

Californian To Top. Mitchell deJong Takes Esports Supercup Points Lead After Round 2.

19/01/2021 Porsche Motorsport Weekly Notes

Temecula, California's Mitchell deJong has moved to the top of the Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup (PESC) point standings after two race weekends for the digital one-make series. The Porsche Young Driver Academy North America graduate finished second in the sprint race and in fifth-place in the main event on January 16. The defending virtual series champion, Sebastian Job (Great Britain), scored his first win of the 2021 season at round two. Representing the Red Bull Racing Esport team, the British driver won the 18-lap main race on the virtual Circuit de Catalunya in Barcelona. Joshua Rogers (Australia) claimed second-place after a spirited charge through the field. Prior to this, the Australian had commanded qualifying and the sprint race.

After two of ten race weekends on the Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup calendar, Mitchell deJong leads the drivers' standings with 124 points, followed by Rogers (118), Dayne Warren (107) and Maximilian Benecke (86). With 72 points, Sebastian Job is in seventh-place.

The 40 sim racers will tackle the third race weekend of the Porsche TAG Heuer Esports Supercup with their digital Porsche 911 GT3 Cup at the virtual rendition of the Autodromo Internazionale in Imola, Italy, on January 30.

Wright Challenge. Veteran Porsche Team Joins Michelin Pilot Challenge.

Entering the Roar Before the Rolex 24 open test at Daytona International Speedway, Wright Motorsports announced an expansion of its Porsche customer racing team to include a full-season entry in the 2021 IMSA Michelin Pilot Challenge. Ryan Hardwick (Atlanta, Georgia) and Jan Heylen (Belgium) will race the No. 16 Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 Clubsport in the road-car based support series.

The idea to run in both the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship and Michelin Pilot Challenge came from Hardwick after watching some of his fellow GTD competitors gain track time in the support series each weekend. As race weekends were condensed in the 2020 season, seat time became even more valuable for Hardwick, the Am in the Pro/Am lineup with Porsche Factory Driver Patrick Long (Manhattan Beach, California). Heylen is included among the GTD class drivers which participated in the Pilot Challenge's GS class, earning valuable insight an experience to improve with every lap.

The Michelin Pilot Challenge currently acts as the support series to the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Challenge, sharing ten race weekends with the headlining series. The 2021 schedule is comprised of 10 races, with eight of them having a runtime of two hours, and the remaining two running for four. The series is comprised of two classes: the Grand Sport (GS) and Touring Car (TCR). The No. 16 Porsche will compete in the GS class, making its on track debut for the first practice session on Friday, January 22.

The 425 HP, 3.8-liter normally aspirated flat-six Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 Clubsport is the German manufacturer's entry in the international GT4 classes. Based directly on the road-going Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 has been a regular in the Michelin Pilot Challenge since the series inception. This iteration of the mid-engine machine made its international debut at Daytona in 2019.

The first race of the year will be the BMW Endurance Challenge at Daytona, held on Friday, January 29 at 1:35 p.m. Eastern Time. The race will air in its entirety on [imsa.tv](https://www.imsa.com) and NBC Sports Gold TRACKPASS. For full event information, visit [imsa.com](https://www.imsa.com).

John Wright, Owner, No. 16 Wright Motorsports Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 Clubsport.

"We met with Porsche and came to the decision that it would be beneficial to everyone to have the manufacturer represented by a great customer racing team like Wright Motorsports. Jan will be able to continue his strong driving record in the series, and Ryan will be able to gain more experience to continue to improve his progression in GTD. We know they'll be a strong pairing and we'll take full advantage of the extra time on track."

Ryan Hardwick, Driver, No. 16 Wright Motorsports Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 Clubsport.

"I have yet to race in the Michelin Pilot Challenge, and I'm really looking forward to racing in a new series. I'm also very excited to be teaming up with Jan Heylen who has already proven to be a front runner in that series. I appreciate the support from John Wright and the team for putting so much work into such a short off season to not only prepare our GTD car for the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship season, but also a new Porsche Cayman for a full season in the Michelin Pilot Challenge. This opportunity will really be a blessing for me in gaining more track time. Jan and I can be competitive for podiums and wins, but I think this will also help us greatly in GTD as well."

Jan Heylen, Driver, No. 16 Wright Motorsports Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 Clubsport.

"I'm very excited to start the new season with Ryan and Wright Motorsports in the Michelin Pilot Challenge. It's great to see Wright Motorsports making their debut in GT4 as well as Ryan making the step to gain more experience and gain track time on the GTD weekends. There's nothing like GT4 racing, with lots of action and close racing. It's everything we love. With the continued support from Porsche Motorsport North America and Wright Motorsport, I know we'll be at Daytona with a strong car."

Rolex 24.

Team Hardpoint EBM makes its 2021 IMSA WeatherTech Sports Car Championship debut in the GT Daytona (GTD) class, with full-time drivers and team co-owners Rob Ferriol (Fayetteville, North Carolina) and Earl Bamber (New Zealand) joined by Katherine Legge (Great Britain) and Christina Nielsen (Denmark) for the season-opening Rolex 24 At Daytona.

Ferriol and Bamber will campaign a Porsche 911 GT3 R throughout the 2021 season, but for the twice around the clock classic, they will be behind the wheel of the No. 88 VB Enviro Care/Richard Mille Porsche 911 GT3 R sporting a livery that will become more familiar to the pairing of Nielsen and Legge in the future.

For Team Hardpoint EBM, the move to Porsche comes in the program and team co-owner Ferriol's second year of IMSA WeatherTech competition, but first season as the newly minted joint venture between Team Hardpoint and Earl Bamber Motorsport (EBM). The move serves as a return to Ferriol's roots, who got his start in IMSA's single-make Porsche GT3 Cup Challenge USA just three seasons ago. It also represents a class change for long-time Porsche driver Bamber, who debuts in the GTD class after scoring championships in the GTLM class with the Porsche GT Team "works" program.

The 2021 Rolex 24 at Daytona will be Ferriol's first appearance in the race. While Bamber is preparing for his first Rolex 24 in the GTD class, he has three podium finishes in the event - including a runner-up a year ago. Bamber will co-drive the season with Ferriol after their late-2020 announcement introducing the collaboration between Team Hardpoint and Earl Bamber Motorsport.

Legge is also no stranger to the IMSA paddock, with four career wins and a championship runner-up in the season-long GTD championship in 2018. Legge's 2018 run included a runner-up in the Rolex 24 At Daytona, her best finish in the race to date in eight attempts. Nielsen became the first woman to win a major full-season professional sports car championship in North America with a GTD title in 2016 and is a four-time race winner in the class. Her last win came behind the wheel of a GTD Porsche 911 GT3 R in 2018 at Road America.

The season gets underway officially with the Roar Before the Rolex 24, a three-day test session at Daytona International Speedway, January 22 – 24. That weekend culminates with a one hour, 40-minute qualifying race for the Motul Pole Award. That race will set the grid for the following weekend's Rolex 24 At Daytona.

Rob Ferriol, Driver/Co-Owner, No. 88 Team Hardpoint EBM Porsche 911 GT3 R.

"So much has been written and said about the Rolex 24 at Daytona over the course of its history, to be able to debut Team Hardpoint EBM at this storied event is just an amazing and humbling opportunity. We've been hard at work since the checker dropped not long ago at Sebring, bringing together two organizations to create what we hope will be a lasting presence in the IMSA paddock for years to come."

"We've put together a wonderful team for the Rolex 24, both on and off the track. It's no secret that Earl, Katherine, and Christina have all had success in IMSA, but to be able to bring all that experience together into one entry, and then join them on track as a driver, is the icing on the cake. I can't think of a better way to start 2021."

Earl Bamber, Driver/Co-Owner, No. 88 Team Hardpoint EBM Porsche 911 GT3 R.

"I'm really, really excited to join Team Hardpoint EBM. It's the first time for Rob to compete in the 24 hours, and I'm coming off back-to-back podiums there so I think we've got a really strong line-up. Rob proved last year that he was a force to be reckoned with in the series and obviously to have Katherine Legge and Christina Nielsen driving with us for the first event is awesome. I can't wait to get there. Everyone has done a great job this year, the field is absolutely huge so I can't wait to get down to Daytona."

Katherine Legge, Driver, No. 88 Team Hardpoint EBM Porsche 911 GT3 R.

"I am excited on so many levels to get our season kicked off with Team Hardpoint EBM. Last year was one to forget for me, but my legs are 100-percent race ready and I am chomping at the bit to get back in a race car. I am very grateful to the team and to Porsche for this opportunity, and for helping in my quest to showcase female talent. I believe we will be the first ever equally diverse team to have competed at Daytona 24. I'm looking forward to working with Rob and Earl, and learning how to wheel a Porsche, as it will be my first time with the marque. A huge thanks to our partners VB Enviro Care, Richard Mille, and to Porsche. We are going to do big things this year and I couldn't be more excited to partner with them."

Christina Nielsen, Driver, No. 88 Team Hardpoint EBM Porsche 911 GT3 R.

"I am thrilled to be joining Team Hardpoint EBM and being with a group of people who have so much experience with Porsche," Nielsen said. "I look forward to driving the new generation of the GT3 R, since the last time I sat in a Porsche was in the previous model. I am grateful for partners like VB Enviro Care, Richard Mille, and Porsche who have given us the opportunity to showcase that Motorsport truly is an equal playing field for men and women. Daytona is still one of the races in the IMSA WeatherTech Championship where everything hasn't worked out perfectly over the 24 hours, so I am still very much on the hunt for that podium and that watch!"

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Path: media/Images/img_1.jpg

Title: Wright Motorsports: Ryan Hardwick (USA), 2020, PCNA

Subline: Ryan Hardwick

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