

ROOKIE SCARDINA TAKES POLE IN SEASON OPENER FOR IMSA GT3 CUP CHALLENGE PRESENTED BY MICHELIN

A new season of the IMSA GT3 Cup Challenge presented by Michelin sees two new faces on the front row of the 2007 season opener. Charles Scardina earned his first career series pole position in his first attempt Thursday at Sebring International Raceway as part of the Mobil 1 Twelve Hours of Sebring.

The rookie from Delray Beach, Fla., put his Orbit Racing Porsche GT3 Cup entry out front for Friday's 45-minute season opener with a lap of 2:10.641 around the famed 3.7-mile, 17-turn circuit. He posted his fast lap on his final time around the track, crossing the line just before the checkered flag came out.

Scardina was 0.066 seconds ahead of fellow rookie Bob Faieta in the CareLevel Racing entry. Like Scardina, the California resident set his fastest time on the final lap. Bryce Miller in the MarquisJet Farnbacher Loles entry qualified third, followed by Dino Loles in another Farnbacher Loles Porsche.

A 12-minute red flag period shifted strategies for some, but Scardina said it didn't change his plans.

"My lap was OK," said Scardina, who ran regional spec Miatas last season. "I didn't think it would be good enough for a pole lap. Certainly I thought it would be top five but I'm glad to be where I am. We had everything done we needed to do earlier this week. We were working on our race setup and strategy."

"This is my first pro race and my fifth race ever – the previous four were in Spec Miata races in SCCA Regionals and only my second race in this car – I did a Porsche Club event. Orbit Racing have given me a great car," said Scardina.

Faieta has even less experience as most of his competitive career has been focused on shifter karts. But he apparently learns pretty quickly.

"It's a huge transition," he said. "I'm glad to have qualified in the top 10 and would be very happy with a top-10 finish. This championship rewards consistency. So I think you can finish in the top 10 every race and contend for the championship without winning a race."

Thirty-nine cars will take the green flag at 1 p.m. EDT on Friday. It is the second season in a row that the series opens at Sebring.

"The hardest thing about this track is getting a setup that will work over all 17 turns," Scardina said. "If you get one corner right you have 16 more to worry about."