



PORSCHE

Press Release

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Race GTE, FIA World Endurance Championship WEC, Round 1, Sebring (USA)

Porsche wins the GTE-Pro class at the WEC season opener in Sebring

Stuttgart. The Porsche GT Team has kicked off the new season of the FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC) with a victory at the Sebring International Raceway. Michael Christensen from Denmark and Frenchman Kévin Estre won the GTE-Pro class at the 1,000-mile race in the US state of Florida ahead of the Corvette crewed by Nick Tandy (Great Britain) and American Tommy Milner. Richard Lietz from Austria and Italy's Gianmaria Bruni finished third with their ca. 378 kW (515 PS) 911 RSR. The eight-hour WEC race had to be halted and ultimately discontinued a good 60 minutes before the end of the race due to a thunderstorm warning. In the GTE-Am class, American Brendan Iribe and the two British racing drivers Ollie Millroy and Ben Barnicoat finished third with the identical 911 fielded by the Project 1 customer team.

“We scored important points towards the championship. Unfortunately, it wasn't quite enough for a one-two result today – which would have been possible,” commented Thomas Laudenbach, Vice President Motorsport. “During a pit stop, we couldn't get a wheel off the No. 91 car for a moment. We need to take another close look at that. This incident prevented us from finishing first and second. Still, it was a great start to the season. I have nothing but praise for the drivers and the team. We can be happy with this result. Of course, it would've been nicer to achieve this success over the full eight-hour distance.”

“That was a long and crazy race. And we won – the season couldn't have started better,” said Alexander Stehlig, Director Factory Motorsport FIA WEC. “We had a

great run over the entire time in Sebring and we managed to work our way through each session steadily and systematically. The Corvette proved to be a strong rival. At times we held the advantage, sometimes they did – it was fun. We kept our cool during the interruptions and ultimately took home a well-deserved victory. We're happy to harvest the points and we're looking forward to the next WEC race at Spa-Francorchamps.”

This marks the third time that a World Endurance Championship WEC event has been contested on the former military airfield in Florida. In 2012, works drivers Richard Lietz (Austria), Marc Lieb (Germany) and Patrick Pilet (France) finished second. In the 2018/2019 season, Lietz and his Italian teammate Gianmaria Bruni won the GTE-Pro class with the Porsche 911 RSR. Porsche is by far the most successful manufacturer in the long history of endurance racing at Sebring, with the Stuttgart marque notching up a total of 18 overall wins.

As the starting drivers, Kévin Estre and Gianmaria Bruni initially took the lead of the eight-hour race. However, after a good 30 minutes, the Italian had to relinquish his spot to Nick Tandy's Corvette when he was held up by traffic. While both factory-run Porsches pitted to change two tyres and swap drivers at the first pit stop, Tandy only refuelled. Thanks to the time saved, the British racer moved up to first place. Moreover, due to rule violations in the formation lap before the start, the race director had handed a 15-second penalty to both 911 RSR in the GTE-Pro category, which they had to serve at the second pit stop. Nevertheless, both nine-elevens were still ahead of the Ferraris fielded by the AF Corse factory squad.

A serious accident involving a vehicle from the Hypercar class after three and a half hours of racing resulted in a 45-minute break. Estre, who had in the meantime taken the wheel again from Michael Christensen, grabbed his chance shortly after the restart: The Frenchman swept past the leading Corvette and pulled away. A good 35 minutes later, Bruni had worked his way up the order to second place after a spirited charge. But that wasn't the end: A problem during a tyre change heading into the final quarter of the race cost about 20 seconds. As a result, Richard Lietz was

relegated back to third place at the wheel of his No. 91 Porsche. At this point, as the season-opening race was about to be halted, the Austrian had closed the gap and was poised to reclaim second place, however, he ran out of time to make the decisive overtaking move.

In the GTE-Am class, two Porsche customer teams had chances to win. Initially, the 911 RSR campaigned by Dempsey-Proton Racing with team owner Christian Ried from Germany and the British racing drivers Sebastian Priaulx and Harry Tincknell had the most promising prospects. In the second half of the race, Britain's Ollie Millroy and Ben Barnicoat as well as American Brendan Iribe took control and briefly moved into the lead of their class. In the final spurt, however, both teams were hampered by bad luck with the timing of their pit stops. Iribe/Millroy/Barnicoat ultimately finished the race in third place in the same lap as the winners, followed closely by Ried/Priaulx/Tincknell.

Drivers' comments after the race

Kévin Estre (Porsche 911 RSR #92): "What a crazy race! We were really strong at the start and led the field. But the Corvette was fast, too. Unfortunately, a 15-second penalty set us back a bit, but we didn't let that rattle us and afterwards, we drove without a single mistake – that was our big advantage and it was enough to win. I'm thrilled."

Michael Christensen (Porsche 911 RSR #92): "It was a weird end to an otherwise great race. The team did a fabulous job over the entire time at Sebring. We deserved this victory – regardless of the race being stopped. Our car was quick over the distance, and we made the best use of that to claim our first win of the year."

Richard Lietz (Porsche 911 RSR #91): "In the USA, there's a general rule that all employees must be brought to safety during a thunderstorm. That's why the race was eventually stopped. We might have managed to drive a little longer because the anticipated rain didn't arrive for quite some time. Still, safety must come first, of

course. Our race was okay: initially, we struggled with oversteer but we got that under control. Third place isn't perfect, but it's still a decent start to the season."

Gianmaria Bruni (Porsche 911 RSR #91): "It's a shame that we didn't quite manage to hand Porsche a one-two result. We lost a lot of time and one position with our No. 91 car at the last pit stop. Had we not been held up with the wheel change, we'd easily have achieved a double victory, because we were right behind our sister car."

Ollie Millroy (Porsche 911 RSR #56): "That was great fun – this is my first time driving a Porsche 911 RSR. I headed into this race with zero experience. But we worked together perfectly as a team and wrapped up this adventure on the podium. Our bronze driver Brendan Iribe gave a very strong performance and withstood the pressure perfectly at the start – we're all very impressed and we're delighted with this great start to the WEC season."

Race result

GTE-Pro class

1. Estre/Christensen (F/DK), Porsche GT Team, Porsche 911 RSR #92, 183 laps
2. Milner/Tandy (USA/GB), Corvette Racing, Corvette C8.R #64, 183 laps
3. Bruni/Lietz (I/A), Porsche GT Team, Porsche 911 RSR #91, 183 laps
4. Calado/Pier Guidi (GB/I), AF Corse, Ferrari 488 GTE Evo #51, 183 laps
5. Fuoco/Molina (I/E), AF Corse, Ferrari 488 GTE Evo #52, 182 laps

GTE-Am class

1. Dalla Lana/Pittard/Thiim (CDN/GB/DK), Northwest AMR, Aston Martin Vantage AMR, #98, 180 laps
2. Keating/Latorre/Sørensen (USA/F/DK), Aston Martin Vantage AMR, #33, 180 laps
3. Iribe/Millroy/Barnicoat (USA/GB/GB), Team Project 1, Porsche 911 RSR #56, 180 laps

4. Ried/Priaulx/Tincknell (D/GB/GB), Dempsey-Proton Racing, Porsche 911 RSR
#77, 180 laps

10. Poordad/Lindsey/Andlauer (USA/USA/F), Dempsey-Proton Racing, Porsche 911
RSR #88, 169 laps

Full results and championship standings: fiawec.alkamelsystems.com

*Further information, film and photo material in the Porsche Newsroom: newsroom.porsche.com.
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