IMSA: Porsche wins all titles at the Petit Le Mans season finale

13/10/2019 The Porsche GT Team concluded the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship season by winning the manufacturer, driver and team titles. At the final round of the season at Road Atlanta, the two Porsche 911 RSR flying the Coca-Cola colours finished on positions five and six.

Race

This race marked the 50th and final factory outing for the successful GT vehicle from Stuttgart, which won six of the eleven rounds on the 2019 IMSA calendar. The Porsche works drivers Earl Bamber (New Zealand) and Laurens Vanthoor (Belgium) have been crowned the drivers' champions, with the team title going to the squad campaigning the No. 912 Porsche 911 RSR. In the GTD class, the Pfaff Motorsports customer team achieved a podium result with the No. 9 Porsche 911 GT3 R.

The ten-hour Petit Le Mans race in the US state of Georgia was distinguished by the constant lapping manoeuvres. With 34 vehicles competing on the 3.6-kilometre circuit, the order was quickly established. When the safety car was deployed for a final time shortly before the finish, the gaps shrunk. In the ensuing 25-minute sprint, Bamber battled valiantly to clinch a podium spot, but was unable to do better than fifth place in the fierce competition of the GTLM class. For the final round of the season, the New Zealander and his Belgian teammate Vanthoor shared driving duties with the Frenchman Mathieu Jaminet in the ca. 510 hp 911 RSR, which is based on the high-performance Porsche 911 GT3 RS* road-going sports car. The No. 911 sister car helmed by Nick Tandy (Great Britain), Patrick Pilet and Frédéric Makowiecki (both France) secured sixth place. Tandy and Pilet concluded the season as runners-up in the drivers' championship.

In the GTD class, Porsche development driver Lars Kern (Weissach) and his Canadian teammates Zacharie Robichon and Scott Hargrove scored a podium spot. The Porsche 911 GT3 R fielded by the customer squad Pfaff Motorsports finished its debut season in the North American sports car series on third place after a gripping finale.

Race quotes

Fritz Enzinger (Vice President Motorsport): "It's a historic day for Porsche Motorsport. After winning the manufacturers' and drivers' world championship titles in the FIA WEC, we've now also secured the titles in the 2019 IMSA championship. Thanks to all the drivers and the entire Porsche team for their excellent performances. Our incredible team spirit and the common goal of winning races for Porsche have made this success story possible."

Pascal Zurlinden (Director Factory Motorsport): “That was definitely not our best race. We made a lot of small mistakes. Still, now it's time to celebrate. We have every reason to party after winning all titles in the 2019 IMSA series. We're now the champions of the FIA WEC and in North America – that's something we can be extremely proud of.”

Steffen Höllwarth (Head of Operations IMSA Championship): “Our competitors were better today. It didn't go so smoothly for us. But we have our eye on the big picture. We've won the manufacturers' title and claimed positions one and two in the drivers' and team classifications. All in all, it was a phenomenal season. We'll enjoy our successes, but we'll also analyse today's race.”

Patrick Pilet (Porsche 911 RSR #911): “The race wasn't easy, because we lacked some speed unfortunately. We don't yet know the reason for this. Still, it's a great day for Porsche. Together, we won all the titles. Congratulations to Earl and Laurens on winning the drivers' championship. I'm now looking forward to the party we'll have to celebrate being crowned manufacturers' champions.”

Nick Tandy (Porsche 911 RSR #911): “You can't win every race. Today wasn't our day. Still, we achieved our goal of winning the championship. Congratulations to the entire Porsche squad and especially to Earl and Laurens. After a great season, the guys deserve to be champions.”

Frédéric Makowiecki (Porsche 911 RSR #911): “It was a perfect season for Porsche. If you take home all the titles in the enormously competitive GTLM class, then it's proof of perfect teamwork, strong performances in the cockpit and an extremely competitive car. The Porsche 911 RSR has enabled us to secure many victories. The new 911 RSR has some big shoes to fill next season.”

Earl Bamber (Porsche 911 RSR #912): “The race was simply exhausting because we had to fight over ten hours. Unfortunately we didn't have the pace to win today. Still, in spite of all the problems, we were within striking distance of the podium until the last lap. And that's exactly what set us apart in this incredible season. Our perfect teamwork always gave us the opportunity to be right up the front when the going got tough. Now we'll celebrate our titles.”

Laurens Vanthoor (Porsche 911 RSR #912): “I came to Porsche three years ago. I finally got the chance to drive in the USA. It's something I've always wanted. The IMSA series was completely new territory for me. I had to get used to the racetracks, the processes and the car. Now I've won the title with my friend Earl. For me personally, a dream has come true.”

Mathieu Jaminet (Porsche 911 RSR #912): “That was a tough race. In the high temperatures in the first half of the race we weren't fast enough. Only when the sun went down were we able to utilise the full potential of our Porsche 911 RSR. We fought to the last second, but it wasn't enough. Still, the most important thing was to win the title – and that's what we did. I'm proud to have contributed to this.”

Race result

GTLM class
1. Calado/Pier Guidi/Serra (GB/I/BR), Ferrari 488 GTE, 434 laps
2. Briscoe/Westbrook/Dixon (AUS/GB/NZ), Ford GT, 434 laps
3. Blomqvist/De Phillippi/Herta (GB/USA/USA), BW M8 GTE, 433 laps
5. Bamber/Vanthoor/Jaminet (NZ/B/F), Porsche 911 RSR, 433 laps
6. Pilet/Tandy/Makowiecki (F/GB/F), Porsche 911 RSR, 432 laps

GTD class
1. Auberlen/Foley/Machavern (USA/USA/USA), BMW M6 GT3, 418 laps
2. Mies/Feller/Morad (D/CH/USA), Audi R8 LMS GT3, 418 laps
3. Robichon/Hargrove/Kern (CDN/CDN/D), Porsche 911 GT3 R, 418 laps

Full results: http://imsa.alkamelsystems.com

Qualifying

In the qualifying session at Road Atlanta (USA), the Belgian Laurens Vanthoor secured the fourth grid spot at the wheel of the No. 912 Porsche 911 RSR. In the No. 911 sister car, his works driver colleague, Nick Tandy (Great Britain), turned the seventh quickest lap in the close hunt for top times on the storied 3.6-kilometre racetrack. The Porsche 911 GT3 R fielded by the Canadian team Pfaff Motorsports will tackle the GTD class from position six on the grid.

In warm, sunny conditions in the US state of Georgia, teams and drivers battled hard for top times in the 15-minute qualifying. As the session progressed, lap times tumbled. Vanthoor's times improved over the first five laps before traffic and deteriorating tyres hampered further progress. For the race, the championship leader shares the cockpit of the No. 912 Porsche 911 RSR with Earl Bamber (New Zealand) and Mathieu Jaminet (France).

At the wheel of the sister car, Tandy patiently warmed up his tyres at the start of the session before heading out and initially topping the time sheet in his class. The British racer, however, could no longer make any significant improvements and thus defend himself against the attempts of his rivals. Tandy shares driving duties in the No. 911 Porsche with the two Frenchmen Patrick Pilet and Frédéric Makowiecki. Both vehicles contest the race flying the colours of Coca-Cola.

In the GTD class, Zacharie Robichon planted the No. 9 Porsche 911 GT3 R fielded by Pfaff Motorsports on position eight. The Canadian is joined in the cockpit of the GT3 vehicle by his compatriot Scott Hargrove and Porsche development driver Lars Kern (Weissach). The ten-hour Petit Le Mans race gets underway on Saturday, 12 October, at 12:05pm local time (18:05 pm CEST).

Qualifying quotes

Pascal Zurlinden (Director Factory Motorsport): “We can be satisfied with the results of the qualifying. There were five different manufacturers within about two tenths of a second. This underlines just how intense and tough the competition is in the GTLM class. I'm feeling confident for the race because we've worked systematically on the race setup. Our car will be strong as the temperatures drop. And that's exactly when the decisive phase starts on Saturday evening."

Steffen Höllwarth (Head of Operations IMSA Championship): “That was a tightsituation with very close gaps between all GTLM-class cars. In the sessions we put the main focus on race preparation, which means a consistently fast pace over a long distance. In view of this, the result was pretty good. Tomorrow is about the big trophies. We have to perform flawlessly and stay within striking distance. When the sun goes down, we want to go for it. We're eager to give the fans a great show, win all the titles and send the Porsche 911 RSR into the museum with a top result."

Nick Tandy (Porsche 911 RSR #911): “The result is okay, although a little more could have been possible. I think I didn't get the perfect time for my flying lap. The tyres weren't within the optimal operating window at that moment. I'm certain that we'll manage to set a more consistent pace in the race compared to our competitors."

Laurens Vanthoor (Porsche 911 RSR #912): “We had a bit of homework to do after the practice session this morning because our car didn't have the optimal setup. We made the perfect adjustments for the qualifying. Fourth on the grid is a solid result. I made a slight error on my hot lap. We could have perhaps gained one or two positions otherwise. Never mind, the qualifying result isn't the most important thing for a ten-hour race."

Qualifying result

GTLM class
1. Calado/Pier Guidi/Serra (GB/I/BR), Ferrari 488 GTE, 1:15.639 minutes
2. Magnussen/Garcia/Rockenfeller (DK/E/D), Corvette C7.R, + 0.063 seconds
3. Krohn/Edwards/Eng (FIN/USA/A), BMW M8 GTE, + 0.145 seconds
4. Bamber/Vanthoor/Jaminet (NZ/B/F), Porsche 911 RSR, + 0.203 seconds
7. Pilet/Tandy/Makowiecki (F/GB/F), Porsche 911 RSR, + 0.398 seconds

GTD class
1. Sellers/Lewis/Seefried (USA/USA/D), Lamborghini Huracan GT3, 1:19.530 minutes
2. Keating/Bleekemolen/Fraga (USA/NL/BR), Mercedes-AMG GT3, + 0.135 seconds
3. McNeil/Vilander/Westphal (USA/FIN/USA), Ferrari 488 GT3, + 0.191 seconds
6. Robichon/Hargrove/Kern (CDN/CDN/D), Porsche 911 GT3 R, + 0.545 seconds

Full results: http://imsa.alkamelsystems.com

Preview

Heading to the final round of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship at Road Atlanta (USA), Porsche is poised to clinch the manufacturer, team and driver titles. The North American factory team of the Stuttgart sports car manufacturer tackles the final ten-hour race, dubbed Petit Le Mans, on 12 October holding a clear lead in all categories. To win the manufacturers' championship, only one of the two Porsche 911 RSR needs to finish in the points. The fight for the drivers' classification goes down to the wire between the Porsche works drivers Earl Bamber (New Zealand) and Laurens Vanthoor (Belgium) in the number 912 car, and their colleagues in the number 911 vehicle, Patrick Pilet (France) and Nick Tandy (Great Britain). The race at Road Atlanta marks the last outing for the two Porsche 911 RSR (2017 model year) decked out in the historic design of Coca-Cola. The customer squad Pfaff Motorsports fields a 911 GT3 R in the GTD category.

Comments prior to the race

Fritz Enzinger (Vice President): "We are eager to make the final race of the IMSA season a huge celebration for the fans, for Porsche and for our partner Coca-Cola. Last year we won the traditional Petit Le Mans with our Porsche 911 RSR finished in a historic design. That's our goal again this year. It'll be the last factory outing for this version of the Porsche 911 RSR. It would be fantastic if we were able to again experience the vehicle in the centre of the winner's ceremony at Road Atlanta."

Pascal Zurlinden (Director Factory Motorsport): "The Porsche 911 RSR has given us countless wins since 2017. We've won the world championship with this car, and we also won Le Mans and Sebring, among others. It would be a dream come true if we could add further titles at Road Atlanta and repeat last year's win at this storied racetrack. Our success at the 2018 Petit Le Mans underlined that we'll be well prepared when we tackle the tough competition of the ten-hour race. We are keen to round out our impressive season in North America with another highlight."

Steffen Höllwarth (Head of Operations IMSA Championship): "With Petit Le Mans we have a real classic to conclude the season. Road Atlanta has been the venue of major Porsche successes. We have fond memories of our overall win in 2015 and our success last year. The circuit and the Porsche 911 RSR match perfectly. Our aim for the finale is clear: At the end of this year we want to finish first in all championship classifications."

Patrick Pilet (Porsche 911 RSR #911): "Petit Le Mans will be the grand finale of a sensational year for Porsche. We hold a convincing lead in the manufacturers' championship. In the drivers' championship, Nick and I still have a small chance in the duel against our colleagues. Our aim is to finish first with our beautiful Porsche 911 RSR decked out in the Coca-Cola livery. If we succeed in doing this, we just might clinch the drivers' title."

The Porsche drivers

Regular drivers Patrick Pilet (France) and Nick Tandy (Great Britain) join forces with their works driver teammate Frédéric Makowiecki in the No. 911 Porsche 911 RSR. This trio won at Road Atlanta in 2018 as well as at Sebring and Watkins Glen in 2019. Pilet and Tandy currently rank second in the drivers' classification. Their works driver colleagues in the No. 912 sister car, Earl Bamber (New Zealand) and Laurens Vanthoor (Belgium), lead the class with a twelve-point advantage after victories at Long Beach, Mid-Ohio and Bowmanville, Canada. The pair shares driving duties in the ca. 510 hp 911 RSR with Porsche Young Professional Mathieu Jaminet (France).

In the GTD class, the customer squad Pfaff Motorsports again relies on the services of Porsche development driver Lars Kern (Weissach) for the ten-hour finale. The seasoned German is joined in the cockpit of the No. 9 Porsche 911 GT3 R by the two Canadians Zacharie Robichon and Scott Hargrove. Robichon took home an early title in the Sprint Cup at the previous IMSA round at Laguna Seca (USA). The Porsche 911 GT3 R fielded by the Canadian team will contest the event decked out in a special blue livery.

The Porsche vehicles

The Porsche 911 RSR, which is based on the high-performance 911 GT3 RS road-going sports car, has undergone further optimisation primarily in the suspension setup for its third racing season in North America. Depending on the size of the restrictor, the engine, which is positioned in front of the rear axle, puts out around 375 kW. The large rear diffuser combined with a top-mounted rear wing provides aerodynamic efficiency and significant downforce. The race at Road Atlanta marks the last factory outing for the 2017-spec vehicle. In the World Sports Car Championship, the switch to the ca. 515 hp successor took place in August.

The 911 GT3 R fielded by Porsche customer teams was newly developed for the 2019 season and is also based on the road-legal 911 GT3 RS*. Improvements in the areas of aerodynamics and kinematics were systematically implemented from the insights garnered from the many race outings of its predecessor. The six-cylinder engine in the rear of the GT3 racing vehicle produces over 368 kW.

The race

The ten-hour race on the 4.088-kilometre circuit in the US state of Georgia marks the conclusion of the 2019 IMSA season. The storied racetrack on the outskirts of the metropolis of Atlanta – the home of Porsche North America and the Coca-Cola beverage company – is a favourite amongst drivers. The so-called "Esses" (turns two to five) are particularly challenging for the drivers. Courage and utmost precision combined with a perfect car setup are required through this high-speed passage. In 21 years, Porsche has notched up a total of 20 class wins at Petit Le Mans. In 2015, the Weissach factory squad

even beat all prototypes in the rain to score overall victory. In 2018, Porsche claimed victory in the fiercely competitive GTLM class flying the historic colours of Mobil 1. Petit Le Mans is also the final round of the IMSA Michelin Endurance Cup (IMEC). In this competition, which includes the endurance races at Daytona, Sebring, Watkins Glen and Road Atlanta, the Porsche GT Team currently ranks first and second after two victories.

The schedule

The Petit Le Mans race held at Road Atlanta takes off on Saturday, 12 October, at 12:05pm local time (6:05pm CEST) and can be viewed live outside the USA and Canada on www.imsa.com.

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.

Image Sublines

Path: media/Images/img_1.jpg
Title: Laurens Vanthoor, IMSA, Road Atlanta, 2019, Porsche AG
Subline: Laurens Vanthoor

Path: media/Images/img_3.jpg
Title: 911 RSR (911): Nick Tandy, Frederic Makowiecki, Patrick Pilet, 911 RSR (912): Laurens Vanthoor, Earl Bamber, Mathieu Jaminet, l-r, IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship, round 11, Road Atlanta/USA, 2019, Porsche AG
Subline: Nick Tandy, Frederic Makowiecki, Patrick Pilet, Laurens Vanthoor, Earl Bamber, Mathieu Jaminet, l-r

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