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Two Mercedes-AMG Motorsport Customer Racing Teams in the Top-Eight in Hot and Hectic Sahlen's Six Hours of The Glen Sunday at Watkins Glen International

Mercedes-AMG Team Riley Keeps NAEC GTD Points Lead With Fifth-Place Finish in IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship Sahlen's Six Hours of The Glen

Press Information

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WATKINS GLEN, NY. Mercedes-AMG Team Riley Motorsports rebounded from a pair of drive-through penalties to finish fifth Sunday in the Sahlen's Six Hours of The Glen and maintain its lead in the Tequila Patron North American Endurance Cup (NAEC) with the No. 33 Mercedes-AMG GT3 and team drivers Ben Keating, Jeroen Bleekemolen and Luca Stolz.

Round 5 of 11 GT Daytona (GTD) races on the 2018 IMSA WeatherTech Championship schedule, the Sahlen's Six Hours of The Glen was also Round 3 of 2018's four-race NAEC.

The No. 33 team and drivers scored seven total NAEC points in Sunday's race – including five first-place points for leading at half distance – and left The Glen with a two-point lead over the nearest competitor, 31 – 29.

The race was run in high humidity and nearly 100-degree afternoon temperatures that seemed to take less of a toll on the big-bore V8 engine in the No. 33 Mercedes-AMG GT3 than most of its competition.

After the first penalty in hour four, assessed for unintentionally accelerating the drive wheels while the car was raised on its jack stands during a pit stop, the No. 33 team and drivers took advantage of the increasingly hot temperatures to get back into contention.

Bleekemolen was running second early in the race's final hour when he dashed into the pits for what was supposed to be the team's final stop. A miscommunication, unfortunately, saw Bleekemolen leave the pits early and with some of the No. 33 team's refueling equipment and hose still attached to the car. The ensuing penalty dropped the No. 33 to ninth but the team's solid pace in the high-afternoon heat and

well-timed yellow flags allowed Bleekemolen to charge back to the top five by the finish.

The No. 75 SunEnergy1 Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3 of Kenny Habul, Thomas Jaeger and Mikael Grenier finished eighth on Sunday, coming back from a lap-down deficit at mid-race for a lead-lap finish.

Focusing on the NAEC this year in its GTD debut season, P1 Motorsports returned to IMSA WeatherTech Championship competition at The Glen with its No. 71 P1 Motorsports Mercedes-AMG GT3. Team owner and driver Juan “JC” Perez and Loris Spinelli were joined in the No. 71 by Daniel Morad, who was a last-minute replacement for scheduled driver Adam Christodoulou who encountered a travel issue that prevented him from making it to Watkins Glen from Europe.

The No. 71 team showed encouraging pace in practice and qualifying only to encounter a left-front suspension issue in the race’s second hour. The team returned to the race several laps down and later decided to retire from the race when the problem returned in hour four.

Next up for Mercedes-AMG Motorsport Customer Racing teams and the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship is GTD Round 6 next weekend, July 6 – 8, at Canadian Tire Motorsport Park in Ontario, Canada.

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

Mercedes-AMG GT3: “We had a car that could win today. It really came down to the temperature I believe. All weekend, up until the end of the race, we were not as fast as the other cars. Even early in the race I didn’t have enough top-speed to pass other cars, but as the temperatures got high I think our big displacement engine in the Mercedes-AMG GT3 kind of came through. Everybody was losing power, but we seemed to lose less than others. We got two penalties, both drive-throughs, and the only reason we got back to fifth was our pace in the heat and some well-timed yellows. We had a good car for overtaking late in the race in the heat, but you can’t have two penalties. That cost us a race we felt we should have won today.”

Thomas Jaeger, Mercedes-AMG Motorsport Customer Racing Program

Coordinator and Driver – No. 75 SunEnergy1 Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3: “We were a little bit on the wrong strategy. That’s why we went one lap down but we gained it back in the end. Performance wise we were maybe in a position to finish in the top-five, but due to being one lap down for a long time, it was just not possible.

We struggled in practice but towards the race our Mercedes-AMG GT3 just got better and better. We understand the tire more, there is an overall improvement, but the competition is getting better as well. In the end, it could have been a better weekend for us, but both the No. 75 and No. 33 were very reliable, even with a quite heavy car and increased ride height that hurt us here a lot. It was not so easy to drive but at least we finished the race.”

Daniel Morad, Driver – No. 71 P1 Motorsports Mercedes-AMG GT3: “I was really excited to get the phone call Wednesday around 8:30 p.m. to drive for P1 Motorsports. I am thankful for the opportunity and for P1 Motorsports to think about me first to replace Adam Christodoulou, who had a tough situation. It was my first time with team and it was nice to work with them to help overcome some of the problems they had in the past. We were looking good for today. Through practice we were working on race setup, and I was looking forward to jumping in the car today. We just had a little bad luck with an issue on the left front but hopefully we can do this again sometime soon.”

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