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IMSA: Fast and reliable – Perfect tests for Porsche at Daytona

The Porsche GT Team has wrapped up its preparations for the 2019 IMSA SportsCar Championship.



On the occasion of the three-day official tests on the Daytona International Speedway in Florida, the two Porsche 911 RSR race cars covered a total of 2,120 kilometres under changeable conditions. The focus of this intensive work for the factory team was on improving the setup, on tyre comparisons as well as tests for the upcoming 24-hour race on the storied racetrack. The season-opening round of the North American sports car series takes place on 26/27 January.

Nick Tandy (Great Britain) and the two Frenchmen Patrick Pilet and Frédéric Makowiecki shared driving duties in the ca. 510 hp Porsche 911 RSR with the starting number 911. Last year the trio won the endurance races at Sebring and Road Atlanta. For the tests, their brand colleagues Earl Bamber (New Zealand) and Mathieu Jaminet (France) shared the cockpit of the No. 912 sister car. Regular driver Laurens Vanthoor (Belgium) missed the “Roar Before The Rolex 24” due to the birth of his first child. The Le Mans winner will be back in the cockpit for the start of the season in late January.

The Porsche 911 GT3 R made a successful debut at the test days and will face stiff competition in the GTD class in the 2019 IMSA season for the first time. At the official Daytona tests, the customer teams Pfaff Motorsports, Park Place Motorsports, NGT Motorsport and Black Swan Racing gained important insights for the first U.S. outing of the ca. 500 hp race car. Over the two test days, the four identical 911 GT3 R covered a total of 484 laps on the 5.73-kilometre racetrack.



The two Porsche 911 RSR race cars covered a total of 2,120 kilometres

Comments on the test

Pascal Zurlinden (Director GT Factory Motorsport): "That was a successful test. We're very familiar with the car, it's the third outing at Daytona for the latest 911 RSR. The tyres are new for us this year. The IMSA series has now adopted the tyres from the WEC. This, of course, requires some adjustments. We managed to tick all the boxes on our test list. We experienced rain, sunshine, high and low temperatures – you can't have it better than that for a test."

Sebastian Golz (Project Manager 911 GT3 R): "The new Porsche 911 GT3 R has passed its first test in the USA. For our customer teams and their drivers, the emphasis on day one was predominantly about getting familiar with the new car. On day two we made great progress in terms of the setup. The lap times were strong and the consistency over longer distances looked good as well. With our customer teams I think we should be well prepared for the race week at the end of the month."

Nick Tandy (Porsche 911 RSR #911): "The test was an important preparation – for both the race and the entire season. After the winter break we all had to get back into our normal rhythm. We not only worked on the setup, but above all we practiced procedures such as pit stops and driver changes. It's critical to do this during the 'Roar' so that you can completely focus on the finer details of the car during the race week."

Patrick Pilet (Porsche 911 RSR #911): "Testing at Daytona is always extremely important because the racetrack has unusual characteristics. It's important to have the best possible top speed on the oval passages, but without being hampered too much by insufficient downforce in the infield. These test days were extremely important for this setup work. Our car made a great impression on me. We were fast and very consistent, and so we're well prepared for the race weekend."

Frédéric Makowiecki (Porsche 911 RSR #911): "Finding the highest possible top speed is not as easy as it sounds. As soon as you reduce the downforce to increase speed on the straights, you often have trouble braking for the tight corners. The rear gets twitchy and the driver has to work really hard. During the test we worked on finding the best compromise and we found a very good solution. So far, our 911 RSR has coped brilliantly on this very exceptional circuit."

Earl Bamber (Porsche 911 RSR #912): "Although the winter break was really short, you still have to work your way back into the procedures. This applies as much to the mechanics and engineers as it does to us drivers. We got back into a really good rhythm during the test, and it didn't take long at all for everything to fall into place again. We're ready and well prepared to start the race week at Daytona."

Mathieu Jaminet (Porsche 911 RSR #912): "I drove the 911 RSR at the end of the 2018 season, but the car is still pretty new for me."

For this reason the emphasis over these test days was to continue familiarising myself with the car and the racetrack. Everything went really well. The car handles the different sectors very well and our pace was also first-class over longer distances.”

Dennis Olsen (Porsche 911 GT3 R #9): “New team, new car, new drivers – as you can imagine the list of tasks was rather long. We sorted out some basic things on the first day and then went on to work intensively on the setup. We made great progress but we still have to implement some other findings before the start of the race week.”

Patrick Lindsay (Porsche 911 GT3 R #73): “A lot is new, but still somehow familiar. The new car immediately feels like a Porsche. I know the previous model and I often drive the 911 RSR. For me, the new GT3 R feels like the perfect combination of the two. The brakes are as powerful as those in the WEC car, it’s very user friendly – it’s simply great fun. At the ‘Roar’ we worked on the setup and familiarised ourselves with the car’s many details and the tyres. Bring on the race week.”

Sven Müller (Porsche 911 GT3 R #99): “We took things slow initially, first running in the brakes, then working on the setup and testing the tyres. We gained a lot of insights and we’ll now use these for the race week to make the car even better. There were many new things for our team and the drivers to discover during the test days and that was exciting.”

Matteo Cairoli (Porsche 911 GT3 R #540): “There were so many new things to discover: car, tyres, racetrack. We worked through our tasks systematically and made great progress. That’s precisely what test days are for. We’ll also use the first sessions of the race week for setup work so that we get the best possible start into the 24-hour classic. At Daytona the name of the game is to have a car that is predictable and easy to handle. We’re on the right track.”

This is the IMSA SportsCar Championship

The IMSA SportsCar Championship is a sports car race series that has been contested in the USA and Canada since 2014. The series originated from the merger of the American Le Mans Series and the Grand-Am Series. 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 Porsche 911 RSR runs in the GTLM class, and the Porsche 911 GT3 R contests the GTD class.

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