



AMG
MOTORSPORT

Mercedes-AMG Motorsport Customer Racing Teams Finish a Perfect Three-for-Three in Triple Sweep of this Weekend's IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship and IMSA Pilot Challenge Races at Indianapolis Motor Speedway

Press Information

Mercedes-AMG Motorsport Customer Racing Teams Sweep IMSA Battle on The Bricks Race Weekend at Indianapolis Motor Speedway

September 18, 2023

INDIANAPOLIS – Filling the spotlight on the grandest stage in American motorsports, Mercedes-AMG Motorsport Customer Racing teams WeatherTech Racing/Proton Competition and Winward Racing combined for a perfect triple sweep of the IMSA Battle on the Bricks race weekend at Indianapolis Motor Speedway (IMS). The No. 79 WeatherTech Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3 of Jules Gounon and Daniel Juncadella secured a convincing victory in the GT Daytona (GTD) Pro category in Sunday's IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship feature event while the No. 57 Winward Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3 of Russell Ward and Philip Ellis broke through for their first GTD victory of the year in the same two-hour and 40-minute race. Sunday's double victory followed a win in Saturday's four-hour Indianapolis Motor Speedway 240 IMSA Michelin Pilot Challenge race by Bryce Ward and Daniel Morad in the No. 57 Winward Racing Mercedes-AMG GT4.

The Indy wins were the first time Mercedes-AMG Motorsport teams combined for three victories on an IMSA weekend since Road America last year, but that event did not include a GTD Pro entry. The Battle on the Bricks triumph is the first time Mercedes-AMG GT3 teams locked out both the GTD Pro and GTD victories on an IMSA race weekend and the Mercedes-AMG GT4 Pilot Challenge (GS) race win adds to the milestone achievement.

The Brickyard triple sweep also continues a recent run of success on the IMS road course that began last October with a win in the Intercontinental GT Challenge Indianapolis 8 Hour by Mercedes-AMG Team Craft-Bamboo

Racing. Juncadella and Morad co-drove with Rafael Marciello in that championship-clinching victory.

On Sunday, WeatherTech led the race three different times for a race-high 70 laps, including closing driver Juncadella's final 22 laps at the front of the field. The No. 79 took the checkered flag with a 4.394-second margin of victory for the team's third GTD Pro victory of the year following wins earlier in 2023 in the season-opening Rolex 24 At Daytona and last May at WeatherTech Raceway Laguna Seca.

Winward's Sunday victory was the first for a Mercedes-AMG GT3 in the GTD class this season and followed the team's first podium showing of the year one race ago at VIRginia International Raceway (VIR).

Similar to the VIR win, starting driver Russell Ward and race finisher Ellis steadily moved up the running order throughout Sunday's race, but this time a victory appeared in reach. Ellis took the GTD lead for the first time on the 88th of the 104 laps the GTD classes completed, only to be aggressively moved out of the top spot a few laps later.

Undeterred, Ellis muscled passed the competitor the same way he was passed five laps earlier and went on to cross the finish line with a 1.268 second margin of victory for Winward's first GTD victory since last year at VIR.

Winward's overall and GS win in Saturday's four-hour race, which ran into the night after a 4:30 p.m. EDT green flag, also came down to a frenzied fight to the finish. After starting driver Bryce Ward – Russell Ward's father – survived a bump-and-run spin on the first lap of the race, Morad took over for the fight to the finish.

Morad began a run through the field and took the lead near the halfway point of the race in the No. 57 for the first of five different tours up front. Bolstered by perfect pit stops by the Winward crew, Morad was in the lead of the race heading into the final hour only to have a string of yellow flag caution periods shake things up and set the stage for a thrilling finish.

Morad retook the lead on a restart with 40 minutes to go and battled, frequently side-by-side, with a competitor on another fuel strategy in the

race's final 30 minutes. Morad grabbed the lead for the fifth and final time with less than five minutes remaining and crossed the finish line for the win a scant 0.566 of a second ahead of a fast-closing Scott Andrews in the No. 27 Lone Star Racing/Bluff City Racing Mercedes-AMG GT4.

Taking over from starting driver Anton Dias Perera, Andrews challenged in the lead pack throughout the final half of the race and stepped up at the end as Morad's final threat after the competitor on the different fuel strategy pitted on the next-to-last lap for a splash of fuel. Andrews never got close enough to make a move on Morad but joined Perera and the Lone Star team in securing their best race result of the season. The one-two finish was also the first of the season for the Mercedes-AMG GT4 in IMSA competition.

The top-two result helped Mercedes-AMG build its Pilot Challenge GS manufacturer championship lead with only next month's season-ending race at Petit Le Mans at Michelin Raceway Road Atlanta on the schedule.

Coming into Indianapolis with a 10-point lead, Mercedes-AMG now heads to the finale with a 40-point advantage over the nearest competitor, 2,770 – 2,730.

The No. 72 Murillo Racing Mercedes-AMG GT4 team, and drivers Christian Szymczak and Ken Murillo, remain in contention for the GS team and driver championship ahead of Road Atlanta, but a challenging race Saturday dropped them to third in the point standings. The No. 72 team finished 13th at Indy and trails the new championship leaders by 70 points and the second-place competitors by 10 points.

Following their season-best GS finish Saturday, Lone Star and drivers Perera and Andrews made their WeatherTech Championship debut as a team Sunday in the No. 15 Lone Star Racing/Bluff City Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3.

Rebounding from a pair of early spins, the Lone Star team and drivers met their pre-race goal of finishing in their GTD debut with Andrews bringing the No. 15 across the finish line in 15th place, just one lap behind the front runners.

The season-ending Petit Le Mans weekend at Michelin Raceway Road Atlanta, October 11 – 14, features the IMSA Michelin Pilot Challenge finale on Friday and the 10-hour IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship race closing out the 2023 season on Saturday.

Daniel Juncadella, Driver – No. 79 WeatherTech Racing/Proton

Competition Mercedes-AMG GT3: “The WeatherTech Mercedes-AMG GT3 was an absolute rocket ship today. We benefitted from mistakes by others, kept the race clean, had good pit stops and were able to control the race to the end. It is nice to win in Indy again, I won the 8 Hour race here last year, so this is a good track for me and for the Mercedes-AMG GT3. The Indy circuit suits our car. The layout is good, and when that happens you need to capitalize on that and take wins. Jules had a good first stint and led the race after a good P2 qualifying run. It’s a good win for the WeatherTech Racing/Proton team and good momentum going into Petit Le Mans next month.”

Jules Gounon, Driver – No. 79 WeatherTech Racing/Proton

Competition Mercedes-AMG GT3: “I think the WeatherTech Mercedes-AMG GT3 was amazing today. Our engineer won here with Dani last year, so we know what the car wants for this circuit, so that was an advantage for us this weekend. I was on pole here last year, so that experience helped as well. I am really looking forward to Petit Le Mans, I have never raced there before. We lead the Endurance Cup, and I am looking forward to going there for the last race of the season and see if we can win it.”

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

“It just feels incredible. We’ve been fighting so hard this season, and it’s just never come our way, so this is the best race out of any for it to come around. It was a new experience for everybody, and we came out on top. Of all the IMSA races I’ve done, this is one of the most difficult. There’s not a lot of overtaking opportunities, and you could just smell the desperation of those Prototypes as you were driving and the moves they were making. I would say this is one of the most difficult wins we’ve had, but it is just a good job by everybody to get it done. It feels amazing. The true test of your character is how you do when you’re down and how you bounce back. Today we showed we’re one of the best and we can do that, so it just feels amazing. We’re going to go home with our heads held high.”

Philip Ellis, Driver – No. 57 Winward Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3: “It was a really, really good race but a tough race. A lot of traffic, and like Russell said, there were a lot of desperate moves by some of the Prototypes so there was always a high risk of getting taken out or having contact. From that perspective, we had a good race. We kept it clean for the most part, but a competitor tried to pass me on the grass, which is quite risky. Luckily our car wasn’t too badly damaged, and in the end, I just gave back what he dished out.”

Bryce Ward, Driver – No. 57 Winward Racing Mercedes-AMG GT4: “Honestly, I’m still in a little bit of disbelief. It hasn’t sunk in, how important the track is, how important the events are. To get two wins, one on Saturday and one on Sunday, is absolutely amazing. We were racing against some of the best cars in the world, guys from the top levels who are just top notch. But we put our mark on IMSA, and I hope to be doing this with Mercedes-AMG for many, many years to come. I’m truly proud of the team, they did a magnificent job, they worked so hard. There were no mistakes. We had such great cars. I did say the last time we got the podium a race ago at VIR that this was the beginning of the 2024 season for us. And truly, this is our first race of 2024, even though it isn’t, but we’re really focusing on that now. Let’s get everything together, and when Daytona comes around, I promise you we’ll be working for that top step again.”

Daniel Morad, Driver – No. 57 Winward Racing Mercedes-AMG GT4: “First of all, Bryce had his best qualifying performance so far and we’re going to continue to improve and improve and improve. The work Bryce is putting in is so appreciated across the entire team, and I really appreciate it because we were struggling, but we worked hard, and this is the result of how much hard work we put in together. We don’t just show up to the track. We’re driving in the simulator and putting in long hours to get better, and it has us in a prime spot. That last hour on Saturday was one of the hardest hours of racing in my entire career. Battling and having to hit a very, very extreme fuel number while keeping cars behind me was so overwhelming. I can’t even begin to describe what was going through my head, trying to be precise, hit the marks, not go wide and pick up marbles. It was just an insane race. It feels like I went through, literally, like a battle for my life. The release on the in lap was insane. I actually cried. I’m not even going to lie. And I was screaming in helmet, which is why my

voice is not here anymore. The Windward guys gave us a beautiful car. And the Mercedes-AMG GT4 platform is as strong as ever and I'm looking forward to Road Atlanta."

Anton Dias Perera, Driver – No. 15 Lone Star Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3; No. 27 Lone Star Racing Mercedes-AMG GT4: "In GT4, a win was a long time coming. The team has been working well together so that was good. It was a brand-new track for me, I've never been here, which is always challenging, especially in a new car on Sunday. We checked all the boxes. I spent most of my time on how to manage traffic and keep the car clean, but it was definitely a baptism by fire. It was frenzied and fast paced but it was really good, and for the team as well. Lots of positives and a lot of things to work on too."

Scott Andrews, Driver – No. 15 Lone Star Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3; No. 27 Lone Star Racing Mercedes-AMG GT4: "It was a successful weekend. We walked away with a GS trophy, which had definitely been a long time coming for this particular operation. I'm glad to finally get the monkey off our backs, so to speak. Sunday's race was about learning. The Mercedes-AMG GT3 program is new and I'm proud to be a part of it. We'll definitely be able to use this as a building block and continue moving forward."

Christian Szymczak, Driver – No. 72 Murillo Racing Mercedes-AMG GT4: "I don't know if we changed our thinking that much. We just had some bad luck with the strategy the last few races. We need to iron out some issues just so we can get back to where we were, just so we can have the weapon that we need to fight for wins. That's what we need to get back to. We were better in that department before, but now we're kind of not, so I see that as a big source of the issue."

Kenny Murillo, Driver – No. 72 Murillo Racing Mercedes-AMG GT4: "We'll do like any professional sports team and look at all of our data, not just from the race, but practice sessions too, and we will come away stronger. It's going to take a full team effort, and the Murillo Racing crew does a really good job of rebounding on these kinds of things, so we're going to come back real strong. We're going to fight for this championship. It's been ours all year and we're going to make sure it's ours at the end."

Contacts:

Adam Saal Tel.: +1 321-890-2848

saalgoodpr@gmail.com

Jochen Übler Tel.: +49 (0) 7144 302-92 470

jochen.uebler@mercedes-benz.com

Andrew Brudnicki Tel.: +1 470-409-8048

andrew.brudnicki@mbusa.com

Further information from Mercedes-Benz, Mercedes-AMG and Mercedes-Benz USA is available on the Internet: media.mercedes-benz.com, www.mercedes-benz.com and www.mbusa.com.

For more information on Mercedes-AMG Customer Racing, please visit www.mercedes-amg.com/en/vehicles/customer-racing.html.