



WeatherTech Championship DPi "Clash of the Titans" Resumes in Penultimate Round of 2019 Season



This Sunday, in front of a national NBC Network television audience, the heavyweight title fight resumes at WeatherTech Raceway Laguna Seca.

In one corner, it's the reigning champions, Action Express Racing – winners of four out of five WeatherTech Championship titles since 2014 – with its No. 31 Whelen Engineering Cadillac DPi-V.R shared by Felipe Nasr and Pipo Derani. In the other corner, it's Acura Team Penske – one of the most storied teams in U.S. motorsport history – with co-drivers Dane Cameron and Juan Pablo Montoya in the No. 6 Acura ARX-05.

Cameron and Montoya come into the weekend holding the edge, a seven-point lead over Nasr and Derani with only Sunday's two-hour, 40-minute Monterey SportsCar Championship Powered by McLaren and the 10-hour Motul Petit Le Mans at Michelin Raceway Road Atlanta on Saturday, Oct. 12 remaining in the WeatherTech Championship season.

The No. 6 Acura duo has put together a championship-worthy run through the first eight races of the season with two victories and podium results in the past six consecutive races.

"We've been on the podium every race since Long Beach," Cameron said. "I'm really impressed the stretch that we're all proud of as a team. So, hopefully we can keep that going through the end of the year. Really, the consistency, continuing to be in that top-three range is kind of the key to success in this championship."

Beyond that consistency, Cameron and Montoya also have finished ahead of the No. 31 team in each of the past six races – but not by much, hence the close margin in the DPi standings. Also, Derani and Nasr had a strong opening to the season with a runner-up result in January's Rolex 24 At Daytona and a victory in the Mobil 1 Twelve Hours of Sebring Presented by Advance Auto Parts, while Montoya and Cameron struggled in those races.

For Nasr, this is somewhat familiar territory. He was battling for a championship a year ago at WeatherTech Raceway, which he and then-co-driver Eric Curran managed to secure at season's end.

"I'm eager to go back to my No. 31 Whelen Cadillac at a very special place like Laguna Seca, WeatherTech Raceway," Nasr said. "It's a pretty iconic circuit that we go to, and we're just reaching the final stages of the championship. We are in that crucial point that every opportunity out there counts.

"Myself, the people in Action Express, we're all aiming for a solid weekend. What I've learned from last year is when it comes to those last stages, it's just crucial to minimize mistakes. Again, every opportunity counts. So, every practice, every session that we have each to maximize the potential of the car, the driving time and make sure we're on top of everything."

It was during this weekend last year at WeatherTech Raceway when the team announced that Derani would be joining Nasr as his full-season co-driver in the No. 31 Cadillac, with Curran shifting to an IMSA Michelin Endurance Cup-only role. Two days after that announcement, Derani went out and won the race in the No. 22 Tequila Patrón ESM Nissan DPi with then-co-driver Johannes van Overbeek.

"Well, I love Laguna," Derani said. "It's a fantastic place, awesome atmosphere. So, I think in that regard, I'm really looking forward to the weekend. Obviously, we haven't had the smoothest run. The last few races were not great, and we all know why, but I'm just trying to take it race by race.

"Hopefully, this weekend, we can repeat a win from last year, which would be great and put us back in the fight for the championship or stronger in the fight for the championship against the Penske No. 6."

While they're battling each other for the title, there's healthy respect among the primary DPi title contenders. In fact, Cameron – who is chasing his third WeatherTech Championship title – won the GT Daytona (GTD) crown in 2014 with Turner Motorsport and the Prototype title in 2016 with the No. 31 Whelen team.

"Action is a great team," Cameron said. "They've shown that with their results in the Prototype class in the last five years and a ton of championships. I enjoyed quite a lot of success together with them and with Eric. So, they're certainly very capable and they know exactly what it takes to win races and to win this championship in particular.

"So, for us from Acura Team Penske, last year we made a lot of mistakes and weren't able to capitalize. So, we spent a lot of time really trying to understand everything better, and really come out swinging for this."

Nasr and Derani are going to come out swinging, too, at Acura Team Penske and every other opponent on the racetrack.

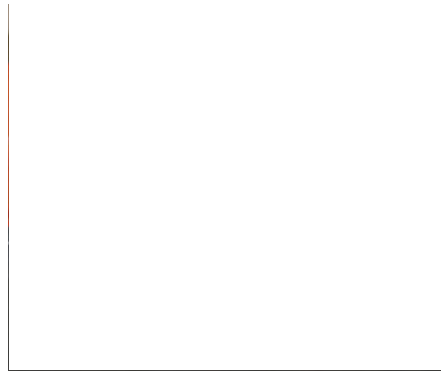
"I think all of us have great respect for the Penske organization," Derani said. "They've won everything they've been involved with. But on the other hand, it's just another team. We're not going to go out there and just try to beat Penske. We have other teams that have been super strong the last few races, like Mazda, for example.

"I even believe Wayne Taylor has been super strong, compared to us. If you look at the last race, it was very close between car 31 and car 10. So, we're going to go out there and try to do the best we can, no matter if it's Team Penske or Mazda Joest, or whoever it is."

Sounds like all the makings for a great title bout.

The Monterey SportsCar Championship Powered by McLaren will be televised live on NBC at 3 p.m. ET Sunday. IMSA Radio also will have live coverage throughout the weekend on IMSA.com, RadioLeMans.com and a live race broadcast on SiriusXM Radio.

Tickets are available now on WeatherTechRaceway.com.



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