

Porsche heads to exciting Petit Le Mans IMSA finale with title aspirations

09/10/2024 Porsche Penske Motorsport aims to take home the championship crowns at the final round of this year's IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship October 10 – 12. The factory race team heads to the 10-hour race at Michelin Raceway Road Atlanta as the leaders of the team and drivers' standings. Porsche also sits atop the manufacturers' classification. At the 27th annual Petit Le Mans, two "works"-run Porsche 963 race cars will once again contest the top GTP class. In the cockpit of the No. 6, Nick Tandy (United Kingdom) and Mathieu Jaminet (France) receive reinforcement from Frenchman Kévin Estre. In the sister car, Australian Matt Campbell will support regular drivers Felipe Nasr (Brazil) and Huntersville, North Carolina resident Dane Cameron. The Proton Competition and JDC-Miller MotorSports customer teams will field two more of the hybrid prototypes. The Porsche contract driver Laurin Heinrich (Germany) looks set to clinch three titles in the GTD Pro category with AO Racing while two more 911 GT3 R race cars tackle the GTD class.

Atlanta, Georgia. Porsche Penske Motorsport has a score to settle at Michelin Raceway Road Atlanta.

Last year, the factory team travelled to the Petit Le Mans endurance race in Braselton, Georgia as the leaders in the manufacturers' championship. Nick Tandy (United Kingdom) and Mathieu Jaminet (France) also had a chance to clinch the drivers' title. However, the dream of taking home the first crown for the Porsche 963 was shattered for the British-French duo after 75 minutes, when Tandy became the unwitting victim of a collision caused by another competitor. The No. 7 sister car would also suffer at the hands of multiple safety car phases towards the end of the race – ultimately relegating it to fourth place.

"We narrowly missed out on winning the title at Petit Le Mans in 2023. Now, after an incredibly demanding season, we're determined to make up for that," explains Urs Kuratle, Director Factory Racing LMDh. "We're travelling to Road Atlanta as the leaders of all three classifications and aim to take home the championship titles. Our tests here in mid-September prepared us well for the IMSA finale. But the 10-hour race is long. Given the extreme traffic with slower cars, the team and drivers face a tough task."

"So far, 'Victory Lane' at Road Atlanta has eluded our organization – we plan to change that with a solid end to the 2024 season," states Jonathan Diuguid, Managing Director Porsche Penske Motorsport. "Felipe Nasr and Dane Cameron head to Petit Le Mans with a healthy lead in the team and drivers' championship. As a group, we now require solid reliability and need to execute the basics at Road Atlanta. Technical problems in Indy affected the result of the number 7 car, but we were able to understand the issues and put counter measures into place."

Proton Competition would be more than happy to repeat its result from last year's Petit Le Mans. In 2023, Porsche factory driver Gianmaria Bruni (Italy), Englishman Harry Tincknell and Swiss Neel Jani finished third – the best result so far for the German customer team's Porsche 963. This year, Bruni will share the cockpit at Road Atlanta with Dutchman Bent Viscaal and Alessio Picariello from Belgium. The fourth Porsche hybrid prototype will be campaigned by JDC-Miller MotorSports crewed by Richard Westbrook (United Kingdom) and Phil Hanson (United Kingdom) and Dutchman Tijmen van der Helm. The trio recently secured a podium result at the penultimate IMSA race of the season in Indianapolis. The third place finish at the "Battle on the Bricks" was JDC-Miller's highest finish in the Porsche 963 to-date.

The championship situation in the top class

Porsche travels to Road Atlanta with excellent chances of scooping the title pool in all three GTP classifications. In the manufacturers' standings, the German sports car manufacturer leads with 2,905 points, ahead of Cadillac by 124 markers. The brand receives a minimum of 286 points for any Porsche 963 to compete this weekend, while victory and pole position are rewarded with 385 points – a difference of 99 points. Consequently, just starting is enough to bring the championship home to Porsche. In the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship, all vehicles, drivers and manufacturers that start behind the safety car in the formation laps are eligible for points. It is not even necessary to cross the finish line under the checkered flag.

The situation in the team and drivers' classifications is similar. The number 7 car driven by the regular crew Dane Cameron and Felipe Nasr leads with 2,650 points, followed by the sister car, driven by Mathieu Jaminet and Nick Tandy, 124 points behind with 2,526 points. The No. 1 Cadillac has accumulated 2,486 points coming to the finale, 164 points behind. The difference between a win including pole position and just participating is 165 points for eleven vehicles.

The battle for the Michelin Endurance Cup, which includes the long-distance races in Daytona, Sebring, Watkins Glen, Indianapolis and Road Atlanta, is even closer. The Porsche 963 duo Cameron and Nasr leads with 37 points, followed by Renger van der Zande/Sébastian Bourdais (33) and Jack Aitken, Pipo Derani and Tom Blomqvist (32). Points are awarded at Petit Le Mans after four, eight and ten hours. The leaders can make up to three points per classification – a maximum of nine. This means that Tandy and Jaminet (30) as well as Jordan Taylor and Louis Deletraz (28) still also have a chance of winning the title.

Laurin Heinrich and AO Racing set sights on GTD Pro title for Porsche

Leading the GTD Pro category, Porsche also has a real shot at taking home the manufacturers' title at the IMSA season finale. Porsche holds a 122-point lead over Aston Martin. Former Porsche Junior Laurin Heinrich (Germany) sits at the top of the drivers' championship leaderboard with a 99-point advantage over Ross Gunn (United Kingdom). Simply put, fifth place in qualifying and in the race is enough for the Heinrich to conclude his first full season in the North American sports car championship as champion. For AO Racing the same situation applies in the bid for the title against the Heart of Racing team. At Road Atlanta, Heinrich once again receives support from Frenchman Julien Andlauer and works driver Michael Christensen (Denmark) at the wheel of "Rexy" – a Porsche 911 GT3 R in its distinctive dinosaur livery. All three drivers have come up through the ranks of Porsche Motorsport's junior development initiative. Heinrich made his North American racing debut here at Road Atlanta in Porsche Carrera Cup North America in 2022.

Two more 911 GT3 R race cars will contest the GTD class. In this Pro-Am style category, professionals share the cockpit with less experienced drivers. Full-season entrant High Class Racing/MDK Motorsports will pursue its first podium of the year with Anders Fjordbach (Denmark), Kerong Li (China) and Porsche ace Klaus Bachler (Austria) in the No. 86. Following their first race win of the season at Indianapolis, veteran Porsche entrant Wright Motorsports will chase its second endurance win of 2024 with drivers Adam Adelson (Losa Angeles, California), Elliott Skeer (San Diego, California) and Jan Heylen (Tampa, Florida) behind the wheel of the No. 120 Porsche 911 GT3 R race cars.

The race

"Petit Le Mans" has been a regular fixture on the North American sports car calendar since 1998 – with

this year marking its 27th running. Michelin Raceway Road Atlanta is located approximately 50 miles northeast of Atlanta, home of Porsche Cars North America. The 10-hour race on the 2.54-mile (4.088-kilometer) course is extremely popular among fans and drivers. The tradition-steeped circuit close to the town of Braselton features twelve turns – including the famous 'esses', a particularly fast section, the sweeping downhill finale turn to the start-finish line.

Unpredictable weather handed Porsche its greatest success at Road Atlanta. In 2015, Nick Tandy (United Kingdom), Patrick Pilet (France) and Richard Lietz (Austria) outpaced the more powerful prototypes in heavy rain to clinch a sensational overall victory in the Porsche 911 RSR – the only one for the sports car manufacturer in the classic event to date. Porsche has notched up 24 class wins at Petit Le Mans.

Live stream of the race

North American race fans can watch live racing on NBC from noon – 3:00 p.m. ET on Saturday, October 12. Coverage from 6:00 p.m. to the checkered flag will air on USA. Full flag-to-flag coverage of Petit Le Mans can be viewed on the Peacock streaming app. Outside the USA and Canada, the race will be broadcast live over the full distance in a free stream on imsa.tv. The website scoring.imsa.com offers live timing. The eleventh and final round of the season gets underway on Saturday, October 12 at 12:10 p.m. local time.

Nick Tandy, Driver, No. 6 Porsche Penske Motorsport Porsche 963:
"Road Atlanta is a beautiful track, and Petit Le Mans is a special event, even if it wasn't particularly our strongest circuit last year. That's why we've invested a lot of work including tests in Mooresville and Weissach [Germany] to perfectly prepare the Porsche 963 and the team for this."

Dane Cameron, Driver, No. 7 Porsche Penske Motorsport Porsche 963:
"Petit Le Mans will be a massive challenge with so many cars racing on a relatively small, high-speed circuit like Road Atlanta. But we've put ourselves in a good position to win the drivers' and manufacturers' titles. Now we need one more strong performance to bring home the trophies."

Gianmaria Bruni, Driver, No. 5 Proton Competition Porsche 963:
"I'm looking forward to the race, although it'll be tough for us. I'm sharing the cockpit with Bent and Alessio. It's their first time at Road Atlanta. I'm very happy with the progress of the Proton 963 crew. Despite limited testing time, the team improved a lot during our first full season with the Porsche 963. We will try our best to finish the season with another good performance."

Richard Westbrook, Driver, No. 85 JDC-Miller MotorSports Porsche 963:
"After the podium result in Indy, we're heading to Petit Le Mans with a confidence boost. We're starting to get into a sweet spot with our Porsche 963 – I wish it wasn't our last round. Despite storms, we had a good test at Road Atlanta last week, and we found a direction for the race. Traffic management is the most important thing at Petit Le Mans because you have to overtake dozens of GT cars per lap. Our

eyes are wide open for that. We want to finish the season like at the last round: with a podium or maybe even better."

Laurin Heinrich, Driver, No. 77 AO Racing Porsche 911 GT3 R:
"After our victory in Indianapolis, we're heading to Road Atlanta feeling particularly motivated. We hold a 99-point lead in the championship. That sounds like a lot, but it isn't in IMSA – it could be close. Obviously, my big goal is to win the title. I'm super excited about my first Petit Le Mans. Two years ago, I competed in the USA for the first time at Road Atlanta and took a lights-to-flag victory in the Porsche Carrera Cup North America. So, I have fond memories of this challenging old-school course. It's one of my favorites. The 10-hour distance is long. As always, we're excellently positioned with our car, and we have a strong trio with Michael Christensen and Julien Andlauer. We'll tackle this race like all others. We want to win."

An overview of vehicles and drivers

GTP class (Porsche 963):
- Proton Competition No. 5: Gianmaria Bruni (Italy) / Bent Viscaal (Netherlands) / Alessio Picariello (Belgium)

- Porsche Penske Motorsport No. 6: Mathieu Jaminet (France) / Nick Tandy (UK) / Kévin Estre (France)

- Porsche Penske Motorsport No. 7: Dane Cameron (Huntersville, North Carolina) / Felipe Nasr (Brazil) / Matt Campbell (Australia)

- JDC-Miller MotorSports No. 85: Tijmen van der Helm (Netherlands) / Richard Westbrook (UK) / Phil Hanson (UK)

GTD Pro class (Porsche 911 GT3 R):
- AO Racing No. 77: Laurin Heinrich (Germany) / Julien Andlauer (France) / Michael Christensen (Denmark)

GTD class (Porsche 911 GT3 R):

- MDK Motorsports (No. 86): Anders Fjordbach (Denmark) / Kerong Li (China) / Klaus Bachler (Austria)

- Wright Motorsports (No. 120): Adam Adelson (Los Angeles, Caliifornia) / Elliott Skeer (San Diego, California) / Jan Heylen (Tampa, Florida)

The schedule (all times eastern):

Thursday, October 10:

10:40 a.m. – 12:10 p.m.: Free practice 1
3:20 p.m.. – 4:45 p.m.: Free practice 2
7:30 p.m.. – 9:00 p.m.: Free practice 3

Friday, October 11:
3:25 p.m.. – 3:40 p.m.: Qualifying GTD-Pro / GTD
4:15 p.m.. – 4:30 p.m.: Qualifying GTP

Saturday, October 12:
12:10 p.m. – 10:10 p.m.: 10-hour race

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Image Sublines

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Subline: Urs Kuratle (Director Factory Motorsport LMDh)

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Title: Jonathan Diuguid, Managing Director Porsche Penske Motorsport, IMSA, 2024, Porsche AG
Subline: Jonathan Diuguid (Managing Director Porsche Penske Motorsport)

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Title: Laurin Heinrich (D), AO Racing (#77), IMSA, 2024, Porsche AG
Subline: Laurin Heinrich (D)

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