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Three Mercedes-AMG Motorsport Customer Racing Teams Compete This Weekend in the Sahlen's Six Hours at Watkins Glen International

**Press Information**

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## **Mercedes-AMG GT3 Teams Bring IMSA GTD WeatherTech SportsCar Championship and North American Endurance Championship Leads To Watkins Glen**

**Watkins Glen, NY. Three Mercedes-AMG Motorsport Customer Racing teams will be looking to give the Mercedes-AMG GT3 a second consecutive IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship endurance race victory this weekend at Watkins Glen International. Sunday's Sahlen's Six Hours of The Glen marks the halfway point of the 2017 IMSA racing season and the third round of this year's Tequila Patrón North American Endurance Cup (NAEC).**

In the most recent endurance race on the IMSA schedule, Mercedes-AMG Motorsport Customer Racing scored a breakout win at the 12 Hours of Sebring in March, where Ben Keating, Jeroen Bleekemolen and Mario Farnbacher co-drove to the GT Daytona (GTD) class win in the No. 33 Mercedes-AMG Team Riley Motorsports Mercedes-AMG GT3.

The victory was the first for the Mercedes-AMG GT3 in the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship and gave Mercedes-AMG, Keating, Bleekemolen and the No. 33 team leads in the respective IMSA GTD manufacturer, driver and team championship standings which they still hold heading to Watkins Glen.

The No. 33 team, drivers and Mercedes-AMG also come to "The Glen" leading the GTD championship standings in the NAEC, a four-race sub-series within the overall IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship that honors the top points earners in the year's endurance races.

The other races joining Sebring and The Glen on the NAEC schedule include January's season-opening Rolex 24 At Daytona and October's Petit Le Mans, a 10-hour endurance race that annually closes out the IMSA racing season at Road Atlanta. The four races combined total 52 hours of endurance racing each NAEC season.

In addition to the No. 33 team, Mercedes-AMG customer teams contesting the full IMSA GTD season this year include the No. 50 WeatherTech Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3 and the No. 75 SunEnergy1 Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3.

Farnbacher, who joins full-season co-drivers Keating and Bleekemolen in this year's NAEC rounds, makes his third race start in the No. 33 at The Glen. The trio, along with fourth team driver Adam Christodoulou, also finished third at the Rolex 24, making the No. 33 the only team in the IMSA GTD class to earn a top-three finish in each of the two endurance races run to date.

Season-long co-drivers Cooper MacNeil and Gunnar Jeannette will be joined in the WeatherTech No. 50 this weekend by their usual endurance-race teammate Shane van Gisbergen, who makes his Watkins Glen debut.

The No. SunEnergy1 No. 75 will be co-driven by Kenny Habul, Tristan Vautier and Boris Said, the same trio that joined the No. 33 on the Sebring podium with a third-place GTD finish.

Along with this season's endurance race success, Mercedes-AMG customer racing teams have been equally competitive in the sprint races that make up the majority of the IMSA WeatherTech Championship schedule.

MacNeil and Jeannette shook off a challenging start to the season at Daytona and Sebring to give the Mercedes-AMG GT3 its first IMSA sprint race victory on the streets of Long Beach in April. They were joined on the Long Beach podium by runner-ups Keating and Bleekemolen, a one-two finish that was the first for the Mercedes-AMG GT3 in IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship competition.

In the following race Circuit of The Americas (COTA), Keating and Bleekemolen scored their second victory of the year – the third straight in IMSA competition for the Mercedes-AMG GT3 – and the No. 33 team remains the only repeat winners so far this season in GTD. Habul and Vautier also earned a podium finish at COTA with a third-place showing, their second of the year.

With Sunday's six-hour race next up, Keating, Bleekemolen and the No. 33 team lead the full-season IMSA WeatherTech Championship GTD driver and team championship standings with 150 points, nine points ahead of the second-place Ferrari drivers and team.

Mercedes-AMG has also has a nine point lead in the full-season IMSA WeatherTech Championship GTD manufacturer championship, edging nearest challenger Ferrari, 159 – 150.

In the NAEC GTD standings, Keating, Bleekemolen, Farnbacher and the No. 33 squad lead the respective driver and team battles with 25 points, three points in front of the second-place Ferrari drivers and team.

Mercedes-AMG has a six point lead over Audi in the NAEC GTD manufacturer championship, 29 – 23.

A three-day Holiday-weekend event, the Sahlen's Six Hours of The Glen gets underway today with a pair of one-hour practice sessions at 11:05 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. EDT. Saturday begins with a final one-hour practice at 8 a.m. before GTD qualifying later that morning at 11:40 a.m. EDT.

Race-day Sunday begins with a 20-minute warmup session at 8 a.m. before the official start of the Sahlen's Six Hours of The Glen at 10:10 a.m. EDT.

The Sahlen's Six Hours of Glen can be seen live in flag-to-flag television coverage on the FOX Sports networks. Coverage begins this Sunday, July 2, at 10 a.m. EDT on FOX Sports 1 (FS1). At 1 p.m., coverage will switch to FOX Sports 2 (FS2) for the conclusion of the six-hour race. International viewers can watch live streaming on IMSA.com.

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

**GT3:** "Watkins Glen is challenging, has very little runoff and no room for mistakes. It is a classic, old-school road course, which has big consequences for mistakes. With four different classes and large speed differentials, you have to make sure all the passes don't put you off line and into a barrier. It will be interesting. Watkins Glen is one of those places where the Balance of Performance (BoP) changes will show up for the Mercedes-AMG GT3. Having said that, it is a six-hour race, which means at least five pit stops, which is good for our team. The more pit stops everyone is

required to make, the better we usually perform, so I hope we are able to work our way up to the front and stay there.”

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

**AMG GT3:** “Our Mercedes-AMG GT3 likes high-speed corners, so Watkins Glen should be a good track for this car. I love this track so much because most of the corners are challenging, particularly the esses going up the hill and lots of other corners later in the lap. Most of them are high speed, and the whole lap has a nice flow. The walls are close, especially coming out of the last corner. No room for error and tricky to find the limit. The new surface is still very smooth, as we learned testing here in the LMP2 car last month. Last year, when it was all new, there was only one real line. Now the line is a bit wider. The amount of grip is mega.”

**Cooper MacNeil, Driver – No. 50 WeatherTech Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3:**

“I like The Glen. My favorite section has to be the high speed esses through the carousel. It is super fast, and our WeatherTech Mercedes-AMG GT3 should handle exceptionally well through that section. I am super excited to have Shane back with us. We have some unfinished business to take care of after Daytona and Sebring. We had a really good test at The Glen a month ago, so we should be up to speed fairly quickly.”

**Gunnar Jeannette, Driver – No. 50 WeatherTech Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3:**

“Watkins Glen should be a good track for our WeatherTech Mercedes-AMG GT3. The circuit has lots of fast, flowing corners which our car likes. The one place it won't be too good is the long straight uphill after the esses, but everywhere else I think we'll be pretty dialed in. I think the last round of BoP was a bit harsh on us pre-Detroit, so we are going to suffer a bit on the straights, but there's not much we can do about that at this point. It's great to have Shane back for this weekend. He hasn't been to The Glen before, but I'm sure after the first session he'll already be up to pace. It would be great for all three of us to get up on the podium together this weekend!”

**Shane van Gisbergen, Driver – No. 50 WeatherTech Racing Mercedes-AMG**

**GT3:** “I have been doing a lot of laps on the computer, studying the car and lines, getting a general feel for the direction of the track. Also I have downloaded last year's qualifying and race to watch on the plane so that when I get on track on Friday I should be close to the pace. Being a six-hour race with three drivers and the minimum drive time just under two hours the strategy seems relatively simple, but as we know anything can happen in racing and usually does. For me, I'm excited to get

back to America, rejoin the WeatherTech team and hopefully get a result after showing so much promise at the first two endurance rounds.”

**Tristan Vautier, Driver – No. 75 SunEnergy1 Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3:**

“Watkins Glen should be good for our Mercedes-AMG GT3, with lots of medium to high speed corners and no huge straight line! My favorite section is the bus stop section, and I really like how turns five and six flow as you exit, and how fast that section is. It's also cool because it goes downhill through five and six with a lot of g-forces. It has a good rhythm, and I really enjoy it. I haven't driven here since being in a Prototype in 2014, so I am really looking forward to seeing how it is with the new pavement.”

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