



Press Information
August 24, 2026

Winward Racing and Mercedes-AMG Retake IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar GT Daytona Championship Leads with Third-Straight Victory at the Michelin GT Challenge at VIR

Mercedes-AMG Motorsport Customer Racing Team Winward Racing and Mercedes-AMG Delivered a Perfect Performance in the Second Half of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship Season with Their Third Consecutive GT Daytona (GTD) Class Victory Sunday in the Michelin GT Challenge at VIRginia International Raceway (VIR). The Triple Sweep has Seen Co-Drivers Russell Ward and Philip Ellis and the No. 57 Winward Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3 Team Erase a Nearly 300-Point Gap to the Former Class Leaders at the Onset of this Summer's Stretch of Races. With the Season's Two Remaining Rounds Set for Indianapolis Motor Speedway (IMS) and Michelin Raceway Road Atlanta in September and October, the No. 57 Team and Drivers Leave VIR with a 36-Point Advantage Over the Nearest Challengers, 2,373 – 2,337, in the GTD Team and Driver Point Standings. Mercedes-AMG is atop the GTD Manufacturer Championship Battle by 20 Points, 2,634 – 2,614, Over the Closest Contenders.

DANVILLE, Virginia – Two-time and reigning IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar GT Daytona (GTD) Champions Winward Racing and Mercedes-AMG retook this year's GTD championship points leads for the first time in more than five months when team drivers Russell Ward and Philip Ellis co-drove the No. 57 Winward Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3 to their third-straight race win Sunday in the IMSA Michelin GT Challenge at VIRginia International Raceway (VIR).

A hard-charging Ellis took the lead for the first and only time late in Sunday's two-hour and 40-minute race and held the position to the checkered flag. The win followed victories in July at Canadian Tire Motorsport Park and earlier this month at Road America to move the second half of the 10-race IMSA GTD season off to a perfect start. Including a victory in the season-opening Rolex 24 At Daytona, the Winward team and drivers have now won four of the year's first eight races on the 10-event schedule.

The four-race stretch that followed the Daytona win, however, was plagued by bad luck that saw Winward and Mercedes-AMG lose a championship lead they held going into March's 12 Hours of Sebring and drop down in the point standings.

Gaining a remarkable 183 points after Road America alone, Ward, Ellis and the No. 57 came to VIR 24 points out of first place in the GTD standings. They leave the 3.27-mile Southern Virginia circuit with a 36-point lead over the nearest challengers, 2373 – 2337, in the GTD team and driver point standings. Mercedes-AMG now tops the GTD manufacturer championship battle by 20 points, 2,634 – 2,614, over the closest contenders.

This weekend's points haul for Winward started in Saturday's qualifying session when Ward earned a valuable 30 markers for clocking in third fastest and ahead of all championship rivals. The gap to the leader was narrowed to 14 points at the start of today's race and grew to the 36-point lead advantage at the checkered flag.

Ward raced among the leaders throughout his 50-minute plus race-opening driving shift and even led a GTD lap before handing off to Ellis, who steadily guided the No. 57 up the GTD running order after taking the wheel. A key move that ultimately set up the winning pass was a pit stop by the Winward Racing team when Ellis took the No. 57 to the pits for the second and final time with just under an hour to go. He steadily closed on the leaders and sealed the winning move when the competitor he was attempting to pass for the lead of both the race and the championship moved Ellis and the No. 57 off course in the race's closing minutes. Ellis pulled the lead pass off a few corners later despite the rough treatment, which ultimately saw the offending challenger assessed a drive-through penalty.

Sunday's Mercedes-AMG GT3 victory added to a great amount of success for Mercedes-AMG Motorsport Customer Racing teams at VIR. In addition to the second straight and third career win in a Mercedes-AMG GT3 for Winward Racing (2026, 2025 and 2022), the victory was the fifth career win for the car in the Michelin GT race. Mercedes-AMG GT3 teams also drove to victories at VIR in 2019 and 2024, which also gives the car GTD wins in four of the last five Michelin GT Challenge races run since 2022.

Next up for Mercedes-AMG Motorsport Customer Racing teams in IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship and IMSA Pilot Challenge competition is the Battle on the Bricks race weekend at Indianapolis Motor Speedway (IMS), September 18 – 20.

"This is a great result for us. It just takes some luck and some clean racing. This is just a swing in luck.

Racing is tough. I mean, everyone wants to win, and at the end of the day the teams that tend to be successful are the ones that just really race the track. Sometimes you get overtaken, sometimes you do the overtaking. It is just nice to see the IMSA Officials stand up for what we were told in the drivers' briefing. If you don't leave racing room, if you push somebody off, you're going to get a penalty. There's still two races to go, and everyone is really, really tight in the points. The difference between first and second is about 30 points and it's 20 points between second and third. That really means everybody is between two and three positions to be honest. There is still a lot of fight left. You never know what can happen in the next two races."

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

"To be honest, we didn't really think that we could catch the leader. I tried to hunt him down and make use of the traffic in front of him. If he didn't have a GTD Pro car in front of him holding him up a bit, I'm still not sure how it would have turned out. We just never had that run off the corner to make like a serious attempt to overtake him. So, I was just waiting a long time. I had one chance going into Turn 3, but overcooked it myself, and I think he just did the same thing when I was on the outside. It is a bit unfortunate that it ended like that. I would have rather had a clean overtake, a clean race without penalties involved, but that's unfortunately the game sometimes. I don't think it was intentional by any means. He was just late on the brakes, and we were all struggling with tire degradation. It was a super-hot race."

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

Contacts:

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

Andrew Brudnicki, +1 470-409-8048, andrew.brudnicki@mbusa.com