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Mercedes-AMG Motorsport Customer Racing Team Winward Racing
Extends IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship Points Lead with
Third Win of the Season Sunday at WeatherTech Raceway Laguna Seca

Press Information

May 13, 2024

Winward Racing, Ward and Ellis Secure Third IMSA WeatherTech GT Daytona Race Victory in Year's First Four Races with Late Pass for the Win Sunday at WeatherTech Raceway Laguna Seca

MONTEREY, California – Philip Ellis capitalized on the race leader's late mistake with five minutes remaining to pull off a winning pass that secured the third IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship GT Daytona (GTD) victory of the season for the No. 57 Winward Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3 team Sunday at WeatherTech Raceway Laguna Seca. Ellis, co-driver Russell Ward and the No. 57 team secured the three wins in the span of the year's first four races and leave Laguna Seca a season-high 213 points ahead of the second-place competitors, 1,367 – 1,154, in the GTD driver championship standings. Winward's GTD team championship margin is even larger with a 308-point advantage in first, 1,367 – 1,059, while Sunday's success also boosts Mercedes-AMG's points lead in the GTD manufacturer championship standings to a season-high 249 points, 1,457 – 1,208.

Winward's previous victories were controlled and convincing wins in the season-opening Rolex 24 At Daytona in January and March's 12 Hours of Sebring, but Sunday saw the Winward team on a different path to victory lane. Starting driver Ward qualified third and joined Ellis in rarely falling out of the top three throughout the two-hour and 40-minute race, but the No. 57 wasn't the race pacesetter it was in sweeping the "36 Hours of Florida" at Daytona and Sebring.

Winward led one lap mid-race as the GTD field filed through pit stops, but the only true race laps up front were the final five circuits after the race leader momentarily tangled with a GTP competitor in the infield section of the 2.238-mile Monterey circuit. Ellis pounced on the opportunity and

crossed the finish line with a 3.458-second margin of victory to seal a win that was the result of great pit work, race strategy and Winward's renewed commitment to avoid mistakes this season.

Winward's victory highlighted a solid weekend for Mercedes-AMG Motorsport Customer Racing competitors at Laguna Seca. The No. 32 Korthoff Preston Motorsports entry of Mike Skeen and Mikael Grenier made it a pair of Mercedes-AMG GT3s in the GTD top four with a fourth place showing.

The result followed the No. 32 team's season-best third place finish last month at the Grand Prix of Long Beach, and Korthoff Preston and its drivers wrapped up this year's two race California stretch with a pair of strong results and a renewed GTD championship campaign.

Skeen and Grenier have cracked the top five in the GTD driver championship standings with 1,033 points while the No. 32 ranks third with the same number of points in the GTD team championship.

Winward Racing also hit the podium in Saturday's two-hour Michelin Pilot Challenge race with Russell Ward's father Bryce Ward finishing third in the top-tier Grand Sport (GS) class with co-driver Daniel Morad in the No. 57 Winward Racing Mercedes-AMG GT4.

Opening driver Ward survived the frantic rush into Turn 1 at the race start to move into the top-10 in his opening-hour stint at the wheel. Morad took over for the final run to the finish, and after a well-executed pit stop by the Winward crew, rejoined the race just out of the top five.

From there, Morad turned in another charge to the front, passing some of the other top drivers in the series and moving to third with just eight laps to go. Time ran out before Morad could track down the top two, but the podium showing was the team's second victory lane appearance this season after securing runner-up honors in the season-opening race at Daytona.

Ward, Morad and the No. 57 jumped from 11th to sixth in the GS driver and team championship standings, leaving Laguna Seca just 120 points out of first place with seven races remaining on the 2024 schedule.

Mercedes-AMG Motorsport customer teams in the WeatherTech GTD championship compete next in the Sahlen's Six Hours of The Glen, June 21 – 23, at Watkins Glen International in New York State. Competitors in Pilot Challenge are next in action as the headliner at Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course, June 7 – 9, in the year's second and final four-hour race. Daytona was the year's first four-hour contest.

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

"It's really awesome momentum from the group. This morning before the recon laps we found a technical issue under the hood, and it was all hands-on deck, scrambling to change a part and pulling some major parts to get to it. We made it with a minute to spare, so another really awesome job by the guys to get that done right before the race. Really, just an amazing job by the team. The team is in really high spirits right now, we are going to keep that momentum going, keep everybody excited to be coming into work every day. We want to keep the streak going, the streak of finishes – not necessarily wins – but those are incredible, and we know we have a car that can win at every race track."

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

"We were able to test at Laguna after Long Beach, so I would say we were sorted out a bit better than some of the other teams, but the conditions this weekend were so different that it was not like it was any huge benefit. The tire degradation on the old pavement that we thought would go away on the new surface came back, so we stuck with what we know, executed at our best and had other guys make mistakes for us. Team spirits are high, and that is the most important thing. If they don't give us a good car and great pit stops, Russell and I can't do a thing. Honestly, they make it easy for us to look good."

Mike Skeen, Driver – No. 32 Korthoff Preston Motorsports

Mercedes-AMG GT3: "I think Laguna Seca was pretty good to us. We didn't have a chance to test there ahead of time, and it was a little bit tricky finding what we needed in two practice sessions to kind of catch up to everybody else. We were pretty happy with where we ended up with the car, it was a super tight qualifying session, and we were right there as far as pace. I had a nice shift, getting by a couple of guys and moving us up into a podium position in the first stint. Then Mik did a good job and it looked for awhile like we might secure a podium

position, but it was still a good points day. We moved up in the championship with the fourth place and I think overall we can be pretty happy.”

Bryce Ward, Driver – No. 57 Winward Racing Mercedes-AMG GT4:

“Russell and Philip gave us some really good pointers on what to do and what not to do after they tested here, so right out of the box the car was really quick. The engineers really nailed it, it was fantastic and our Mercedes-AMG GT4 was great. I saw a really great opening on the outside of Turn 1 at the start, but I didn’t figure there would be so many marbles and gravel there. I lost a bunch of places but then got my head in the game, got a rhythm going, made a couple of great passes and turned it over to Daniel. I am just so excited, it was such a great race, I am on top of the world. IMSA has done a great job this year in not over-managing the competition and performance to let us all just race on track and the competition has been great. Everybody seems to have an opportunity to win. WeatherTech Raceway Laguna Seca also did a really good job getting the new pavement down. Everybody really, really enjoyed it, including us, so let’s give them a tip of the cap. It’s good to be out of Laguna Seca with a podium and looking forward. Onward and upward!”

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