



***MICHELIN CELEBRATES VIR'S PRESENT, FUTURE IN 2019 MICHELIN GT CHALLENGE***

*Through challenging conditions, teams in three IMSA series excel with MICHELIN® slicks and wets at VIRginia International Raceway*

**Alton, Va. (August 25, 2019)** --- Michelin and the International Motor Sports Association returned to the VIRginia International Raceway for the Michelin GT Challenge at VIR and delivered an impressive array of stunning cars and top driver talent in a weekend featuring production car-based GT competition.

Between the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship and yesterday's IMSA MICHELIN Pilot Challenge there were 15 different automotive brands in competition at VIR this weekend.

"At 3.27 miles, with 17 turns and significant elevation changes, VIR is a great circuit and its technical demands present a robust challenge for teams, drivers and tires. We enjoy the technical challenges, and meeting so many sportscar fans," said Chris Baker, director of motorsport, Michelin North America.

"Each race on the IMSA schedule has its own personality and VIR is the 'back to where you came from' relaxed, friendly, family atmosphere in a beautiful facility that make it a favorite for fans and teams.

"We should recognize IMSA, VIR track promoter Connie Nyholm and her team, our Michelin team, and the fans for making the Michelin GT Challenge at VIR a place where new fans are being introduced in a way that many of us were introduced to the sport."

Ironically, the VIR event almost didn't happen. One of the first tasks facing the leaders of IMSA following the merger of the former American Le Mans Series and the GRAND-AM Rolex Series was to create a consolidated schedule for the first post-merger season in 2014. As a smaller market, VIR was at the risk of being dropped.

Instead, the idea of a GT feature weekend shifted from concept to reality. The Michelin GT Challenge at VIR weekend has proven to be successful and is hailed by Nyholm and her team as VIR's "Super Bowl" on its annual event calendar.

In pre-race ceremonies, Nyholm announced a four-year extension, which will take the race through 2023.

On track, steady and consistent rain didn't allow teams in any series to set new qualifying records at VIR.

However, all five classes in the three series set new race lap records during the weekend, proving the performance every time in both ideal and treacherous conditions. This brings Michelin's season total up to 70 new records in its three IMSA series in 2019.

## **PRESS INFORMATION**



### **Porsche Dominates GTLM; Riley Mercedes Wins GTD**

Porsche GT Team dominated the weekend in GT Le Mans en route to its sixth win of the season. The team's 1-2 finish also has them poised to secure the GTLM manufacturer championship for Porsche provided at least one car starts the last two races.

The lead ebbed and flowed between the two Porsche 911 RSRs throughout the two-hour, 40-minute race but ultimately the No. 911 car of Patrick Pilet and Nick Tandy moved ahead in the final pit stop sequence. Pilet noted the options of Michelin's confidential range of tires suited them well at VIR, and the car excelled on pace all weekend.

"The Michelin tire was working perfectly. We found a good compromise with our two options (we picked), which work really well on this track. It's one of the big keys for success here," Pilet said.

Pilet and Tandy scored their third win and closed a few points on teammates Earl Bamber and Laurens Vanthoor, who finished second in the No. 912 Porsche. Jan Magnussen and Antonio Garcia completed the podium in the No. 3 Corvette C7.R.

In GT Daytona, an undercut strategy from the pit box enabled Riley Motorsports-Team AMG to win its first race of the season. Ben Keating started and Jeroen Bleekemolen made the winning pass in the No. 33 Mercedes-AMG GT3.

"We had hot tires, with two laps on our tires and the (No. 86) Acura was on older tires. Mario (Farnbacher) did an unbelievable job the first half of the lap, but it's a rough ride the exit of Oak Tree, and that enabled Jeroen to get a run on him down the backstraight."

GTD points leaders Mario Farnbacher and Trent Hindman finished second in their No. 86 Meyer Shank Racing Acura NSX GT3 Evo. The No. 63 Scuderia Corsa Ferrari 488 GT3 of Toni Vilander and Cooper MacNeil finished third.

### **IMSA Challenge Series Teams Thrive Through Rain**

Consistent rain and unseasonably cool temperatures on Saturday affected both IMSA Challenge series races, but teams used a mix of Michelin commercial slicks and wet tires to great success as the weather fluctuated.

In the two-hour Virginia Is For Racing Lovers Grand Prix, the eighth round of the 2019 IMSA MICHELIN Pilot Challenge season, the drama again came down to the last lap in both GS and TCR after a race peppered with on-and-off rain and frequent caution flags.

Trent Hindman (Park Place Motorsports Porsche) attempted to pass GS leader Corey Fergus (MIA Racing McLaren) at Turn 4, but nudged Fergus into a spin. Hindman then proceeded to hold off Kyle Marcelli (KohR Motorsports Ford) to take the checkered flag on-track. However, his car was subjected to a 30-second time penalty for avoidable contact. Marcelli and Nate Stacy inherited their first MICHELIN Pilot Challenge win this season in their No. 60 Mustang GT4.

With the win, Ford is the sixth different automotive brand to win in MICHELIN Pilot Challenge GS this season (McLaren, Audi, Porsche, Mercedes-AMG, Chevrolet).

## **PRESS INFORMATION**



TCR also had drama with a three-wide battle on the final lap on the back straight. James Vance and Nick Galante emerged victorious in the No. 23 FAST MD Racing Audi RS3 LMS TCR following the last-lap action.

Even more cautions and more rain affected the penultimate round of the IMSA Prototype Challenge season later Saturday evening. Through the challenging conditions, Stevan McAleer made a late pass of Kyle Masson to score his second win of the year in the No. 43 Robillard Racing Norma M30. McAleer then held off Mike Skeen, with Skeen having run the entire race on a single set of Michelin commercial slicks.

### **Championship Pictures**

The championship battles are forming up in all classes with just two IMSA race weekends remaining after VIR.

Both WeatherTech Championship GT class points leaders finished second in Sunday's Michelin GT Challenge. Earl Bamber and Laurens Vanthoor provisionally hold an 11-point lead over their Porsche teammates in GTLM. In GTD, Meyer Shank Acura's Trent Hindman and Mario Farnbacher's lead is north of 30 points with just two races to go.

In MICHELIN Pilot Challenge, Tyler McQuarrie and Jeff Westphal (No. 39 CarBahn with Peregrine Racing Audi R8 LMS GT4) finished second to extend their GS class points lead to 24 points over their closest rivals. TCR is now significantly tighter with Mark Wilkins and Michael Lewis (No. 98 Bryan Herta Autosport Hyundai Veloster N TCR) still leading, but with only nine points covering the top three pairs in class.

Prototype Challenge points leaders Austin McCusker and Rodrigo Pflucker (No. 47 Forty7 Motorsports Norma M30) finished eighth to extend their lead in that series with just one race left.

### **Next Up**

IMSA heads west for the second-to-last race weekend of 2019. All four WeatherTech Championship classes race at WeatherTech Raceway Laguna Seca in Monterey, Calif., with live race coverage Sunday, September 15 at 3 p.m. EDT on NBC.

MICHELIN Pilot Challenge will join the WeatherTech Championship in Monterey with its second-to-last race of the year on Saturday. Prototype Challenge has one final race remaining at Michelin Raceway Road Atlanta the second weekend of October.

### **About Michelin**

Dedicated to the improvement of sustainable mobility, Michelin designs, manufactures and sells tires for every type of vehicle, including airplanes, automobiles, bicycles, earthmovers, farm equipment, heavy-duty trucks and motorcycles. The Company has earned a long-standing reputation for building innovative premium tires. In addition to tires, the Company also publishes travel guides, hotel and restaurant guides, maps and road atlases. Headquartered in Greenville, S.C., Michelin North America ([www.michelinman.com](http://www.michelinman.com)) employs more than 20,000 people and operates 19 major manufacturing plants. Forbes magazine has ranked Michelin No. 1 on its annual survey of "Best Large Employers in America" for 2018.

## **PRESS INFORMATION**

For more information contact:



**Contact:** Tom Sullivan  
Michelin North America  
Cell: 704-222-5488  
Email: tom.sullivan@michelin.com | [www.michelinmedia.com](http://www.michelinmedia.com)

John Love  
Jackson Motorsports Group  
Cell: 313-506-2114  
Email: john.love@jacksonmg.com



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