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Repeat Mercedes-AMG Motorsport Customer Racing Victory at the 12 Hours of Sebring with Winward Racing in IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship GT Daytona (GTD) Division

Press Information

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Winward Racing Team and Drivers and Mercedes-AMG Take Early Season IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship GTD Points Lead with Repeat 12 Hours of Sebring Race Win

SEBRING, Florida – Reigning IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship GT Daytona (GTD) titlists Winward Racing and Mercedes-AMG took an early-season points lead with a convincing victory Saturday in the 73rd Mobil 1 Twelve Hours of Sebring with the No. 57 Winward Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3 and team co-drivers Russell Ward, Philip Ellis and Indy Dontje. The reigning IMSA WeatherTech Championship GTD driver, team and manufacturer champions bolstered their bid for repeat titles this year with their second-consecutive victory in America's oldest major sports car race on the legendary 3.74-mile Sebring airport circuit.

Unhappy with a fourth-place qualifying effort on Friday, Ellis wasted no time charging to the front when the green flag for the 12-hour race dropped at 10:10 a.m. on Saturday. He took the lead for the first time just under 14 minutes into the race and then joined Ward and Dontje in maintaining first place or running in the lead pack for the rest of the race. Combined, Ellis, Ward and Dontje led 67 of the GTD race's 327 laps.

The only time the No. 57 dropped out of the lead pack was after a drive-through penalty in the second half of the race for a pit-procedure violation. The team and drivers served the penalty and maintained their focus on getting Ellis back into the fight for the finish.

Ellis tracked down the GTD leader in the closing stages of the race and pulled off the winning pass in traffic with just over 12 minutes remaining.

He then put a comfortable gap on the field while leading the race's final nine laps and drove the No. 57 across the finish line with a 3.265 seconds margin of victory.

Combined with a fourth-place finish in January's season-opening Rolex 24 At Daytona, the No. 57 squad now leads the GTD driver and team championship standings with 690 points, 41 clear of the nearest competitors. Mercedes-AMG leads the GTD manufacturer championship with 694 points, 40 tallies ahead of the second-place challenger.

Similar to the Rolex 24, Winward was joined in the lead-pack battle in the second half of the race by the No. 80 Lone Star Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3, which competes in this year's five-race IMSA Michelin Endurance Cup rounds.

Team drivers Dan Knox, Eric Filgueiras and Scott Andrews joined the team in a near-flawless performance that saw the No. 80 steadily move into contention throughout the race and firmly in the top-five battle in the closing hours.

Andrews and the Lone Star Racing team had just made their last pit stop and were beginning a run back into the lead pack as the rest of the GTD field cycled through its final pit stops only to have the No. 80 suffer a cut rear tire with only 45 minutes remaining in the race.

With the entire outer ring of the tire thrown from the car, Andrews slowly made it back to the pits where the Lone Star team quickly threw a new tire and wheel on and got the No. 80 back in the race. Andrews kept the pressure on in the closing minutes and crossed the finish line in ninth place.

For more than the first half of the race, Winward was joined in the GTD lead battle by the No. 32 Korthoff Competition Motors Mercedes-AMG GT3 of Kenton Koch, Seth Lucas and the team's IMSA Michelin Endurance Cup specialist Maximilian Götz. Starting on the front row from the outside pole position, Koch moved into the GTD lead in the race's opening hour shortly after Ellis did and joined his No. 32 teammates in racing with the class leaders straight through the race's halfway point.

Koch was back in the car and leading the field early in the race's seventh hour when the car suddenly lost drive on course and slowed to a stop. After what seemed like an eternity as the No. 32 was rope towed over two spectator bridges and the crowded Sebring infield, the car made it back to the Korthoff team in the paddock. The team quickly went to work but soon determined the driveline technical issue was a race-ending one and Korthoff Competition's race was over.

Next up for Mercedes-AMG Motorsport Customer Racing teams on the 2025 IMSA WeatherTech calendar is the 50th Running of the Grand Prix of Long Beach, April 11 - 12 on the Long Beach street circuit.

Russell Ward, Driver - No. 57 Winward Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3:

"I think I speak for the whole crew when I say we expect nothing less. I really want to give a shout out to the entire team and particularly the full-time people back in the shop. Everyone who works so hard to get this done. There's no break, this is just what we love to do. To come here and close it off on another win, that's just a culmination of all the efforts over the last couple of months and even last year. Hats off to the group. Personally, I had an awesome drive. I did some heavy lifting in the heat of the day, double stinted a set of tires. It was really a tough run for me, but I managed to hold station. I gained a little bit in the pit stops. I'm really proud of myself and all of the guys that made the car really easy to drive. It's just incredible."

Philip Ellis, Driver - No. 57 Winward Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3:

"This was huge. We had to come back from a penalty early on, shook it off and kept going. There was a car at the end. We knew we were quicker, but we had to be careful getting by. That's the level of operation for this team, and we don't take on an unnecessary risk. If they give you an opening, you take it, and we did. It's another great start to the season again. I think Sebring this year was tougher compared to last year, but they were both tough in their own way. Last year we had a lot of restarts in the lead that we had to control, so we were usually the leaders up front. Saturday was a different kind of pressure, and now I wasn't being hunted, I was the hunter and chasing down the front guys. It was a lot of fun, but to some extent, you need the help from the traffic, which is why I think IMSA is great."

Indy Dontje, Driver - No. 57 Winward Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3:

"It's really important that everyone is coming back together. I think there were a lot of cars today that were really competitive but had bad luck or made some mistakes around us. We even made a mistake where we had a penalty, but we scrambled back. Philip took over in the end and got back the win for the team. It's unbelievable, I think this one feels even better than last year. We're focused on the championship. I think it would be nice if we do it back-to-back this year on the championships. It's great for Winward, and I want to continue this good rhythm and good flow with the team."

Scott Andrews, Driver - No. 80 Lone Star Racing Mercedes-AMG

GT3: "I think we can all be really proud of ourselves collectively as a group for a really well executed race. There were pretty much no flaws by the team at all. That gave us a good shot at the top five and even potentially a podium. It's unfortunate to get a puncture with such little time to go. It stings a little bit, but I didn't go to bed displeased or unhappy because the only thing that took us out of the race was something out of our control. The team should be proud, and I'm happy with the job I did. I drove a good race with no mistakes and the pace was good. It's good for the team to know that we can really have some good performance, solid pit stops, change the car for the better as the race progresses and still be competitive."

Eric Filgueiras, Driver - No. 80 Lone Star Racing Mercedes-AMG

GT3: "It's not the result that we wanted, but the team showed a really strong effort, and we had a great performance. Everybody worked really hard, and this was a huge improvement from Daytona. Not only did we finish, we were in the running for a really great outcome as we were at Daytona, but the execution from the team side was just much, much better. Dan Knox, our team owner and driver, did a fantastic job. Everybody was firing on all cylinders, and we were very close at the end. We've got three more of these races, and we've shown our ability to grow, our ability to progress and to learn from the mistakes that we've made and how we can make this program more efficient on all ends. Drivers, people that put their hands on cars, the strategy, the engineering, everything. We're making people nervous and that's what we want! This was my first 12 hours. I had a fantastic experience. I got to have some battles, fuel energy saving, gain more experience and

helped put the team into a position for a good outcome. Our day is coming.”

Kenton Koch, Driver - No. 32 Korthoff Competition Motors Mercedes-AMG GT3: “We have a lot of positives to take away. The one negative is the fact that we didn't finish well, but the positive was that we had all the pieces possible to be there. The car was great, the co-drivers were great, the pit stops were great and everyone on the team was good. That helps for the rest of the season, but to have this one end so quickly is just a bummer. Everyone worked really hard. This one stings.”

Maximilian Götz, Driver - No. 32 Korthoff Competition Motors Mercedes-AMG GT3: “Sometimes racing is unfair, but you can't really control it. I think the team did a great job. Since the beginning, since the testing last month, we've been competitive. We found a good pace. Then we came here, and Kenton put the car on the front row in P2 in qualifying, but it was very close. So, in the end, it was a great job and a great start to the weekend. The start of the race was pretty good, and it looked like it was paying off for us with good pace in the car. It was really disappointing for sure how it ended. I think this could have been our day. We had the pace in the car, we were all set for this one. I need to come back next year with the same approach, the same people, and the same team to finish the race at the top of the podium. I think that's the only goal we have now.”

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