

IMSA win rounds off successful weekend for Porsche Motorsport

13/05/2024 A banner weekend for Porsche Motorsport: after triumphs in both FIA WEC classes in Spa-Francorchamps (Belgium) and works driver António Félix da Costa's victory at the Formula E home race in Berlin, the success at the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship at Laguna Seca was the icing on the cake.

Race

The Porsche 963 driven by Nick Tandy and Mathieu Jaminet won the action-packed thriller in California. This marked the 600th victory for a Porsche racing car in the IMSA series and the 100th triumph for the Penske team in sports car racing. Clinching third place, the sister car shared by the championship leaders Felipe Nasr and Dane Cameron continued its podium streak. Moreover, AO Racing's Porsche 911 GT3 R won the GTD class.

In perfect summer conditions and witnessed by a record crowd at the Laguna Seca Raceway, the IMSA

series once again delivered a gripping show over 2:40 hours. After a solid start and thanks to a clever strategy, strong driver performances and decisively good tyre durability, the two Porsche 963 racers from the Porsche Penske Motorsport works team charged their way onto the podium. With just twelve minutes left on the clock, Le Mans winner Nick Tandy made the crucial final move: In a last-ditch push, the UK driver catapulted his No. 6 car past the leading Cadillac and safely brought home the factory team's second win of the season in North America.

“What an incredible weekend for Porsche," exclaims Thomas Laudenbach, Vice President Porsche Motorsport. “First the double success of the Porsche 963 and Manthey's Porsche 911 GT3 R at the FIA WEC race in Spa, then António Félix da Costa's triumph at the Formula E race in Berlin and finally victory and a podium place for Porsche Penske Motorsport as well as first place in the GTD Pro class for AO Racing in the IMSA series in Laguna Seca. My heartfelt thanks to everyone in the works and customer teams at the racetracks and at the Weissach R&D Centre for making these incredible successes possible. The results of the last two days make me extremely proud!"

“Laguna Seca is one of my favourite tracks and seeing the Porsche 963 win there today was fantastic," states Roger Penske, CEO and founder of Penske Corporation. With this result, his team celebrates its 100th victory in sports car racing: “I was in Spa until yesterday evening watching the WEC team, now I was part of the success here in California – and later I'll follow our team in the Indycar race. Many people know that we're winners. We've underlined this several times with Porsche Penske Motorsport. Now we're setting our sights on Le Mans."

“It's a wonderful day for us," says Jonathan Diuguid, Managing Director Porsche Penske Motorsport. “Nick and Mathieu delivered a formidable and flawless performance. It was an unforgettable weekend for our global team with a win and podium finish in Laguna Seca and second place in Spa-Francorchamps. I'm very proud to notch up the 100th victory for the Penske organisation in sports car racing. We're now very much looking forward to the next IMSA race in Detroit and the FIA WEC season highlight in Le Mans."

In the overall standings, Nasr and Cameron retain first place in the drivers' standings after round four race of the season, while teammates Tandy and Jaminet progressed to fifth place. Porsche Penske Motorsport ranks first in the team classification. In the manufacturers' championship, Porsche reduced the gap to the leaders in second place.

The two Porsche 963 racers fielded by the customer teams JDC-Miller MotorSports and Proton Competition finished the race in Laguna Seca in eighth and tenth respectively.

AO Racing's Porsche 911 GT3 R wins GTD Pro class for the first time

The Porsche 911 GT3 R demonstrated its potential in the two GT classes. In the GTD Pro category, the customer team AO Racing brought home a commanding win with the so-called ‘Rexy' 911. UK racer Sebastian Priaulx laid the groundwork at the wheel of the No. 77 car with a solid drive in his first stint.

Former Porsche junior Laurin Heinrich followed up with an inspired drive. For long stretches, the German was undoubtedly the fastest GT driver on the track and built a significant lead over his pursuers. Wright Motorsports' drivers Adam Adelson and Elliott Skeer finished third in the GTD class.

Round five of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship will be held in Detroit on 1 June. The race on the spectacular street circuit is contested over just 100 minutes.

Drivers' comments after the race

Nick Tandy (Porsche 963 #6): "Our team did a tremendous job. Keep in mind, first, the crew clinches the 100th pole position for Penske in sports car racing, and then a day later the IMSA team scores their 100th victory. The results on both sides of the Atlantic clearly show how much we've improved in all areas over the past few months. That's exactly what we needed. I'm so proud to be a part of it!"

Mathieu Jaminet (Porsche 963 #6): "Luck eluded us in the first three races of the year, but now the tables have finally turned. The team did a perfect job, from preparing the cars to pit stops and strategy. Our Porsche 963 was a dream to drive today. Nick delivered a thrilling and ultimately successful fight for victory. Let's continue like this."

Felipe Nasr (Porsche 963 #7): "Congratulations to our colleagues in the sister car. It was a fantastic day of racing in California for our team. We crossed the finish line in third place with our number 7 car – that earned us a lot of points in our bid for the championship. We've extended our lead in the drivers' standings, which was our goal. During my stints, I came from seventh on the grid and reached the podium. That was great fun."

Laurin Heinrich (Porsche 911 GT3 R #77): "I'm over the moon! Not only is this my first win in the IMSA series but also for our AO Racing team and our much-loved 'Rexy'. Laguna Seca is only our third race with this configuration – and against many factory-supported teams in the notoriously competitive GTD Pro class. I'm immensely grateful and happy."

Elliott Skeer (Porsche 911 GT3 R #120): "We're newcomers to the scene so we kept our expectations conservative heading into the Laguna Seca weekend. Now the event is over and we finished on the podium. My mum watched it on TV and I'm sure it was a great Mother's Day gift for her. I bet the same goes for my teammate Adam's mum. We surely made our mothers proud today."

Race result:

GTP class:
1. Jaminet/Tandy (F/UK), Porsche 963 #6, 119 laps
2. Derani/Aitken (BR/UK), Cadillac #31, + 5.764 sec.
3. Nasr/Cameron (BR/USA), Porsche 963 #7, + 34.673 sec.

8. Van der Helm/Westbrook (NL/UK), Porsche 963 #85, + 77.343 sec.
10. Bruni/Viscaal (I/NL), Porsche 963 #5, + 1 lap

GTD-Pro class:
1. Heinrich/Priaulx (D/UK), Porsche 911 GT3 R #77, 111 laps
2. Kirchhöfer/Jarvis (D/UK), McLaren #9, + 9.074 sec.
3. Milner/Catsburg (USA/NL), Corvette #4, + 10.324 sec.

GTD class:
1. Ward/Ellis (USA/UK), Mercedes-AMG #57, 111 laps
2. Foley/Gallagher (USA/USA), BMW #557, + 3.458 sec.
3. Adelson/Skeer (USA/USA), Porsche 911 GT3 R #120, 9.371 sec.
10. Andretti/Chavez (USA/USA), Porsche 911 GT3 R #43, + 2 laps
13. Li/Fjordbach (CHN/DK), Porsche 911 GT3 R #86, + 2 laps

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

Qualifying

The No. 6 Porsche 963 will line up for the fourth round of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship season at Laguna Seca on the second row of the grid. Works driver Mathieu Jaminet from France planted the 511 kW (695 PS) hybrid prototype from Porsche Penske Motorsport on the fourth grid spot in qualifying. Dane Cameron finished sixth at the wheel of the No. 7 sister car. The American will start tomorrow's 2:40-hour race with Brazilian Felipe Nasr as the leader in the drivers' championship.

Bright sunshine and ambient temperatures upward of 20 degrees Celsius set the scene as a thrilling battle for the best grid positions unfolded at Laguna Seca Raceway. Following the resealing of the storied circuit, lap times were over two seconds faster than last year. Both of Porsche Penske Motorsport's 963 race cars continued to improve over the course of the 15-minute qualifying session but were just shy of matching the lap times of the race leaders.

“From our point of view, it was a pretty decent qualifying session. The team and the drivers did a good job,” summarises Jonathan Diuguid. The Managing Director Porsche Penske Motorsport adds: “We timed our attacks well so that the cars had a clean run. Nevertheless, it wasn't enough to beat the two Cadillacs and the BMW. I'm optimistic for the race. We're well within striking distance of the competition so we still think we have a good chance.”

The two Porsche 963 vehicles from the customer teams JDC-Miller MotorSports and Proton Competition were slightly off the pace of the works cars. Dutchman Tijmen van der Helm finished ninth in the No. 85 car. His fellow countryman Bent Viscaal, who makes his debut at the wheel of the hybrid prototype from Weissach this weekend, finished the IMSA qualifying in tenth place.

AO Racing's Porsche 911 GT3 R in fifth place on the grid in the GTD Pro Class

The Porsche customer teams struggled to join the battle for top spots in the two GT classes. In the GTD-Pro category, AO Racing's 911 GT3 R secured a place on the third row of the grid. British driver Sebastian Priaulx set the fifth-fastest lap time at the wheel of the bright green nine-eleven, affectionately called 'Rexy'. In the GTD class, the customer cars from Andretti Motorsports, Wright Motorsports and MDK Motorsports which produce up to 415 kW (565 PS) will start the race from positions eleven, twelve and fifteen respectively.

Round four of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship season at Laguna Seca runs over 2 hours and 40 minutes. The race gets underway on Sunday, 12 May at 12:10 local time (21:10 CEST). Outside of North America, the entire race can be watched via a free live stream on IMSA.tv.

Drivers' comments after qualifying

Mathieu Jaminet (Porsche 963 #6): "When I look at the results we achieved in the free practices, fourth place is good. That's where we stand in the competition at the moment. My fastest lap was flawless and good. However, looking at the tiny gaps and chances, I always feel that a little more would've been possible. I'm sure that we can do better in the race."

Dane Cameron (Porsche 963 #7): "It was the first qualifying session on the new tarmac – and it was close. Half a tenth of a second made a big difference. Our car feels good. I'm confident that we're ready for the race. The new surface has changed the conditions, so I expect the competition to be very different from previous years. We want to work our way forward and continue our streak of podium finishes."

Bent Viscaal (Porsche 963 #5): "A few days ago, I didn't even know that I'd be driving here. I'm used to the LMP2 cars in Europe. Now I'm coming to Laguna Seca and driving a Porsche 963 for the first time. Of course, I need a bit more time to get used to the track and the hybrid prototype. Tenth place is not a dream result, but given my lack of experience, I couldn't expect more. We want to keep improving in the race and get to the front."

Tijmen van der Helm (Porsche 963 #85): "After difficult practice sessions, we managed to make some improvements for qualifying – the team did a great job. We can't compare ourselves with the works cars because, unlike us, the manufacturers were recently at a two-day test in Laguna Seca. Naturally, that puts us at a bit of a disadvantage. Let's see what we can achieve in the race."

Sebastian Priaulx (Porsche 911 GT3 R #77): "My lap was clean, our Porsche 911 GT3 R was perfectly balanced. Unfortunately, it still wasn't enough for a top position. That's a shame but it doesn't dampen

my optimism. I'm sure that we have a great car for the race. We'll go all out and grab every opportunity that presents itself."

Qualifying result:

GTP class:
1. Bourdais/Van der Zande (F/NL), Cadillac #01, 1:12.445 minutes
2. Derani/Aitken (BR/UK), Cadillac #31, 1:12.557 minutes
3. Krohn/Eng (FIN/A), BMW #24, 1:12.649 minutes
4. Jaminet/Tandy (F/UK), Porsche 963 #6, 1:12.664 minutes
6. Nasr/Cameron (BR/USA), Porsche 963 #7, 1:12.771 minutes
9. Van der Helm/Westbrook (NL/UK), Porsche 963 #85, 1:13.184 minutes
10. Bruni/Viscaal (I/NL), Porsche 963 #5, 1:13.314 minutes

GTD Pro class:
1. Milner/Catsburg (USA/NL), Corvette #4, 1:19.727 minutes
2. Garcia/Sims (E/UK), Corvette #3, 1:20.038 minutes
3. Kirchhöfer/Jarvis (D/UK), McLaren #9, 1:20.244 minutes
5. Heinrich/Priaulx (D/UK), Porsche 911 GT3 R #77, 1:20.473 minutes

GTD class:
1. Marcelli/Formal (CDN/CR), Lamborghini #45, 1:20.866 minutes
2. Foley/Gallagher (USA/USA), BMW #557, 1:20.995 minutes
3. Ward/Ellis (USA/UK), Mercedes-AMG #57, 1:21.019 minutes
11. Andretti/Chavez (USA/USA), Porsche 911 GT3 R #43, 1:22.346 minutes
12. Adelson/Skeer (USA/USA), Porsche 911 GT3 R #120, 1:22.458 minutes
15. Li/Fjordbach (CHN/DK), Porsche 911 GT3 R #86, 1:23.437 minutes

Complete results at https://imsa.alkamelsystems.com.

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