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Mercedes-AMG Motorsport Customer Racing Teams Extend IMSA
WeatherTech Championship and Michelin Endurance Cup GTD
Championship Points Leads at the Sahlen's Six Hours of The Glen

Press Information

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Mercedes-AMG Motorsport Customer Racing Team Winward Racing Secures Fourth Victory of 2024 in Wet and Wild Sahlen's Six Hours of The Glen

WATKINS GLEN, New York – Mercedes-AMG Motorsport Customer Racing team Winward Racing continued to roll in the 2024 IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship with team co-drivers Russell Ward, Philip Ellis and Indy Dontje winning a rainy Sahlen's Six Hours of The Glen in the No. 57 Winward Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3 for a series-leading fourth GT Daytona (GTD) class win of the season Sunday at Watkins Glen International. The rain-delayed and red-flagged race was a victory of redemption for Winward in the Sahlen's Six Hours after taking the checkered flag first under similar wet weather circumstances in 2022 only to lose the victory for just missing the modified minimum driver time requirements in the shortened race.

Winward encountered no such issues in Sunday's race as the team's renewed commitment to flawless execution and mistake-free races continues to pay off. Race starting driver Ward started the rotation that included Dontje pulling the middle shift of the race and Ellis strapping in for the final hours for the run to the checkered flag. Ward fulfilled his required 90 minutes behind the wheel in a strong race-opening double stint and handed the No. 57 off to Dontje in third.

Dontje, the team's endurance race addition in this year's long-distance races, stayed in lead contention throughout his stint, checking off his required driver time and giving the car to Ellis as the gray skies that hung over Watkins Glen all day began to darken. Ellis ran in the dry at the beginning of his stint as Winward kept him on schedule to complete his minimum driving time, but soon on-and-off rain arrived, which grew into a

heavy downpour that one pitside broadcast commentator described as “painful.”

Despite the deluge, Winward made what proved to be the winning call of the race and elected not to pit for rain tires as the majority of the field did. With IMSA slowing the field to circulate on the soaked circuit under yellow flag caution conditions, Ellis skillfully kept the slick-tired No. 57 in the GTD lead right up until a red flag was displayed to stop the race due to flooding at various locations on the 3.4-mile Watkins Glen circuit.

After a 40-minute delay, the race resumed in dry and even sunny conditions with just 16 minutes remaining. With dry-weather slick tires already on the No. 57, Ellis led from the green flag restart as several competitors had to pit for tire changes. Ellis withstood one last overtake attempt by a competitor who went off course trying to pass in The Glen’s Inner Loop turns and took the checkered flag at full speed for an .884 of a second margin of victory.

Winward’s victory anchored another solid points haul that extended the leads Mercedes-AMG and its partner Mercedes-AMG Motorsport Customer Racing teams have in all six possible IMSA GT Daytona (GTD) championships across the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship and the IMSA Michelin Endurance Cup (IMEC). Point standings remain provisional until IMSA can properly sort out the results of the chaotic and curtailed race, but with Winward’s victory not at issue, the No. 57 team and drivers leave The Glen with a season-high 315-point lead in the WeatherTech GTD championships.

Ellis, Ward and Dontje have now swept the year’s first three long-distance races – the Rolex 24 at Daytona, the 12 Hours of Sebring and the Sahlen’s Six Hours – to build a sizable lead in the IMSA Michelin Endurance Cup events that award the top performers in the year’s five endurance races. Winward’s fourth victory this season came in the series-standard two-hour and 40-minute race last month at WeatherTech Raceway Laguna Seca.

The No. 32 Korthoff Preston Motorsports No. 32 Mercedes-AMG GT3 of Mike Skeen, Mikael Grenier and Kenton Koch matched Winward’s pace in the first half of Sahlen’s Six Hours. The reigning GTD Michelin Endurance Cup Champions, Korthoff won the opening segment on Sunday to join

Winward in a first-place tie in the race's IMEC GTD standings with each team earning seven points.

The No. 32 led 41 laps in the first half of the race but what looked to be a challenge to the finish for the race win was derailed as the team was trapped on course with low fuel during a caution period. The No. 32 was brought in for emergency service only to be assessed a drive-through penalty for an infraction during the related pit stop sequence. The team had the pace to recover from the setback, but the sketchy and race-slowng wet conditions never provided the No. 32 team and drivers a realistic chance to fight their way back into winning contention. By the checkered flag, the No. 32 team and drivers admirably worked their way back to a lead-lap finish in 11th place, just 38 seconds behind the winners.

The No. 80 Lone Star Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3, which contests the five-race Michelin Endurance Cup this season with team drivers Salih Yoluç, Rui Andrade and Scott Andrews, also showed strong pace at The Glen. The team survived the rainy conditions and usual endurance race scrapes and skirmishes to finish the race on the lead lap.

Next up for Mercedes-AMG Motorsport Customer Racing teams in IMSA competition is a full weekend event at Canadian Tire Motorsport Park, July 12 – 14.

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

“It feels amazing. It’s redemption for us. I have to say, we ran the same strategy we did in 2022 with three double stints. I was pretty nervous at the end. We could see the rain coming. I was just praying we weren’t going to make the same mistakes we did two years ago but we were ready this time. It’s good to get redemption. It’s an amazing job by the team. I mean, it’s just a testament to the group of people we put together. The drivers kind of just did their jobs today. We didn’t run the car off track. It’s just a testament to the group of people we’ve put together.”

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

“I think it was a very chaotic race, as you definitely saw a lot of mixed weather conditions. Very heavy rain coming down at times. Sometimes just a bit of drizzle, which made some guys take rain tires. For the most

part of the race, I'd say we were always on the right tires at the right time. To be honest, we were a bit lucky with the red flag coming out. Just a roll of the dice that we were fueled up to get to the end, which gave us the restarting position in the front with some GTD Pro cars behind me as well. After that it was keeping the cars behind. I can't thank the other guys enough as well. The team, Russell and Indy all have done an amazing job with very difficult conditions."

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

"Yeah, the guys did a good strategy call. We stayed the whole race on slick tires, which is pretty funny if you look to the weather we had in this race! We were a bit lucky at the end. Really happy to win again in IMSA at The Glen. I think it's lovely. Hopefully we can continue this streak. Already looking forward to the next race."

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