



Mercedes-AMG Motorsport Customer Racing Continues Busy Summer With Quick Turnaround Between Lime Rock and Grand Prix of Mid-Ohio

**Press Information**

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## **Mercedes-AMG GT3 Teams to Race This Weekend at Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course in the Pirelli World Challenge Series**

**Lexington, OH. Mercedes-AMG Motorsport Customer Racing continues a busy summer schedule this weekend at Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course, where three Mercedes-AMG GT3 entries will compete in the Pirelli World Challenge Grand Prix of Mid-Ohio, July 28 - 30. The Mid-Ohio Pirelli World Challenge races come just days after Mercedes-AMG Motorsport Customer Racing teams endured a challenging IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship Northeast Grand Prix at Lime Rock Park, July 21 – 22.**

With two of three customer racing teams knocked out of the Lime Rock IMSA race after hard hits from other competitors, the No. 50 WeatherTech Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3 of co-drivers Cooper MacNeil and Gunnar Jeannette once again stepped up to carry the Mercedes-AMG flag to the finish.

Overcoming some pace and performance issues of their own, MacNeil and Jeannette never let up in the two-hour and 40-minute Lime Rock race, crossing the finish line in 10<sup>th</sup> place in the GT Daytona (GTD) class.

The WeatherTech Racing team was the only Mercedes-AMG GT3 left with a chance of making it to the end of the race after the No. 33 Mercedes-AMG Team Riley and No. 75 SunEnergy1 Racing entries were eliminated after separate contact incidents.

Early in his stint after taking over from starting co-driver Ben Keating, Jeroen Bleekemolen was just settling into his race-closing run in the No. 33 Mercedes-AMG GT3 when he was hit in the back by the race-leading BMW.

The hardest of the blows broke the left-rear suspension and sent Bleekemolen and the No. 33 to the garage. The Riley Motorsports crew quickly repaired the car, getting Bleekemolen back in the race, but the team voluntarily retired the Mercedes-AMG GT3 with less than 30 minutes remaining as there wasn't enough time left to improve finishing position.

The SunEnergy1 team's race was even shorter, with Tristan Vautier forced to retire the No. 75 early in the race's second hour with a broken left-rear shock absorber mount. Vautier was also hit by the leading BMW, but the shock failure was likely the result of an earlier collision with an Acura competitor during co-driver Dion von Moltke's race-opening stint.

Von Moltke was a race-day substitution for usual SunEnergy1 Racing driver and team owner Kenny Habul, who didn't feel well enough to drive race-day morning after battling a high fever all weekend.

Competing Mercedes-AMG Motorsport customer teams in Pirelli World Challenge this weekend at Mid-Ohio include CRP Racing, Black Swan Racing and Champ1.

Ryan Dalziel drives the No. 2 CRP Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3 in the top-tier and all-pro GT class.

Tim Pappas, in his No. 54 Black Swan Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3, and Pablo Perez Companc, in the No. 69 Champ1 Mercedes-AMG GT3, compete in the GTA class, which is home to sportsman, non-professional drivers.

The Mid-Ohio race weekend is a doubleheader, with back-to-back 50-minute sprints on Saturday and Sunday. The races are Rounds 6 and 7 of the Pirelli World Challenge sprint championship, the more traditional format of the series that features one driver per car and no scheduled pit stops in what are typically flat-out races to the finish.

Dalziel, Pappas and Perez Companc are looking for their first World Challenge sprint championship victories of the year at Mid-Ohio, but Dalziel, Pappas and their respective teams have won with the Mercedes-AMG GT3 in the Pirelli World Challenge SprintX series this year.

A complementary championship to the main sprint series, SprintX requires two drivers per car and at least one driver change in both of each race weekend's 60 minute sprints.

Both Mercedes-AMG GT3 SprintX victories came at VIRginia International Raceway (VIR) in April in the weekend's second and final race on Sunday. Dalziel co-drove with Daniel Morad to the GT Pro class and overall win in the CRP Racing entry while Pappas partnered with Bleekemolen in the Black Swan car.

Dalziel and Pappas are hoping to see similar success on the 2.258-mile, 13-turn Mid-Ohio circuit in the World Challenge sprint series, which kicks off a stretch-run of four races over the final two race weekends. After the Mid-Ohio doubleheader, the 2017 sprint series championship concludes with the season's final pair of races in mid-September at Sonoma Raceway in California.

The best sprint series showing by Dalziel and CRP has been a sixth-place finish at Long Beach in April as the team has endured several contact incidents and a costly radiator puncture from debris one event ago at Road America that forced them out of the weekend's first race.

Pappas has fared better in the sprint series GTA class and is coming off a season-best pair of third-place finishes at Road America. The double-podium showing moved Pappas and Black Swan into third in the sprint series GTA driver and team championship standings.

Perez Companc returns to World Challenge competition at Mid-Ohio after a minor illness prevented him and the Champ1 team from racing at Road America. Their best result this season was a fourth-place finish in the second race of the season at St. Petersburg in March, where Perez Companc improved five positions from the start and nearly pulled off a third-place finish.

The Pirelli World Challenge schedule at Mid-Ohio gets underway this Friday with practice and qualifying. The first GT race is scheduled for 4:45 pm EDT on Saturday with the second 50-minute GT feature set for noon EDT on Sunday.

Saturday's race can be viewed live on [MotorTrendOnDemand.com](http://MotorTrendOnDemand.com) and [World-Challenge.com/streamvideo](http://World-Challenge.com/streamvideo). The second race of the weekend will be telecast in same-day coverage on the CBS Sports Network on Sunday, July 30, at 2 p.m. EDT.

**Ryan Dalziel, Driver – No. 2 CRP Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3:** "Mid-Ohio has always been a really good race track for me. For as long as I can remember I've had great success there, most notably winning the past two outings in 2014 and 2015 in Pirelli World Challenge. We've not had the results we deserved the past few races

with the CRP Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3, but we will do our best to turn things around this weekend and get back to our winning ways."

**Tim Pappas, Driver – No. 54 Black Swan Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3:** "I feel like the performance of the Mercedes-AMG GT3 has actually been there all season, so our results over the past few races have had more to do with shedding some of the bad luck more than anything. The car has always been quick, we just missed the setup a little at the beginning of the season. Once Jeroen joined us for SprintX, we saw just how strong we could run, we were just occasionally bit by random bad luck or misfortune. The mechanical grip of the Mercedes-AMG GT3 is incredibly strong, and at a track like Mid-Ohio, where mechanical compliance is critical and top speed less so, we should be OK. We need to have a good weekend. Period. Where exactly we'll stack up remains to be seen."

**Cooper MacNeil, Driver – No. 50 WeatherTech Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3:** "Honestly, the top-10 at Lime Rock was almost a win for us. Since we rolled the car off the truck it was a handful to drive with the weight. The Riley Motorsports team did their best to try and tune that out of the car as good as they could, but when you are 45 kilos heavier than the next car it is tough. Gunnar and I drove our best and we finished 10th. I hope we can get a little BoP (Balance of Performance) help before Road America or it will be much the same story."

**Gunnar Jeannette, Driver – No. 50 WeatherTech Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3:** "The Riley Motorsports guys did an awesome job all weekend at Lime Rock. We were destined to be uncompetitive in this race with the weight we are carrying. We are so heavy right now. The car is decent in the first quarter of a stint but by half-stint you are just holding on. I could run similar lap times to the guys who are on the podium early on in my run, but the tires just go away."

**Ben Keating, Driver – No. 33 Mercedes-AMG Team Riley Motorsports Mercedes-AMG GT3:** "We did really well in the beginning of the season because of incredible pit work, no mistakes, great strategy and great teamwork. I feel like many of the races we ran up front were because of that, but without yellow flags you don't get a lot of opportunities to take advantage of those things. There were no red flags last weekend at Lime Rock and no yellow flags in the race. It was a tough weekend. We got taken out by the BMW here for the second year in a row. Anything can happen from here on, but it is starting to feel a little out of reach with just four races to go. We need some really massive changes if we are going to be in this competition at all."

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

**Mercedes-AMG GT3:** “It’s a shame, it’s a big blow to the championship to be taken out by the BMW again. It was unnecessary, we just got hit twice and it broke the suspension. It’s part of racing, it’s part of Lime Rock because it’s such a short lap with a lot of cars together, and you have to be aggressive to overtake. At the same time, we weren’t fighting for position so there was no point to hit me. It makes our situation harder in the final races but hopefully the Mercedes-AMG GT3 will be given some of our performance back and we can be competitive again.”

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

“I think the shock was letting go from the earlier hit because the car felt very strange from the moment I hopped in. We were fighting with the BMW because we were trying to get back on the lead lap, but he just hit me. I had the move clean on him, it was going to stick, but he just turned left into me. So, that’s just the way it is, but I’m happy about the way our team was operating all weekend at Lime Rock. We’ve had some changes but everything ran really smooth in the race on our side. Everything we could control we did. Our performance was good considering how hard we got hit with the Balance of Performance (BoP), but we still managed to do our best. It’s a shame, it’s been a bad swing of races for us, but the only thing we can do is focus on what we can control and at one point it will click.”

**Dion von Moltke, Driver – No. 75 SunEnergy1 Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3:**

“First off, this was a great opportunity but not necessarily how any driver wants to get it. Kenny is a good friend, he just wasn’t feeling well enough to drive, but I didn’t wake up race day at Lime Rock thinking I’d be driving a Mercedes-AMG GT3, fighting to stay on the lead lap here. My first time ever driving the car was the recon lap and then we were racing. It was the first time I’ve ever had to do that in my life but it was really fun. Once we got hit by the Acura it was a fight to stay on the lead lap, but the Mercedes-AMG GT3 is a really great car, it gives you confidence. I have had a lot of success at Lime Rock too, so that helped in knowing the flow of the track and knowing what to expect.”

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