



Press Information

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Mercedes-AMG Kicks Off its IMSA Title Defense Mission at the Rolex 24 At Daytona with a GTD Victory and a GTD Pro Double Podium Finish

Winward Racing Secures Third Rolex 24 At Daytona Race Win in Six Years in the No. 57 Winward Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3

The Mercedes-AMG GT3 once again proved its competitiveness with strong results by Mercedes-AMG Motorsport Customer Racing teams at this weekend's 64th Rolex 24 At Daytona at Daytona International Speedway: First and Sixth place in the GT Daytona (GTD) class and Second, Third and 11th place in the GTD Pro category. A hard-fought GTD victory was secured by two-time and reigning IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar GTD Champions Russell Ward, Philip Ellis and endurance race co-drivers Indy Dontje and Lucas Auer in the No. 57 Winward Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3.

The GTD Pro double podium included the No. 75 SunEnergy1 75 Express Mercedes-AMG GT3 team with Kenny Habul, Chaz Mostert, Will Power and Maro Engel in second and the debuting No. 48 Winward Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3 of Scott Noble, Jason Hart, Maxime Martin and Luca Stolz in third place. It was the first double podium showing at the Rolex 24 for Mercedes-AMG Motorsport Customer Racing teams since Winward and 75 Express secured a one-two finish in GTD in 2021.

With Ellis starting the race, the No. 57 moved into the early GTD lead in the race's opening hour to lead a strong performance by all five competing Mercedes-AMG GT3 entries. The No. 80 Lone Star Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3 of Scott Andrews, Lin Hohenius, James Roe Jr. and Ralf Aron joined Winward in GTD while the No. 69 Bartone Bros. Racing with Team GetSpeed Mercedes-AMG GT3 team of Anthony Bartone, Fabian Schiller, Jules Gounon and Maximilian Götz joined 75 Express and Winward in the GTD Pro division.

As night fell, thick fog descended on the Daytona International Speedway. Due to increasingly poor visibility, the race continued behind the safety car just before Midnight and continued to circulate under the yellow flag for six hours and 33 minutes – the longest full-course caution period in the history of the Rolex 24. The previous record was three hours and 58 minutes in 1989.

After the race went back to green flag conditions Sunday morning, the Mercedes-AMG Customer Racing teams continued their strong performances. All five Mercedes-AMG GT3s continued to hold their own within the leaders in their classes during this phase.

With just under four hours remaining until the end of the race, the No. 69 Bartone/GetSpeed entry dropped from winning contention after losing several laps resolving an electronics issue.

In the dramatic final hours, the lead in the two GTD classes changed hands several times due to different fuel and pit stop strategies. Ellis took the lead in the GTD field in his final stint and successfully fended off all

challengers until he crossed the finish line with a 1.367-second margin of victory. The winning Winward entry led the race eight different times for a total of 69 laps.

Lone Star finished sixth in GTD, the team's best result to date as it starts its third season of IMSA Michelin Endurance Cup GTD competition at the Rolex 24. The team's previous best Rolex 24 finish was eighth in its 2024 debut in the race.

The victory was Winward's third Rolex 24 triumph since winning in its GTD debut in 2021. The No. 57 team and drivers also won the Rolex 24 in 2024.

Including 32 points earned by Ellis and the No. 57 team by qualifying second for the Rolex 24 At Daytona, the No. 57 Winward Racing team and drivers leave the season-opening race already with a comfortable 46-point GTD championship lead over the nearest challengers, 382 - 336. The No. 57 team and drivers earned 350 points for the Rolex 24 race win. Mercedes-AMG has in turn built an early 27-point lead in the GTD manufacturer standings, 382 - 355, over the nearest challenger.

Winward also left IMSA's season-opening races at Daytona as the only team to secure a podium finish in every series and class in which it competed. In addition to the GTD win and GT Pro P3, the No. 57 Winward Racing Mercedes-AMG GT4 of Bryce Ward and Daan Arrow secured third in the Grand Sport (GS) class in Friday's four-hour IMSA Michelin Pilot Challenge race. In his Daytona debut, Arrow pulled off a last lap pass for the final podium finishing position.

The Friday GS race also marked the return of Murillo Racing to IMSA with the newlywed driving duo of Aurora Straus and Kenny Murillo. Murillo Racing is back in partnership with the P1 Motor Club and Straus and Murillo co-drive the No. 24 Murillo Racing P1 Motor Club Mercedes-AMG GT4. The No. 24 showed top-10 pace early in Friday's four-hour race and persevered to a lead-lap finish after rebounding from some typical endurance racing setbacks.

Next up for Mercedes-AMG Motorsport Customer Racing teams in IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship competition is the Mobil 1 Twelve Hours of Sebring, March 18 - 21 at Sebring International Raceway.

"I am simply overwhelmed by the performances of our four teams and all the drivers. Winward Racing with their third victory here at Daytona – incredible. In the GTD Pro class, 75 Express and Winward Racing were rewarded with podium places. But Bartone Bros with GetSpeed and Lone Star Racing also did a great job. We certainly did not have the fastest car over the entire race distance, but we were fast enough at the right time to finish on the podium, which is just great! I am very proud that we got all five cars to the finish line. It was a strong performance all around from all the teams. I can only thank everyone involved."

Stefan Wendl, Head of Mercedes-AMG Motorsport Customer Racing

"When we walked into this weekend, just the atmosphere of the team felt just like 2021 and 2024. So, I just knew that we had a chance. From the moment the race started, you could see the pace in the car. The guys did an incredible job, just keeping it clean. I mean, we went from the back to the front more times than I thought were possible. We had to take two emergency service penalties, endure some bad luck throughout the whole race and really had to fight for this one. The boys earned this in pit lane and on the track and hats off to the entire team and Philip for that final stint. He managed to get by for the lead and stay in front and just drove the wheels off that thing! This race went by as one of the quickest I can remember, but those last few minutes felt like another 24 hours! My heart rate is going to still be coming down in the next week or so!"

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

"I'm super stoked that we came out on top. It was super rough. It changed as well as the race went on. Sometimes other cars had the upper hand when it was a bit colder and then it looked like we got the upper hand when it was a bit warmer towards the end. Of course, the team put us in a great spot as well with good strategy calls, so that was the basis of all of it. And then yeah, I can't thank my teammates enough. They've done an outstanding job this entire week and, in the race, and the team of course gave us a sort of rocketship. Yeah, I couldn't be happier."

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

"Thanks to Mercedes-AMG for an always strong car and strong support. Chaz and Will drove amazingly, and Maro at the end there is what he does. My stints were fast, I am very happy, just a couple seconds off the other. For us, this is a victory. We gave it our all, all that we could do. I am very happy, and now off to Bathurst."

Kenny Habul, Driver – No. 75 SunEnergy1 Racing 75 Express Mercedes-AMG GT3

"There's some seriously good drivers on this team. Honestly, seriously good drivers throughout the field, and it's really cool to drive with the 75 Express team in a Mercedes-AMG. I really enjoyed it, I enjoyed it in Indy last year, and I really want to do more. It's so much fun, and I can't believe this is my first time here at Daytona. I definitely plan to come back. Kenny is so fast. At his age, and for a guy whose day-to-day job is running a huge business and is not in the car very often, his pace is amazing. The last time we shared a podium was 27 years ago in Formula Ford, so it was pretty cool to share one again. The actual racing itself over the last nearly two weeks, it was great to experience that and the level of competition. I expected tough competition, but I like just how much fun the driving was. I really enjoyed it. It's very important at this stage of my career to have fun driving, and I think when you're really competitive, you're having fun. As long as I'm competitive, I'll continue to drive."

Will Power, Driver – No. 75 SunEnergy1 Racing 75 Express Mercedes-AMG GT3

"First of all, a big thank you to Kenny and the entire 75 Express team. Kenny put together this 'Aussie Express', as we nicknamed it, with Chaz and Will, and brought me into the team. It was great fun driving with them. We gave it our all in the race and are very happy with second place. Of course, it was close, but that's how it is sometimes in sport. It was a great race by everyone."

Maro Engel, Driver – No. 75 SunEnergy1 Racing 75 Express Mercedes-AMG GT3

"It's just such an honor to be part of his programs. I mean, I'm obviously a bit of the wing in, you know, like Indianapolis, or whenever he needs me. I'm always on call and I'll always be there for Kenny, and it was just an awesome privilege to be back at the Daytona 24. I haven't been here since 2020, and you always just have to be in it to win it, and we fought all the way to the end. Maro did a super job. Kenny and Will both kept the car safe and had plenty of speed throughout the race too. I'm not going to lie, and there is a bittersweet taste in my mouth after coming up just so short of the win. I hope we can run it again and come back stronger next year. The fog overnight made for some of the toughest stints I've ever done. Your heart rate even gets lower because you are going so slow, have a half empty fuel tank, the fog is heavy, the visibility low and you are in a nice warm car. It makes you want to go night, night! It was pretty tough, but we got through it. We made the big trip over with our young daughter for her first major international race. She's not even two yet, and this is the furthest flight she's done, and it was great. Now we're looking forward to getting home, back to a bit of normality before the Australian 12-hour race kicks off, and then straight back into Supercar."

Chaz Mostert, Driver – No. 75 SunEnergy1 Racing 75 Express Mercedes-AMG GT3

"It's my fifth year of racing and my coach, Jason Hart, searched long and hard to find the right team with the right culture, with the right car, with the right brand. Jason put it all together, and when you have Mercedes-AMG together with Winward Racing, you know you have the right combination. Being a bronze and a

gentleman driver, it is by far the easiest and best race car I've ever driven. I knew that right away in our first test just a couple of months ago. So, for it to all come together and see everybody - how smart they are, how hard they work, how much we train, how much we practice - and we end up on the podium in my first time at Daytona is kind of stupid, crazy fun! It's a life journey for many. I'm 63 years old, and I couldn't be happier with Mercedes-AMG. They are so supportive. I mean, I have never been in those types of meetings before. It is just great to see all of the love and all the caring. They truly care about the car and the client. So here we are, on the podium at Daytona, and thanks to Winward, Mercedes-AMG, my great co-drivers and coach and teammate Jason. I went out in my first run and planned a double stint. It was going so well, I felt great and the car was so easy to drive. I said, 'let's get a triple out of the way to give you guys more options for strategy, and that really worked out in the long run, because we're able to put the two Mercedes-AMG performance drivers, Maxime and Luca in there, and they just tore it up. Jason more than held his own when he was in there too and did the majority of the night and the long caution in the fog, but he had a great first drive in the sun and a great last stint in the sun too."

Scott Noble, Driver - No. 48 Winward Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3

"I want to thank Scott and the Noble family for their commitment and trust in me with their father. Trusting me with their husband and father as we go off and do all of these races. Huge thanks to Mercedes-AMG for the drivers they provided us with on the factory side, and of course, Winward, who made it all happen. All of their crew men and women the incredible effort they put in. We can't thank them enough. We are very appreciative to them for having us, and for them to win a race again here at Daytona, and for us to be on the podium too, it is just unbelievable. I did most of the driving in the fog and the hardest thing was staying awake. I kept wanting to go to sleep, like in a foggy drive from Dallas to Houston or something when you're just trying to stay awake because it's so boring because you don't see much. Plus, race cars are smoother at speed. I dreamed of being in a race car all my life, but I never dreamed of driving in the fog, under caution for over four hours, but I'll take it. We were on the podium in Daytona!"

Jason Hart, Driver - No. 48 Winward Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3

"It's amazing. It's amazing for the team. It's amazing for everyone. I think it's fantastic for Scott, in his first time at Daytona, to be on the GTD Pro podium. Winward took a win in GTD and third in GTD Pro, which is great for them. I think if we could have known this before the race, we would have all signed off on it. It's an amazing result, and now we just have to enjoy it. At the moment, Daytona is not too bad for me! Fifth in GTD Pro last year and a podium in 2026. I have done worse, and this is really quite good with Mercedes-AMG."

Maxime Martin, Driver - No. 48 Winward Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3

"My first race as a Mercedes-AMG Junior Driver was quite nice but challenging. I was sick last week, so it was very physically demanding. Still, it was an amazing experience to put everything together and be part of this race. The night stints especially were a very special experience. Finishing in sixth place is a great result after a very exciting final. I'm really proud of myself, my teammates, and every member of Lone Star Racing."

Lin Hodenius, Driver - No. 80 Lone Star Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3

"Our goal for the race was to have, let's say, a boring race until the last couple of hours. No penalties or major mistakes and that was perfect. The crew didn't get any penalties, and the drivers didn't get any penalties. So, I think everyone did a fantastic job and the car was in great shape for the end of the race. I have to thank my teammates for keeping the car in one piece as well. We had the chance to fight for the finish. We couldn't charge as hard as we wanted for the end, but the winning Winward car wasn't far ahead of me at that point. I'm really happy that I got the chance to be there at the end to fight for it. The team really deserves it, and I'll be cheering them on all year. I think if they keep doing the same things, racing clean and so on, they'll win some races this year."

Ralf Aron, Driver - No. 80 Lone Star Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3

“Our focus was on the race right from the start, and strategically everything went according to plan. The fuel saving and energy management worked well, we received few penalties and were able to maintain our pace.

A big thank you to everyone at Team Bartone Bros with GetSpeed. The cooperation was excellent throughout and everyone gave their all. It makes it all the more bitter that we ultimately fell back due to an electronic problem and were no longer in a position to fight for the class victory. With over three hours under full course yellow, I probably drove the longest stint of my life in this race, and I can say one thing: driving behind the safety car on the oval for that long is definitely more exhausting than driving at full speed.”

Maximilian Götz, Driver – No. 69 Bartone Bros. Racing with Team GetSpeed Mercedes-AMG GT3

“Congratulations to the team to start with. The whole team, the tire changers, the fuelers, the spotters and

Russell and the boys back home. They prepared that car amazingly, and we had a great long run car. It showed in the end. We needed all four hours, or actually three hours and 58 minutes to get to where we wanted to be. It was mega and a beautiful way to go. I think for me personally, it was one of my best races. I really had a great start. While I dropped a few places in the beginning, I didn't get disheartened. I knew we had a good car, it improved and the car came together, the crew came together, and honestly, I am so happy to be leaving Daytona in third place.”

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

“I think it was understanding what we had, which was a very long race and really nothing to win in the first few hours. I was listening to the advice I was given and trying to learn, so I was falling back actually every stint, but in the end all of those learnings came together and we could move forward. We kept the car in one piece, which was very important, and we made it to where we wanted to be. The crew is amazing and did my first stop so well and so quick, I didn't expect it and I stalled the engine because I didn't expect we could be done already! So, they outperformed my expectations, and I have high expectations! It was a really good start to the year.”

Daan Arrow, Driver – No. 57 Winward Racing Mercedes-AMG GT4

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