round 3, Sebring, USA, 2020, Porsche AG
Subline: Porsche 911 RSR

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Title: 911 RSR, IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship, Race, Round 3, Sebring, USA, 2020, Porsche AG
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