

Porsche Penske Motorsport celebrates historic first win with the Porsche 963

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16/04/2023 The new Porsche Penske Motorsport works team celebrates its first victory with the Porsche 963 hybrid prototype. At round three of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship, the No. 6 car driven by Nick Tandy and Mathieu Jaminet came out on top after a gripping race. In the 100-minute sprint through the streets of Long Beach, their team colleagues Matt Campbell and Felipe Nasr took the flag in third place with the No. 7 car. In the GTD-Pro category, Pfaff Motorsports scored a podium result with the Porsche 911 GT3 R.

The Race

In glorious sunshine and set against the stunning backdrop of the Pacific coast, the IMSA series treated fans to an extremely entertaining show on the narrow street circuit in Long Bach. Hollywood, barely 50 kilometres away, could hardly have staged it better. The two Porsche 963 fielded by Porsche Penske Motorsport had started the race from positions six and eight. In the first lap, the two ca. 500 kW (680 PS) cars benefitted from a collision among the leading pack in the early stages and inherited second and fifth place.

The first stint drivers, Nick Tandy from the UK and Brazilian Felipe Nasr, fended off fierce attacks from their rivals and brought the two Porsche 963 into the pits midway through the race for a scheduled service and driver change. There, the new Porsche Penske Motorsport works team opted for a daring strategy: Unlike the rest of the competition, instead of changing the wheels on both vehicles, the squad put its trust in the excellent durability of the Michelin tyres. The time gained in the pits propelled the two “Made in Flacht” hybrid prototypes to the front of the field.

While Frenchman Mathieu Jaminet confidently turned his laps, his brand colleague Matt Campbell had his hands full in the final phase. The No. 7 car came under repeated attacks, which the Australian cleverly and resolutely countered or fended off. A minor collision, however, caused slight damage to the rear. Moreover, the tyres deteriorated rapidly over the last ten laps. With nine minutes left on the clock, Campbell lost two positions initially but reclaimed third place after an accident involving the No. 10 Acura in a battle with the leading Jaminet. Ultimately, the race ended behind the safety car.

“What an exciting and fantastic race,” says a delighted Thomas Laudenbach, Vice President Porsche Motorsport. “It was a spectacle from the first to the last lap. Our team chose an optimal strategy and did a perfect job with the pit stops. Our drivers gave their utmost and drove flawlessly without exception despite coming under enormous pressure. This performance was deservedly rewarded with our first victory. Many thanks to everyone in the team, our employees in Weissach and all our partners who made this success possible. I’m sure today's victory will give our team extra motivation in the FIA WEC as they head into Sunday's race in Portugal.”

“This day will go down in the history of our team. The first victory with the Porsche 963 is incredibly important to us,” says Jonathan Diuguid, Managing Director Porsche Penske Motorsport. “We put in so much energy and work to be able to celebrate such a success. Our strategy was certainly risky, but it paid off. We owe this triumph to every single person in the team. What Matt Campbell did in the battle for second place at the end was awesome. He had the sister car’s back in the important final phase. I’m enormously proud of the entire team!”

Pfaff Motorsports customer team scores podium with the Porsche 911 GT3 R

The GTD-Pro class race was equally as thrilling to the last moment. Thanks to a strong team effort and flawless drives, the Frenchman Patrick Pilet and Klaus Bachler from Austria secured a spot on the podium for Pfaff Motorsports. The No. 9 car fielded by the Canadian team reached the flag in third place. In the GTD class, the identical models campaigned by Wright Motorsports and Kelly-Moss by Riley finished without drama on positions ten, twelve and thirteen.

Thanks to this victory in Long Beach, Tandy and Jaminet have taken the lead in the drivers' championship. In the GTP-class manufacturer's classification, Porsche ranks third. Round four of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship will be contested in Laguna Seca on 14 May. The race on the legendary Californian circuit runs over 2:40 hours. This Sunday, the Porsche Penske Motorsport team faces its next big challenge: At the six-hour race in Portimão, two of the factory squad's Porsche 963 tackle the Hypercar class. Round two of the FIA World Endurance Championship WEC gets underway on Sunday at noon local time (1:00 pm CEST).

Drivers' comments after the race

Mathieu Jaminet (Porsche 963 #6): "What a terrific feeling! We're all very relieved. When the Acura appeared in my rear-view mirror towards the end, I knew he was going to attack – after all, I was on the back foot with significantly older tyres. He tried to outbrake me in the first corner. I immediately realised he wasn't going to make the corner and took evasive action while he landed in the tyre barriers. That was some real nail-biting stuff at the end of the race. Now, we're celebrating the Porsche 963's first victory!"

Nick Tandy (Porsche 963 #6): "It was clear to us before the start that we couldn't win the race based on our pace. We didn't have the fastest car. So, we thought through all possible strategies before race day and agreed not to change the tyres. That's the beauty of sprint races in the IMSA series: there are always many conceivable scenarios and sometimes a gamble pays off. We didn't know whether the tyres would last the distance, but it worked out. We also owe our victory to our colleague Matt Campbell, who put in a terrific performance in the battle for second place. That was a super strong effort from him! The first victory for the Porsche 963 feels fantastic. It's a well-deserved reward for everyone around the world who put an incredible amount of work into this project."

Matt Campbell (Porsche 963 #7): "I'm delighted for my colleagues in the number 6 car. Victory at last for the Porsche 963. That's just so cool. I gave absolutely everything in the battle for second place, but in the end, I couldn't quite fend off the competition due to our deteriorating tyres. At least we got over the line in third place. It was a great day."

Felipe Nasr (Porsche 963 #7): "A super victory for the team, the first success with the Porsche 963 – we couldn't have dreamed of a better result. We had to start from quite far back and catapulted ourselves to the front of the grid with a perfect strategy. Of course, we also benefitted from the incidents involving the other cars. But still, we were flawless and squeezed the most out of today."

Klaus Bachler (Porsche 911 GT3 R #9):"Patrick put in a very strong first stint and handed the car over to me in second place. I managed to withstand the pressure from the Corvette behind me for a long time. However, things turned a bit chaotic in turn six when we were overtaken by a GTP car. My rival took advantage of this opportunity and pulled alongside me. He got past and I didn't get a chance to attack afterwards. Overtaking is really difficult at Long Beach. I didn't take any risks and brought the podium result home. Those were important points today in terms of the championship."

Race results

GTP class:
1. Tandy/Jaminet (UK/F), Porsche 963 #6, 78 laps
2. Yelloly/de Phillippi (UK/USA), BMW #25, 78 laps
3. Campbell/Nasr (AUS/BR), Porsche 963 #7, 78 laps

GTD-Pro class:
1. Hawksworth/Barnicoat (UK/UK), Lexus #14, 73 laps
2. Garcia/Taylor (E/USA), Corvette #3, 73 laps
3. Bachler/Pilet (A/F), Porsche 911 GT3 R #9, 73 laps

GTD class:
1. Sellers/Snow (USA/USA), BMW #1, 73 laps
2. Sörensen/de Angelis (DK/CDN), Aston Martin #27, 73 laps
3. Montecalvo/Telitz (USA/USA), Lexus #12, 73 laps
10. Brynjolfsson/Hindman (USA/USA), Porsche 911 GT3 R #77, 72 laps
12. Metni/van Berlo (USA/NL), Porsche 911 GT3 R #91, 71 laps
13. Udell/Bleekemolen (USA/NL), Porsche 911 GT3 R #92, 71 laps

Full results on http://imsa.alkamelsystems.com.

Qualifying

The No. 6 Porsche 963 tackles round three of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship from the grid position six. During the qualifying for the Long Beach Grand Prix in California, works driver Nick Tandy from the UK turned his fastest lap in 1:11.406 minutes. His brand colleague Felipe Nasr from Brazil claimed P8 in the 20-minute hunt for top times on the city circuit close to Los Angeles. In the GTD-Pro class, the Sebring-winning squad Pfaff Motorsports secured a promising grid spot, planting its

Porsche 911 GT3 R on third place.

The Porsche Penske Motorsport switches from long distance to sprint mode with the Porsche 963 in the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship: next up on the calendar is the Long Beach event – which is the shortest race of the season at just 100 minutes long.

In sunny conditions and cool temperatures of around 17 degrees Celsius, the Porsche Penske Motorsport works team struggled to get the tyres of both LMDh prototypes within the ideal operating window. This had already become evident in the morning's practice session and again at noon. Despite a mammoth effort from the qualifying drivers Tandy and Nasr, the gap to the fastest vehicles in the GTP class was significant. Given the lack of overtaking opportunities on the narrow US street circuit, the grid positions play a major role.

"We're disappointed – no question about it," says Thomas Laudenbach, clearly stating his impressions of the qualifying. The Vice President of Porsche Motorsport continues: "We started the race weekend with high hopes. However, we already noticed in the practice sessions that it was very difficult to get the Michelin tyres up to temperature, especially the front tyres. Hopefully, our engineers manage to significantly improve the setup for race day. The Sebring class winners Pfaff Motorsports tackle the GTD-Pro class from position three. That's a great place to start to give the Porsche 911 GT3 R the best chances in the race."

"Obviously, that's not the result we'd hoped for," concludes Jonathan Diuguid. The Managing Director of Porsche Penske Motorsport adds: "We've been off the pace since the first free practice. We'll continue to work tirelessly and systematically on possible improvements. Let's see what race day brings. One thing is clear: we're too far from the top and we need to find out exactly why."

Best Porsche 911 GT3 R tackles the GTD-Pro category from position three

The qualifying for the two GTD classes was stopped early after an accident involving PJ Hyett at the wheel of AO Racing's Porsche 911 GT3 R. Despite the heavy impact of the bright green 911 with its dinosaur livery, the American was uninjured. The vehicle with the nickname "Rexy", however, sustained severe damages and is unable to contest the race. In the Pro class, Frenchman Patrick Pilet heads into the Pro class from P3 in Pfaff Motorsports' No. 9 car. In the GTD class, the two entries from Kelly-Moss with Riley and the 911 GT3 R fielded by Wright Motorsports start from positions 11, 14 and 15 respectively.

The 100-minute sprint race on the spectacular street course along the Pacific Coast gets underway on Saturday at 2:05 pm local time (11:05 pm CEST). Outside the USA and Canada, the entire race can be viewed live on the website https://imsa.com/tv.

Drivers' comments after the qualifying

Nick Tandy (Porsche 963 #6): "Over a flying lap, we're too far off the competition. It's always tricky when a team arrives at such a special track with a completely new car. Our Porsche 963 feels really good and it's great fun racing through the streets of Long Beach. But the others are simply faster. Qualifying and racing are two different things. I'm sure the team will find some solutions by Saturday. I believe we'll be closer over the distance."

Felipe Nasr (Porsche 963 #7): "The qualifying was difficult for us. We simply couldn't build up sufficient speed. We managed to make some progress during the practice sessions but there's still a long way to go to catch up to the frontrunners. We know where there's still room to improve. I hope the engineers come up with a good solution for this. In tomorrow's race, we are determined to fight our way forward as far as possible. I hope we can achieve a top 3 result."

Patrick Pilet (Porsche 911 GT3 R #9): "Our Porsche felt great in the first free practice but we still made some tweaks for the second session and learned a lot in the process. The team found an ideal solution: Our 911 was very strong in qualifying. On my first fast laps, I had to keep slowing down because of the yellow flags so that no one was endangered. My final lap was great again. I reached the eighth turn without any mistakes and really fast. And again, the yellow flags were there – what a shame! More would definitely have been possible. The car drives beautifully. I think our chances on race day look very good."

Qualifying result

GTP class:
1. Albuquerque/R. Taylor (P/USA), Acura #10, 1:09.909 minutes
2. Blomqvist/Braun (UK/USA), Acura #60, 1:10.583 minutes
3. Bourdais/van der Zande (F/NL), Cadillac #01, 1:10.981 minutes
6. Campbell/Nasr (AUS/BR), Porsche 963 #7, 1:11.406 minutes
8. Tandy/Jaminet (UK/F), Porsche 963 #6, 1:11.591 minutes

GTD-Pro class:
1. Hawksworth/Barnicoat (UK/UK), Lexus #14, 1:17.817 minutes
2. Gunn/Riberas (UK/E), Aston Martin #23, 1:17.958 minutes
3. Bachler/Pilet (A/F), Porsche 911 GT3 R #9, 1:18.083 minutes

GTD class:
1. Sörensen/de Angelis (DK/CDN), Aston Martin #27, 1:17.811 minutes
2. Montecalvo/Telitz (USA/USA), Lexus #12, 1:18.376 minutes
3. Sellers/Snow (USA/USA), BMW #1, 1:18.383 minutes
11. Brynjolfsson/Hindman (USA/USA), Porsche 911 GT3 R #77, 1:19.629 minutes

13. Hyett/Priaulx (USA/UK), Porsche 911 GT3 R #80, 1:19.767 minutes
14. Udell/Bleekemolen (USA/NL), Porsche 911 GT3 R #92, 1:19.807 minutes
15. Metni/van Berlo (USA/NL), Porsche 911 GT3 R #91, 1:20.789 minutes

Full results on http://imsa.alkamelsystems.com.

Preview

Porsche Penske Motorsport travels to round three of the North American IMSA series in Long Beach feeling highly motivated. After the dramatic 12-hour race in Sebring, the factory squad is now determined to bring home a top result from the Pacific Coast of the United States with the Porsche 963. However, the contrasts could hardly be greater: Next up after the two longest races of the year comes the shortest event of the season – with the short 100-minute sprint on the 3.167-kilometre city circuit held as part of the IndyCar Grand Prix weekend. Qualifying for the event is particularly critical: overtaking on the Long Beach Street Circuit is rare and when all goes well, the teams come into the pits only once.

“After the spectacle in Sebring, our Porsche Penske Motorsport now faces the next highlight,” explains Thomas Laudenbach, Vice President Porsche Motorsport. “Racing on the streets around Long Beach has a very different character compared to the first two events of the season at Daytona and Sebring. It’ll be an intense sprint. We’ve worked meticulously to prepare our two Porsche 963 for this special challenge. After narrowly missing out on our first victory at Sebring, we have a clear goal for Long Beach. I’m looking forward to an exciting race in the GTD classes and I’m certain that our customer teams can be winners with the Porsche 911 GT3 R.”

“First we tackled the two endurance races in Florida over 24 and 12 hours, next up is the short sprint in Long Beach – the challenges in the early part of the IMSA season could hardly be more different,” exclaims Urs Kuratle. The Director Factory Motorsport LMDh adds: “We drew important conclusions from our outing in Sebring. Now we finally want to reap the rewards in Long Beach. Our two Porsche Penske Motorsport squads again face another intense weekend: while the IMSA team competes in California, the WEC crew will be tackling round two of the world championship in Portimão. We aim to score maximum points on both sides of the Atlantic.”

Jonathan Diuguid, Managing Director Porsche Penske Motorsport: “We are ready to tackle something different this week, with the first sprint race of the year at Long Beach. These types of races play out totally different than the endurance events, so as a team we need to have a different mindset and a different type of preparation in the shop. For us, we are encouraged by the speed we had in Sebring and hope that can transfer over to Long Beach. This is an important race for us as well, because we will be sharing the weekend with our Team Penske counterparts in IndyCar, so there will be a lot of eyes on how we perform. Our goal is to qualify up front, minimize mistakes and hopefully bring home the win at one of the legendary races in North America.”

The IMSA race

Round three of this year's IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship will be contested on the Long Beach Grand Prix Circuit. The 3.167-kilometre city circuit features eleven turns and is regarded as the American equivalent of the Monaco Grand Prix. The course runs in a clockwise direction around the Long Beach Convention Center. Its special features include the sweeping start-finish straight along the Pacific coast and the sharp right-hander at the end of the lap. The temporary circuit has served as a racetrack since 1975 and hosted Formula 1 eight times between 1976 and 1983. On the third weekend in April, the popular American IndyCar series will be contested at Long Beach, in which Team Penske is also represented with a team.

The Porsche teams and drivers

Four regular IMSA drivers share the cockpits of the two Porsche 963 fielded by the Porsche Penske Motorsport factory squad in the GTP class. Nick Tandy from the UK and Frenchman Mathieu Jaminet helm the No. 6 vehicle, with the No. 7 sister car shared by Australian Matt Campbell and Felipe Nasr from Brazil.

In the GTD-Pro class, Austria's Klaus Bachler and Patrick Pilet from France drive Pfaff Motorsports' No. 9 Porsche 911 GT3 R. In the GTD category, Kelly-Moss with Riley fields two Porsche. Sharing driving duties in the No. 91 car are Alan Metni from the USA and the Porsche North America selected driver, Kay van Berlo from the Netherlands. American Alec Udell and Jeroen Bleekemolen from the Netherlands drive No. 92 entry campaigned by the customer team from the US state of Wisconsin.

Alan Brynjolfsson and Trent Hindman from America compete for Wright Motorsports as the regular drivers in the No. 77 Porsche. AO Racing relies on PJ Hyett from the USA and Sebastian Priaulx from the UK. Thanks to its distinctive dinosaur livery, their bright green No. 80 Porsche 911 GT3 R has been nicknamed "Rexy".

An overview of the teams and drivers

GTP-class (Porsche 963):
Porsche Penske Motorsport (#6): Mathieu Jaminet (F), Nick Tandy (UK)
Porsche Penske Motorsport (#7): Matt Campbell (AUS), Felipe Nasr (BR)

GTD-Pro class (Porsche 911 GT3 R):
Pfaff Motorsports (#9): Klaus Bachler (A), Patrick Pilet (F)

GTD-class (Porsche 911 GT3 R):
Wright Motorsports (#77): Alan Brynjolfsson (USA), Trent Hindman (USA)

AO Racing (#80): PJ Hyett (USA), Sebastian Priaulx (UK)
Kelly-Moss with Riley (#91): Alan Metni (USA), Kay van Berlo (NL)
Kelly-Moss with Riley (#92): Jeroen Bleekemolen (NL), Alec Udell (USA)

The schedule (local time, CEST -9 hours)

Friday, 14 April
9:00 am – 10:00 am: Free practice 1
12:45 pm – 2:30 pm: Free practice 2
5:15 pm – 5:30 pm: Qualifying GTD-Pro/GTD
5:40 pm – 6:00 pm: Qualifying GTP

Saturday, 15 April
2:05 pm – 3:45 pm: Race (100 minutes)

Drivers' comments ahead of the race

Nick Tandy (Porsche 963 #6): "Long Beach should be fantastic in a GTP car. I've been lucky enough to compete there a lot but never in a prototype – that's going to be exciting. Plus, we share the weekend with our Penske friends from the IndyCar series. Perhaps we could swap information which would assist both teams."

Felipe Nasr (Porsche 963 #7): "We're about to face the first street course of the season set against the unique backdrop of Long Beach. The circuit is super technical with several pretty tight corners but it's also very exciting. I always enjoy going there, especially with its great vibes from the Californian fans. With many other series competing there, the level of grip usually increases during the weekend. This factor is the key to finding the best setup for the car. We learned a lot in Sebring, now we have to continue this work. We aim to climb to the top of the podium with our Porsche 963 soon."

Klaus Bachler (Porsche 911 GT3 R #9): "I've never competed in Long Beach so again I'm stepping into new territory. However, there is one advantage: because it's a temporary street course, nobody has been able to test and practice there before the race. I'll definitely prepare well. Luckily, I have a great teammate with Patrick Pilet at my side. He knows the track and can share a few tips with me. I like street circuits and I'm super excited about the race weekend."

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Image Sublines

Path: Sprint debut for the Porsche 963 on the streets of Long Beach/Images/img_1.jpg
Title: Patrick Pilet (F), Klaus Bachler (A) (l-r), Pfaff Motorsports, IMSA, Long Beach, 2023, Porsche AG
Subline: Pfaff Motorsports' Patrick Pilet and Klaus Bachler

Path: Sprint debut for the Porsche 963 on the streets of Long Beach/Images/img_3.jpg
Title: Thomas Laudenbach, Vice President Motorsport, 2023, Porsche AG
Subline: Thomas Laudenbach, Vice President Porsche Motorsport

Path: Sprint debut for the Porsche 963 on the streets of Long Beach/Images/img_4.jpg
Title: Porsche 911 GT3 R, Pfaff Motorsports, 2023, Porsche AG
Subline: 911 GT3 R Pfaff Motorsports

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