



Mercedes-AMG GT3 and GT4 Teams Return to Florida for IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship Rolex 24 At Daytona and IMSA Michelin Pilot Challenge Season-Opening Races

Press Information

January 23, 2019

Mercedes-AMG Motorsport Customer Racing Teams Competing This Weekend at Daytona in Opening Races of IMSA's 50th Anniversary Season

DAYTONA BEACH, Florida. Nine Mercedes-AMG Motorsport Customer Racing teams have returned to Daytona International Speedway (DIS) for this weekend's IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship Rolex 24 At Daytona, and IMSA Michelin Pilot Challenge race, the opening events of IMSA's 50th Anniversary Season, January 24 – 27.

The No. 33 Mercedes-AMG Team Riley Motorsports and No. 71 P1 Motorsports Mercedes-AMG GT3 teams will compete in the 57th running of the Rolex 24 At Daytona, North America's premier day-long endurance race, running from 2:35 p.m. EST this Saturday straight through to the checkered flag at 2:35 p.m. EST Sunday.

The 57th Rolex 24 At Daytona will be broadcast live in IMSA's premiere on the NBC Sports Network family of broadcast and online channels. Pre-race coverage and the opening hours of the Rolex 24 air on NBC Sports Network from 2 to 5 p.m. EST this Saturday. Coverage picks up again from 9 p.m. on Saturday to 3 a.m. EST on Sunday, and from 6 a.m. to 3 p.m. EST on Sunday for the race finish. Coverage is available in between those time slots online or through a mobile device via the NBC Sports Network App.

Seven Mercedes-AMG GT4 teams will compete in the IMSA Michelin Pilot Challenge four-hour opening race that is scheduled to start Friday at 12:15 p.m. EST.

The pair of races on the 3.56-mile Daytona road course are the first major events in the year-long celebration of IMSA's 50th Anniversary season.

The No. 33 Mercedes-AMG Team Riley Motorsports entry has finished no lower than fourth in the GT Daytona (GTD) class in the Rolex 24 each of the last two years, including a third-place finish in Mercedes-AMG's IMSA debut race in 2017.

Full-season co-drivers Ben Keating and Jeroen Bleekemolen will be joined at Daytona by first-time team driver Felipe Fraga and returning teammate Luca Stolz, who co-drove the No. 33 last year at Daytona and in the full IMSA North American Endurance Cup (NAEC). The No. 33 team and drivers won the NAEC GTD crown for the second-straight year in 2018. They begin their bid at Daytona for a third-consecutive title this season in the four-race endurance championship that is now known as the Michelin Endurance Cup.

Fraga co-drives with Keating and Bleekemolen in the three Michelin Endurance Cup races following Daytona, after Stolz was elevated to a Gold driver ranking during the off-season.

Second-year Mercedes-AMG Motorsport Customer Racing team P1 Motorsports made its GTD debut in last year's Rolex 24, and is expanding to a full IMSA WeatherTech Championship season in 2019 after a successful NAEC debut in 2018. Team owner and driver JC Perez will co-drive with Mercedes-AMG driver Maximilian "Maxi" Buhk, who returns to the team following a competitive debut in 2018's season-ending Petit Le Mans at Road Atlanta. Co-drivers for the Rolex 24 opener include Fabian Schiller and Dominik Baumann, with the Silver-rated Schiller set for the full Michelin Endurance Cup in the No. 71.

Seven Mercedes-AMG GT4 entries will compete in the IMSA Michelin Pilot Challenge race. Among these entries are reigning team and driver champions TeamTGM and co-drivers Hugh Plumb and Owner Trinkler. A strong second half of the 2018 season saw Plumb, Trinkler and TeamTGM clinch their first Grand Sports (GS) class title.

This championship-winning effort returns unchanged for 2019, with Plumb and Trinkler back at the wheel of the No. 46 TeamTGM Mercedes-AMG GT4 and team owner/driver Ted Giovanis and Guy Cosmo paired up again in the No. 4 TeamTGM Mercedes-AMG GT4.

Winward Racing/HTP Motorsport and Murrillo Racing are also back in 2019 with their own two-car Mercedes-AMG GT4 IMSA Michelin Pilot Challenge GS teams.

Bryce Ward and Christian Hohenadel co-drive the full season in the No. 57 Winward Racing/HTP Motorsport Mercedes-AMG GT4 while Ward's son, Russell Ward, shares the No. 33 Winward Racing/HTP Motorsport Mercedes-AMG GT4 this year with Indy Dontje.

Longtime co-drivers Jeff Mosing and Eric Foss return for another season in Murillo Racing's No. 56 Mercedes-AMG GT4, while Mosing's brother, Brent Mosing, shares the team's No. 65 Mercedes-AMG GT4 with Tim Probert and Justin Piscitell.

A new for 2019 entry Mercedes-AMG GT4 comes from the same Riley Motorsports team that campaigns the No. 33 Mercedes-AMG GT3. The Riley team has added the No. 35 Riley Motorsports Mercedes-AMG GT4 to its Mercedes-AMG Motorsport Customer Racing program with co-drivers Dylan Murry and Jim Cox. The teammates will get an assist from Bleekemolen in the four-hour Michelin Pilot Challenge opener, with the quick No. 33 Mercedes-AMG GT3 driver set for double duty at Daytona this weekend.

Official on-track IMSA action begins Thursday at DIS with practice for both series, including a nighttime session for IMSA WeatherTech Rolex 24 competitors from 7 to 8:30 p.m. EST. Another Friday highlight is the 15-minute Michelin Pilot Challenge GS qualifying session at 5:45 p.m. EST.

Friday has a final one-hour practice for IMSA WeatherTech Rolex 24 teams at 10 a.m. with the four-hour IMSA Michelin Pilot Challenge race schedule from 12:15 to 4:15 p.m. EST. The Michelin Pilot Challenge Daytona opener will air on the NBC Sports Network on February 6 at 1 p.m. EST.

Saturday's only on-track activity is the start of the 57th Rolex 24 At Daytona that will see the green flag drop on the twice-around-the-clock race at 2:35 p.m. EST.

Ben Keating, Driver – No. 33 Mercedes-AMG Team Riley Motorsports

Mercedes-AMG GT3: "Everybody is a long-shot in a 24-hour race, but I think the Mercedes-AMG GT3 is a really strong package for Daytona this year. We have been extremely consistent over the past several years, and that is what it takes to be there in the end. Most of our competitors have had 'evolutions' in the offseason. This means new parts, and new setups, and more downforce, and hopefully an opportunity for the Mercedes-AMG. We feel good. In the past two years, it has rained in the race and this has been one of our competitive advantages. I hope it rains. With the new Michelin rain tire, I would expect the Mercedes-AMG GT3 to be one of the fastest cars on track in the rain. We are good in the cold, or the wet, or the dry. We are consistent, and this is what wins 24-hour races."

Jeroen Bleekemolen, Driver – No. 33 Mercedes-AMG Team Riley Motorsports

Mercedes-AMG GT3: "With Mercedes-AMG Team Riley and long races, we know we

should always be in contention. They are great at preparing cars and awesome at strategy. We had a good Rolex Roar test a few weeks ago. For the whole team, this is the third season with the Mercedes-AMG GT3 and our sixth season in total together. We know what we have and how to be fast. I feel confident we can be fast in all conditions, and we are as prepared as we can be. The Mercedes-AMG GT3 is very consistent and nice to drive, so that should help a lot. I feel the field will be very close. There are a lot of strong teams and lineups. With the new cars, we will have to wait and see where everyone stands, but it looks like it will be a fantastic fight! It will be my 10th Rolex 24 and I'm really excited to get our IMSA season started with this great event!"

Luca Stolz, Driver – No. 33 Mercedes-AMG Team Riley Motorsports

Mercedes-AMG GT3: "I am really looking forward to the race. I think we have the best driver lineup on a Mercedes-AMG GT3 ever since their debut in Daytona. We all got comfortable with the car during the Rolex Roar two weeks ago, and we made some nice set up progress with the new Michelin rubber. I think with a zero-mistakes race by the team and drivers, the No. 33 has a good shot to finish on the podium. Our biggest advantage is for sure the reliability of the Mercedes-AMG GT3. Other than that, our car is really good on brakes and handles really well in the infield. So far, IMSA seems to have done a really good job with the Balance of Performance (BoP), but you never really know until the race has started."

Fabian Schiller – No. 71 P1 Motorsports Mercedes-AMG GT3: "I believe we have a strong team, with great people, a fantastic driver lineup and a very quick car with the Mercedes-AMG GT3. Anything is possible, and we will definitely aim for victory. We need to keep our heads down, keep working and developing during the practice sessions, and we will be fully prepared for a great result. I don't really care what the conditions will be. We can't change the weather, so I don't think too much about it and just take what comes. The Mercedes-AMG GT3 is great in every condition and, as well, I like to drive in the rain. I see the Mercedes-AMG GT3 as the perfect endurance car. It is great over the distance, keeping the tires alive as good as possible. Our strength will be the drivability in the infield of the track."

Hugh Plumb – No. 46 TeamTGM Mercedes-AMG GT4: "After the Roar test we learned a lot and we are feeling confident heading into the race weekend. It was important for us to get a good handle on the new Michelin Tires, and TeamTGM was able to do that. We have a strong car and a strong line up, and with the leadership of Ted Giovanis we can really have a good run at Daytona."

Owen Trinkler – No. 46 TeamTGM Mercedes-AMG GT4: “After the Roar test we are feeling pretty confident for the race. We got a lot of good race runs in during the Roar, which helped us know what to expect for the longer stints. The Michelins have been good to us so far, but the race will definitely be the true test to see how everyone stacks up. I've just been focusing forward. It's a new year and the same goal, and I know TGM is as prepared as ever to get the job done this weekend.”

Dylan Murry – No. 35 Riley Motorsports Mercedes-AMG GT4: “I’m looking forward to my first race in a Mercedes-AMG GT4. I’m really glad that Jeroen will be one of our co-drivers. He knows these cars inside and out, and I think it will be really good for me to learn all of the ‘little things’ about the car from him in my first race. It will help our race performance too because it cuts the drive time down. The finishing driver will be fresher at the end to make good clean passes. We should be a strong force going into Daytona. We’ve already shown our speed at the Roar, and Riley Motorsports went back to the shop and did a great job on the preparation.”

Contacts:

Jochen Übler Tel.: +49 (0) 7144 302-92 470 jochen.uebler@daimler.com

Baron Smith Tel.: +1 770-705-3537 baron.smith@mbusa.com

Adam Saal Tel.: +1 321-890-2848 saalgoodpr@gmail.com

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

For more information on AMG Customer Sports, please visit www.mercedes-amg.com/customerracing.