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### 2010 PATRÓN GT3 CHALLENGE BY YOKOHAMA OFF TO A RECORD START

SEBRING, FL. March 22 – The Patrón GT3 Challenge by Yokohama kicked off the 2010 season at the 58<sup>th</sup> Annual Mobil 1 Twelve Hours of Sebring Presented by Fresh from Florida, held at the Sebring International Raceway.

The Speed TV production of Rounds 1 & 2 of the Patrón GT3 Challenge by Yokohama is scheduled to air on Sunday, April 18<sup>th</sup> at 12:00am EST. The program will include a closer look at the series, its partners including Porsche Motorsports North America and Yokohama, and the teams. For the complete television schedule, please visit [www.imsachallenge.com](http://www.imsachallenge.com).

The season opener also marked the debut of the newly restructured classes of the Patrón GT3 Challenge by Yokohama, with the Platinum Cup Class now featuring the more powerful 2010 Porsche 911 GT3 Cup Car. With increased downforce and a larger engine package, the new car provides additional speed and increased performance, making for impressive racing. The Gold Cup Class now includes 2005 ½ - 2009 Porsche 911 GT3 Cup cars.

Practice began on Wednesday, March 17, and it was clear that the 2010 Porsche 911 GT3 Cup cars of the Platinum Cup Class were capable of setting new track records – and they did just that. In qualifying, Ross Smith, Fort Worth, Texas, drove his #5 Maxwell Paper Racing 2010 Porsche 911 GT3 Cup car to the pole with a 2:07.109, setting a new qualifying lap record. The previous Platinum Cup qualifying track record was a 2:10.311.

Of his record setting lap, Ross commented, “I wasn’t too pleased with my qualifying lap, believe it or not. I was considerably faster in practice the morning before, but our set up was still good.” Ross is no stranger to Sebring International Raceway or to the Patrón GT3 Challenge by Yokohama. In 2009, Ross started both Round 1 and Round 2 in Sebring, but did not complete either race due to mechanical failures. The 2010 season is proving to be infinitely more successful for the young driver.

The Gold Cup Class of the Patrón GT3 Challenge by Yokohama also showed record setting speed in qualifying. NGT Motorsport’s Carlos Eduardo, Miami, FL, drove his 2009 Porsche GT3 Cup Car to the top of the Gold Cup Class, passing the old qualifying time of 2:10.301 and posting a 2:09.521. “The car is great,” Carlos said. “It handles well, is aggressive in the corners, and is fun to drive. I’m ready to go racing.”

Both Ross Smith and Carlos Eduardo were awarded the BBS Pole Award for setting the fastest lap in their respective classes. Both drivers will also accumulate points towards the BBS Pole Award Grand Prize, presented at the end of the season.

Round 1 of the Patrón GT3 Challenge by Yokohama began Thursday afternoon. Ross Smith jumped to an early lead, but Javier Quiros, San Jose, Costa Rica, and Jorge Trejos, San Jose, Costa Rica, teammates from AASCO Motorsports, chased after him. The Platinum Class battle continued throughout the race, with Trejos pushing his teammate hard, while Ross seemed to flawlessly keep his 2010 Porsche 911 GT3 Cup car at the head of the pack.

The competition in the Gold Cup Class was fierce, with Carlos Eduardo moving his 2009 Porsche up through the grid. Kendall Smith, Fort Worth, TX, brother and teammate of Ross Smith, pushed his Maxwell Paper Racing car hard, doing his best to catch the NGT Motorsport machine, but to no avail. Henrique Cisneros, Coral Gables, FL, also from NGT Motorsport, kept the pressure on Kendall, rounding out the top 3 of the Gold Cup Class.

As the checkered flag dropped on Round 1, the Platinum Cup Class winners were Ross Smith (Maxwell Paper Racing), Javier Quiros (AASCO Motorsports), and Jorge Trejos (AASCO Motorsports), with Gold



Cup Class winners Carlos Eduardo (NGT Motorsport), Kendall Smith (Maxwell Paper Racing), and Henrique Cisneros (NGT Motorsport).

Of his first race of the season, Ross Smith was pleased with his result. "I have to tip my hat to Yokohama, the International Motor Sports Association (IMSA), and Patrón for putting on a great show. I looked at the entry list and heard there were some fast Costa Ricans coming. And now I look to my left [Jorge Trejos] and my right [Javier Quiros] and I realize – these guys are fast!"

About his race, Javier Quiros said, "I made a good start, and I was trying to keep up with Ross. He's too fast!" As teammate Jorge began to creep closer, Javier's strategy changed. "I thought, I will pass [Ross] first, and leave [Jorge] in the back...but [Ross] ran away and Jorge was in my mirror the whole time."

Jorge Trejos wanted a few more laps to battle for second with his teammate, Javier, in Round 1. "There is no way of telling what the end would have been...but it was close racing, good racing. It was really fun." Jorge was also awarded the Yokohama Hard Charger Award for advancing the most positions within the grid; he started 7<sup>th</sup> and finished 3<sup>rd</sup>.

All three drivers made it clear that the new 2010 Porsche GT3 Cup Car is a force to be reckoned with on the track. After Round 1, Ross Smith said, "These 2010 Porsche 911 GT3 Cup Cars are great, even on cold tires. These are purpose built race cars. You can hop them around, slide them...this 2010 car is great." Javier agreed with Ross, commenting on not only the quality of the car, but also the drivers and the series as a whole. "I'm surprised about the good quality of drivers in this series...I thought it would be a little easier, but this is not a game – this is real racing. Excuses are finished. Now let's go racing."

Round 2 brought the weekend to a close for the Patrón GT3 Challenge by Yokohama, but it marked the beginning of what will be some great season long racing. The start was waved off with the pack too widely dispersed, but the official start saw Ross Smith once again jump ahead of the grid. This time Darrell Carlisle, McLean, VA, was right behind him in his Kelly-Moss Racing machine. Chris Cumming, Vancouver, BC, pushed hard in the World Speed Motorsports car, fighting for a spot on the podium.

The Gold Class Cup battle was heated from the start. With minor contact in the first few laps, Carlos Eduardo, took advantage of the situation, passing the m $\acute{e}$ l $\acute{e}$ e and putting a Platinum Cup Car between himself and the second place car, teammate Henrique Cisneros. Kendall Smith battled for a podium finish once more against Michael Mills, Angleton, TX. Both drivers pushed hard, but made contact in lap 13, ending Mills' race. Kendall kept on but suffered a flat front tire, eventually moving him down one lap.

The second race of the season ended under caution when Amadeo Quiros, San Jose, Costa Rica, spun on the front straight. While under caution, Rob Walton, Scottsdale, AZ, and teammate Chris Cumming made contact, taking Chris out of the race and off of the podium. The checkered flag brought the Platinum Class winners home, with Ross Smith (Maxwell Paper Racing) at the top, followed by Darrell Carlisle (Kelly-Moss Racing) and Marco Cirone, Toronto, ON (6<sup>th</sup> Gear Racing). The Gold Cup Class podium held Carlos Eduardo (NGT Motorsport), first in the Gold Cup Class and third overall, Henrique Cisneros (NGT Motorsport), and Lloyd Hawkins, Meyairie, LA (Hawk Motorsports).

After winning the pole and both races, Ross Smith was very thankful for a great team. "I really have to thank my team, Maxwell Paper Racing, and the guys they brought in. These guys are the best. When we heard the 2010 car was coming out, it was a no-brainer. But we had a late entry, and the first time I saw the car was the night before we went on track. So Maxwell Paper Racing has done a great job." But Ross isn't secure at the top of the championship points. "It's still so early in the year, there's no need to talk about championships right now. Darrell [Carlisle] is still here – I don't have a comfortable lead. He's a great driver...it's still just very, very early."

Darrell Carlisle certainly is still here, and will no doubt be a challenger for Ross. On his second place finish, Darrell said, "I feel really good about it, and being involved with a team like Kelly-Moss, they made it happen." Darrell is already looking to the future, and to the championship. "It's the beginning of the season, and you want to accumulate points, and that's what we're after right now."

The third place finisher, Marco Cirone had quite a journey from Toronto, Ontario down to Sebring International Raceway, and wasn't sure if he or his team would make the race, much less land on the



podium. “Honestly, I never expected to come so far and to have such success here. I couldn’t believe we were in third.”

But with the phenomenal help and hard work of Porsche Motorsports North America (PMNA), the official engine partner and provider of the Patrón GT3 Challenge by Yokohama, Marco and his team enjoyed a sweet victory. “From the first moment I placed an order, I talked to [PMNA] on the phone, they have been nothing but fantastic. They have done so much. When I first got to see the car, I had a few [technical] problems, but the guys at Porsche helped me so much to get the car ready.” Marco and his team thrashed to get the car set up, but faced the serious possibility of not starting the race. “I was honestly disappointed because I thought I wouldn’t be able to race, but [the Porsche engineer] came up to me and said, ‘You know what? You’re going to be at the start of the race. I guarantee it.’ I wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for [PMNA].”

Ludovico Manfredi, Key Biscayne, FL, received the Yokohama Hard Charger Award for the Gold Cup Class in Round 2, moving his NGT Motorsport 2009 Porsche 911 GT3 Cup car up from a starting position of 30<sup>th</sup> to finishing 8<sup>th</sup>.

The Patrón GT3 Challenge by Yokohama features semi-professional drivers racing head to head in one of the world’s most successful race cars, the Porsche 911 GT3 Cup car. As a developmental series designed to prepare drivers and teams for professional careers in sports car racing, the multi-class structure of the series teaches drivers essential skills for improving maneuvering abilities and driving techniques – all necessary proficiencies for an eventual career in the American Le Mans Series presented by Tequila Patrón.

The 2010 season of the Patrón GT3 Challenge continues May 21 – 23, 2010, with Rounds 3 and 4 at the 2010 American Le Mans Series Monterey Presented by Patrón, held at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca. Please visit [www.imsachallenge.com](http://www.imsachallenge.com) for the latest schedule and updates.

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