

2018 Pirelli World Challenge Round 1 Report

The 2018 season kicked off last weekend for Callaway Competition USA at the Opening Round of the Pirelli World Challenge. After 12 years of GT3 competition for Callaway in Europe, 2018 signaled the start of a new chapter for the Company's history. Following the departure of Cadillac Racing in 2017, the Leingarten built C7 GT3-R was now eligible for North American Competition.

This year, Callaway Competition USA field the Nr26 entry of Daniel Keilwitz. After a successful Preseason test at Sebring International Raceway, the team started the weekend off strongly in St Pete. Despite the lack of track knowledge, Daniel Keilwitz quickly got up to speed in his Nr26 C7 GT3-R. Qualifying for Race 1 saw the German grab 3rd position despite a late red flag, which prevented a possible challenge for pole. "It took a long time for the tyres to get up to the peak temperature," explains Keilwitz. "I put in two flying laps before the red flag came out. My second lap wasn't bad at all. I could have improved if I had more laps. The session ended right as we were getting started, but third place to start isn't bad for a first qualifying here."



Race 1 on Saturday began under cool and damp conditions. During the start for race 1, Keilwitz positioned himself on the inside and narrowly led in to the first turn. However, a maneuver by the Nr61 Ferrari of Vilander, squeezed The Nr26 to the wet inside white line, which caused the German to take to the escape road at turn 1. After a lengthy caution (& now in last place), Daniel fought his way back up the field to bring his C7 GT3-R home in 4th place.

"I'm not that happy about the race overall," explains Daniel. "I had a really good start but the Ferrari pushed me wide on the white line. I couldn't turn in on turn one, and I was lucky there was a pace car period and I was able to catch back up after rejoining. The car ran really great, and the lap times were consistent."

Race 2 on Sunday was greeted with sunny and warmer conditions, which was the optimal environment for the Corvette. The starting grid for race 2 is determined by fastest race laps from the previous race, which saw the Nr26 line up in 2nd position. Due to low tyre pressure and wheel spin at the start, Keilwitz lost two positions to the Nr61 (Ferrari) and Nr2 (Mercedes). Once the tyre pressures improved, the German moved back in to 2nd position after a handful of laps. After a feverish attempt to catch and pass the leading Porsche of Mangrove, a heavy accident for the Nr9 KPAX Bentley resulted in both a red flag and race end with 10 minutes remaining. However, the Nr26 of Keilwitz ended with a solid 2nd place finish to cap off a successful North American Debut for the C7 GT3-R Corvette.

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Additional Quotes:

Daniel Keilwitz (Nr26 Callaway Competition USA C7 GT3-R)

(Qualifying): "It took a long time for the tyres to get up to the peak temperature. I put in two flying laps before the red flag came out. My second lap wasn't bad at all. I could have improved if I had more laps. The session ended right as we were getting started, but third place to start isn't bad for a first qualifying here. Everything is possible during the race. We had cooler temperatures for qualifying, but we took care of the temperatures for the session."

(Race 1): "I'm not that happy about the race overall. I had a good start but the Ferrari pushed me wide on the white line, so the braking wasn't very effective because the paint was wet from the earlier rain. I couldn't turn in on turn one, and I was lucky there was a pace car period and I was able to catch back up after rejoining. The car ran great, and the lap times were consistent. The team did a good job and prepared the car well. I'm happy with the result after the turn one incident."

(Race 2): "The start was bad for me because we started with low tyre pressures. I had wheel spin at the green flag and lost two positions to the other guys. We knew if we played it cool, I'd be faster once we came up to temperature. I was able to overtake the Ferrari and the Mercedes, and tried to catch the Porsche. It was hard to handle the tyre pressure at the restart, so I lost a lot of time, but made it up. I caught the Porsche, and started to fight for the win, but we didn't get that chance with the red flag. It's important that the driver involved is okay and didn't get hurt."

Reeves Callaway (Team Owner): "We are very pleased that we had a chance to demonstrate the championship performance of the Corvette here in North America. I'm happy to see the front running performance from Europe continued for the North American debut. We had two hard fought and tough races, where Daniel could show his skills against a very talented field of drivers. I am thrilled to be able to please the Corvette fan base with some great racing."