



## IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship GTLM and GTD Classes at Lime Rock Park This Weekend

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The IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship has really been evolving since the merger between the IMSA and Grand-Am series that was first announced at Sebring in 2013. Five years on and the series has seen the Daytona Prototypes fade away in favor of more exotic racecars that emulate, at least in outward appearance, the mightiest models of prototypes appearing in the FIA World Endurance Challenge series – home to the Le Mans 24 Hours race. Alas, these cars will not be making an appearance this weekend as the WeatherTech Series conducts a GTLM and GTD only event at the ‘Racing Center of the East’, Lime Rock Park, in the IMSA Northeast Grand Prix.

This weekend will host the seventh of 11 races for the WeatherTech Championship GT Le Mans (GTLM) and GT Daytona (GTD) classes. “No prototypes?” You ask? Not this time, but professional racing of the highest caliber is still on tap with 19 GT cars, presented by 12 different teams and representing 10 separate manufacturers, looking to go hard at it on the 1.5 mile ‘Bull Ring’ that is this beautiful racetrack in a valley.



How competitive are the GTLM and GTD classes? “The competition is, candidly, much, much, much tougher than it was two years ago in GTD,” Paul Miller Team Racing owner **Paul Miller** says. “We’ve risen to the occasion and we’ve actually been able to grow our team so that we’ve been able to grow our performance and consistency. It’s very gratifying and it’s really a lot of fun to see if we can really compete head-to-head with some of these teams.”

Miller will be competing with the only Lamborghini Huracan GT3 running in the GTD class, piloted by Bryan Sellers and Madison Snow. They are currently riding at the top of the GTD Driver Standings.

One of the other five GTD teams looking to blow past Sellers and Snow - going faster than a 'Huracan' – is the Turner Motorsports BMW M6 GT3, No. 96. Drivers have not yet been announced but for Will Turner's team, Lime Rock is akin to their 'Home Track' as their shop is located in the neighboring state of Massachusetts. The team comes off a great win at Watkins Glen, and they have been regular competitors at Lime Rock since the team's inception.

Meyer-Shank Racing intends to make a statement in GTD at Lime Rock with a pair of Acura NSX GT3 mounts in the field. Team Owner **Michael Shank** commented: "We are in a strong position right now in this championship so we want to keep our foot in it and go for it." The team is currently second in the series standings, represented by the #86 Acura.

For **Bill Riley's** team, Mercedes-AMG Team Riley Motorsports, driver **Owen Trinkler's** view of racing at this historic venue suggests a great deal of positive energy is carrying the team into the weekend. "I love Lime Rock," said Trinkler. "It's another old school track that's fast. I think we will be good there and I think we will run a quick lap. We can be competitive and we will just play the game again. We just can't risk having a DNF right now. We will just work and not get stuck like we did at Mosport."

Also running in the GTD class are teams fielding Porsche, Lexus, Mercedes-AMG, Audi, Ferrari and Acura chassis, with established teams like Wright Motorsports, 3GT Racing, Magnus Racing and Scuderia Corsa, all in the hunt to have the first view of the checkered flag.



In the GTLM class, the fight between BMW, FORD, Corvette and Porsche continues to burn asphalt at speed. Each marque is being represented by two cars, eight racers and four teams combined. Currently, FORD has the series lead with the #67 FORD GT of Chip Ganassi Racing ahead of the Corvette Racing #3 Corvette in second. The #66 Ganassi FORD GT holds down third spot with Porsche in 5<sup>th</sup> and BMW last.

For BMW, 2018 has not been a season of riches. From the BMW of North America team press release: "With two pole positions and two second place finishes at Sebring and Mid-Ohio, the M8 GTE has led the GTLM field at times, but the four other races in the first half of the season have seen both cars register disappointing finishes. The high speed centrifuge that is Lime Rock Park should be the catalyst required to begin the season's turnaround."

"It's always a challenge to have a problem-free or contact-free race at Lime Rock Park, but we have been successful there in the past," said **Bobby Rahal, Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing Team Principal**. "Pit strategy plays a big part at Lime Rock due to the shortness of the circuit. You go a lap down, or very close to it, when you pit but if we can call a good strategy I'm confident that the cars will be competitive. Hopefully, Lime Rock will be to the M8 GTE's liking and if so I think we can do well. And, of course, we want to do well there because it's BMW's home track. A win there is good for the team but it's even better for BMW."

**BMW of North America - Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing team Driver quotes:**

**Connor De Phillippi, driver No. 25 BMW M8 GTE:** "I believe the progress we have been making with the BMW M8 GTE should put us in a better qualifying position at Lime Rock and, with some luck, aiming towards a podium finish."

**Alexander Sims, driver No. 25 BMW M8 GTE:** "I am looking forward to returning to Lime Rock. While a very short track, it has some very interesting corners. I think the characteristics of the M8 versus the M6 should put us in a more favorable position to challenge."

**John Edwards, driver No. 24 BMW M8 GTE:** "I had my first win with BMW at Lime Rock (2013) and Martin Tomczyk and I finished third there last year in the M6 after a great battle with one of the Corvettes so the track holds some good memories for me. Many folks come up from BMW of North America headquarters so we always can count on a lot of support."

**Jesse Krohn, driver No. 24 BMW M8 GTE:** "I like the racing at Lime Rock. The gaps between cars are very short and a pass must be earned. A good qualifying position is usually the first step to a good finish."

Porsche comes back to the sight of some early successes with a sense of anticipation that history may very well be repeated at this idyllic venue. **Dr. Frank-Steffen Walliser**, Vice President Motorsport and GT Cars commented: "We celebrated our maiden win with the new 911 RSR at Lime Rock last year. We are keen to repeat this success. After the strong performances at Watkins Glen and Canadian Tire Motorsport Park, we are now heading to Lime Rock fully prepared and feeling very optimistic. We'll do our utmost to secure a top result and further improve our promising position in the fight for the championship."

**Nick Tandy**, driver of the No. 911 Porsche GT Team Porsche 911 RSR too sees a positive outcome ahead for the team. "Lime Rock is great turf for Porsche. We have always performed very well on this racetrack. We look forward to this unique race all year. Because the track is so short, the traffic is always heavy. Our team has to implement the right race strategy so that we get as many free runs as possible."

With all the competition on track with GTLM and GTD cars, many fans would agree the prototypes, while welcome here any time, are really not needed for the fans to see some professional caliber speed contests take place. And what could be better than a lawn chair on a grassy hill overlooking a field of high powered, colorful and oh so fast race cars running nose to tail through a lush green valley nestled in the Berkshire Mountains?

**Track notes (provided by Marlane White, Public Relations and Communications Manager at LRP):**

- There are three drivers on the entry list with four victories each at Lime Rock Park.
- No. 4 Corvette Racing Chevrolet Corvette C7.R driver Oliver Gavin won the American Le Mans Series (ALMS) GTS race in 2004, ALMS GT1 in 2005 and 2007, and the WeatherTech Championship GTLM class in 2016.

- Andy Lally – a native of nearby Long Island, New York – won the GRAND-AM SRP11 class at Lime Rock in 2001, as well as a GRAND-AM GT win in 2006, an ALMS GTC class win in 2010 and the WeatherTech Championship GTD class in 2016. He returns this year with the same team and car – the No. 44 Magnus Racing Audi R8 LMS GT3 – and co-driver – John Potter – with whom he won in 2016.

- Patrick Long, who shares the No. 58 Wright Motorsports Porsche 911 GT3 R with co-driver Christina Nielsen, also is a four-time Lime Rock winner. He won the ALMS GT2 class in 2006 and 2009 and the ALMS GT class in 2010 and 2012.

- Corvette Racing has the most Lime Rock race wins with five, the most recent coming in the 2016 WeatherTech Championship GTLM race with the No. 4 Corvette C7.R and co-drivers Oliver Gavin and Tommy Milner. That victory was a milestone 100th victory in sports car competition for Corvette Racing which includes eight victories in the 24 Hours of Le Mans. The team's next victory will be its 100th in IMSA competition.

- Porsche is the winningest manufacturer on the entry list with 18 IMSA wins (17 ALMS and one GRAND-AM), followed by Chevrolet, which has 11 wins at Lime Rock (six GRAND-AM, five ALMS).

The Northeast Grand Prix starts at 3 p.m. ET and will be carried live by IMSA Radio on IMSA.com, RadioLeMans.com and SiriusXM Radio (Sirius 138/XM 202/App 972). It will be televised on FS1 on a delayed basis beginning at 4 p.m. ET.

For the IMSA Northeast Grand Prix Weekend, current or former members of the U.S. Armed Forces with any proof of service are admitted free. Thank you for your service! Youths 16 and under with at least one accompanying adult are also admitted free to all 2018 Lime Rock Park spectator events. (General Admission)

