Thompson and van Berlo Split Porsche Carrera Cup North America Presented by the Cayman Islands Rounds in Austin

03/05/2021 The premier one-make championship made its second stop of an eight-weekend inaugural season at the Circuit of the Americas (COTA).

Weather played a key role in Rounds 3 and 4 of the Porsche Carrera Cup North America Presented by the Cayman Islands. The premier one-make championship made its second stop of an eight-weekend inaugural season at the Circuit of the Americas (COTA) in Austin, Texas. Severe weather plagued the first two days of the April 30 – May 2 visit to the 3.4-mile (5.513 km), 20-turn race track even forcing the cancelation of qualifying on Saturday. However, Sunday dawned with clear skies for both events on Sunday, May 2. Overcoming the still damp conditions and intense competition, Parker Thompson (Canada) won his first race in the series on Sunday morning while Kay van Berlo (Netherlands) won his second career Porsche Carrera Cup North America Presented by the Cayman Islands in Race 2 later in the afternoon.

“This was a challenging weekend in regard to the weather but it was a great success for our teams and drivers," said Dr. Daniel Armbruster, President & CEO, Porsche Motorsport North America. "We were faced with many obstacles but each time we were able to overcome those by working as a team. In the end, we provided two very competitive and exciting races in one day under very different conditions. We are seeing our Junior Program North America drivers shine despite the adversity and their development is a key goal for Porsche Carrera Cup North America Presented by the Cayman Islands."

Earlier in the week, April 28, Porsche Motorsport North America, the sole supplier of Porsche-built race cars and parts in the United States and Canada, announced a title partnership with the Cayman Islands Department of Tourism for the top Porsche one-make series on the continent. 27 cars were entered for the COTA weekend, 20 of which are the newest generation Porsche 911 GT3 Cup race car, type 992, in the Pro and Pro-Am classes. Seven of the previous generation type 991.2, Porsche 911 GT3 Cup cars were also entered for the pair of 45-minute races.

"We welcomed some of our friends from the Cayman Islands to the race track here in Austin and I believe we have found not only a partner with synergy to our clients but have also created new race fans," said Armbruster. "They witnessed the passion that our drivers and team owners have not only for the sport, but for life and found a deep connection we all share. We look forward to returning the favor and visiting them in the Cayman Islands very soon."

Pro Class

With qualifying canceled due to severe weather on Saturday, the starting grid for Race 1, held at 8:00 a.m. CDT on Sunday morning, was set by championship points. The starting order for Race 2 was determined by each driver's fastest lap in Race 1. As a result, in the morning event, Sebastian Priaulx (United Kingdom) sat on the pole position in the No. 3 Kelly-Moss Road & Race Porsche 911 GT3 Cup car while with teammate Kay van Berlo (Netherlands) beside him. When the young driver from Guernsey – and winner of the first race in series history at Sebring in March – brought the field to the green flag in tight, side-by-side formation. It was van Berlo who took the lead charging uphill into Turn 1 and began to pull away. Priaulx would fall into the clutches of those behind him, unable to put full power down on the 500+ Hp normally aspirated rear-engine racer. 15-minutes into the race, van Berlo – who won Race 2 at Sebring – was ahead of Parker Thompson (Canada) by more than four-seconds. As the remaining top-five battled behind them, and on a drying track, the leading pair pulled away. A late yellow flag bunched the field for a green flag with ten-minutes remaining. van Berlo grew the lead to almost two-seconds before Thompson formed his attack and was less than one-second behind the Dutchman entering the final lap. Thompson closed and overtook van Berlo for the win in the final sector of the circuit. The podium for Race 1 was Thompson, van Berlo and a surging Priaulx in third-place.

It was Priaulx's late charge that earned him the fastest race lap and pole position for Race 2. The Pro class point's leader entering the event pulled into the early lead in Race 2 as Leh Keen (Atlanta, Georgia) in the No. 12 311RS Motorsports entry and Riley Dickinson (New Braunfels, Texas) in the No. 53 Team Hardpoint EBM Porsche 911 GT3 Cup car battled behind. The field remained consistent until van Berlo – who started in fourth-place – closed the gap to the leaders and overtook for the top position at the end of the backstraight. He would never be seriously challenged again as Priaulx and a local favorite Dickinson closed out the top-three. Thompson was in fourth-place.

Comments after the race

Parker Thompson, Driver, No. 9 JDX Racing Porsche 911 GT3 Cup, Winner, Race 1.
"Kay was really good on cold tires so on the restart he pulled away but I slowly tracked him back in. He made a little mistake going through [turns] 17, 18, 19 and I threw it in and we got the job done. I think the JDX car was the fastest on track. We deserved to be on the pointy-end of the field today."

Kay van Berlo, Driver, No. 3 Kelly-Moss Road & Race Porsche 911 GT3 Cup, Winner, Race 2.
"I felt I had to set something right for the team. I just wanted it to be a clean race. I made it up to P2 and after that it was remembering we had a 45-minute race and I had to save the tires. I closed the gap to Priaulx and my first opportunity I made my move. It worked out pretty well. From there onwards it was a matter of taking care of the tires and not making any strange mistakes. We brought it home. A good way to finish the weekend. It was a difficult weekend with so many different conditions. It requires the driver to shift from one style of driving to another."

Info

Pro-Am

Alan Metni (Austin, Texas) was the Pro-Am class race winner of both rounds at COTA. He now stands as the only driver to win the class at every round of the championship thus far. Metni was originally placed in second at the conclusion of Race 1 but post-race technical inspection of the No. 69 BGB Motorsports entry of Thomas Collingwood (Canada) found the car did not meet the camber requirement set by series officials. As a result Metni's No. 99 Kelly-Moss Road & Race Porsche was moved to the win with Efrin Castro (Dominican Republic) in the No. 65 Team Hardpoint EBM Porsche and Curt Swearingin (Chattanooga, Tennessee) piloting the No. 17 ACI Motorsports machine in second and third. The trio would repeat the order in Race 2.

Pro-Am 991

In Race 1 on Sunday morning, Matt Halcome (Dallas, Georgia) piloted his No. 55 Goldcrest Motorsports Porsche 911 GT3 Cup car, type 991. 2, to victory. Not only did he lead his fellow Pro-Am 991 class competitors, he bettered the field of Pro-Am type 992 cars. Jeffrey Majkrzak (Orono, Minnesota) – No. 29 – and Grady Willingham (Birmingham, Alabama) – No. 21 – finished off the podium in both rounds.

Matt Halcome, Driver, No. 55 Goldcrest Motorsports Porsche 911 GT3 Cup, Winner, Race 1 and 2.
"This morning was pretty rough in the first race. It was super slick with no grip in the front end but the second race was great weather. The track got a little greasy toward the end but it was a good time. We are happy with our results this weekend."

An archive of the event can be found on the Porsche Motorsport North America YouTube channel (youtube.com/porschemotorsportnorthamerica). Rounds 5 and 6 of the 2021 Porsche Carrera Cup North America Presented by the Cayman Islands will be held at Watkins Glen International in New York on June 24 – 27.

Info

Porsche Carrera Cup North America by the Cayman Islands is the premier one-make race series in the United States and Canada utilizing a combination of the latest Porsche 911 GT3 Cup race car, type 992, and MICHELIN® Pilot® Sport Cup N3 racing slick to challenge the best road and street race courses on the continent. As with all national Carrera Cups worldwide, the inaugural season of the championship is scheduled to host 16-rounds. Each 45-minute race counts toward a season-long driver and team championship in each of three classes: Pro, Pro-Am and Pro-Am 991.

For more information on Porsche Carrera Cup North America by The Cayman Islands can be found at www.PorscheCarreraCup.us.

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