

MERCEDES-AMG GT4 MAKES NORTH AMERICAN DEBUT THIS WEEKEND IN INAUGURAL 24H SERIES RACE AT CIRCUIT OF THE AMERICAS

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Nov 9, 2017 - AUSTIN -- The Mercedes-AMG GT4 will make its North American competition debut this weekend in the Inaugural Hankook 24H COTA USA at Circuit of the Americas, November 10-12, where Mercedes-AMG Motorsport Customer Racing teams Black Falcon and HTP will each run "Testteam" entries of the new GT4-specification Mercedes-AMG race car in the season-ending round of the 2017 24H Endurance Series. The 24-hour COTA race is one of the final major endurance races of an extensive test-race program for the Mercedes-AMG GT4 that was unveiled at the 24-hour race at Spa-Francorchamps in Belgium in late July. By the finish of the COTA 24H this weekend, Mercedes-AMG GT4 "Testteam" entries will have completed nearly 40,000 kilometers of race testing since making its race debut in the fifth round of the VLN Championship at the legendary Nürburgring Nordschleife in August.

Two of the three Mercedes-AMG GT4 race cars that have anchored the extensive testing schedule over the last several months have been brought to the U.S. for the COTA race, which is the first in North America for the Dutch-based 24H racing series.

The No. 2 Mercedes-AMG Testteam Black Falcon Mercedes-AMG GT4 will be co-driven by Mustafa Mehmet Kaya, Gabriele Piana, Saud Al Faisal and Ryan Ratcliffe, in addition to Thomas Jaeger, who serves as both a development driver and project coordinator for Mercedes-AMG Motorsport Customer Racing.

The No. 84 Mercedes-AMG Testteam Winward Racing/HTP Motorsport Mercedes-AMG GT4 will be co-driven by Russell Ward, Damien Faulkner, Indy Dontje and

Maximilian Gtz. The HTP entry is being run in cooperation with the U.S.-based Winward Racing team.

The Spa unveiling of the Mercedes-AMG GT4 R was preceded by a two-car 30-hour test race at the Lausitzring in Germany. Additional races in the test program included the initial six-hour race victory at the Nürburgring and podium finishes in two other rounds.

The new GT4 race car is based on the Mercedes-AMG GT R road-legal sports car, available in US dealerships now. The race car has been made to meet the requirements of international GT4 race series with a production-based concept that combines fully developed racing technology with the highest level of safety and efficiency.

With the new Mercedes-AMG GT4, Mercedes-AMG Customer Racing is expanding its program and entering another GT racing category that stands out for its dynamic growth. Race series all over the world including the IMSA Continental Tire SportsCar Challenge and Pirelli World Challenge series in the U.S. provide an attractive mix of demanding sprints and legendary endurance races that allow for an increasing number of opportunities to compete with GT4 machinery.

Since 2010, Mercedes-AMG has earned outstanding achievements in the GT3 class, initially with the SLS AMG GT3 and, since 2016, with the Mercedes-AMG GT3. The many years of experience from the GT3 segment have been incorporated into the development of the Mercedes-AMG GT4, which will be delivered to the first Mercedes-AMG Motorsports Customer Racing Teams at the end

of 2017.

In addition to the pair of Mercedes-AMG GT4 entries, which will compete in the 24H Series SP2 class, four Mercedes-AMG GT3 teams will be competing at COTA in the top-tier A6 division.

Three of the Mercedes-AMG GT3 entries will be competing in the A6-Pro class, including the No. 3 Black Falcon Mercedes-AMG GT3 that will have multiple COTA race winners Ben Keating and Jeroen Bleekemolen among its co-drivers.

Keating and Bleekemolen most recently drove the No. 33 Mercedes-AMG Team Riley Motorsports Mercedes-AMG GT3 to the GT Daytona (GTD) class victory in last May's IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship race at COTA.

Bleekemolen also co-drove the No. 54 Black Swan Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3 with Tim Pappas to second-place GT Pro/Am-class finishes in all three of the weekend's one-hour races in September's Pirelli World Challenge weekend at COTA.

Keating and Bleekemolen will co-drive the No. 3 Black Falcon Mercedes-AMG GT3 in the COTA 24H with Abdulaziz Al Faisal and Luca Stolz.

Other A6-Pro class Mercedes-AMG GT3 teams competing in the COTA 24H include the No. 17 IDEC Sport Racing and No. 31 ROFGO Racing entries.

The A6-Am class No. 1 Hofor-Racing powered by Car Collection entry is the fourth Mercedes-AMG GT3 that will be racing this weekend.

After practice and qualifying sessions on Friday, the Hankook 24H COTA USA will be run in two parts this weekend. The opening 14-hour segment takes place this Saturday, November 11, from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. CST.

All race cars will be impounded in "parc ferme" conditions overnight until the race resumes for its final segment, Sunday, November 12, at 8 a.m. CST. The COTA 24H is scheduled to finish 10 hours later on Sunday at 6 p.m. CST.

Tobias Moers, Chairman of the Board of Management, Mercedes-AMG: "The GT4 segment is getting more and more popular. The production-based concept is an important factor, especially when you want to get started in motorsport as a team or as a driver. For some teams, the GT4 category also serves as a sensible addition to their existing involvement in GT3, for instance to support young drivers. For us as a manufacturer, GT4 competition is a logical next step to extend our Customer Racing program. After the achievements in GT3 racing, the Mercedes-AMG GT4 is opening another valuable platform for us to prove our competence as a globally successful sports car and performance brand. There is no doubt that we will once again be setting new benchmarks in the segment with the latest member in our Customer Racing program."

Thomas Jaeger, Mercedes-AMG GT4 Project Coordinator and Driver No. 2 Mercedes-AMG Testteam Black Falcon Mercedes-AMG GT4: "We are very happy with the development so far. After completing a 30-hour test with two cars successfully, we had a win in the first test race in a six-hour at the Nürburgring in the SP-X class and podium finishes in two other rounds. At COTA we are using two of the three test cars, which already have a lot of mileage. As this is almost the final stage

of the testing program, we are doing a bit of fine tuning and want to make sure that the Mercedes-AMG GT4 is a well developed and easy to use product. Our customers have high expectations and we want to fulfill these. The main target was to build a very safe and high quality customer racing car, which is easy to drive for both gentlemen and pro drivers. Being a test and development driver and working as a project coordinator I can oversee all aspects of the program and put all my racing and business experience into the project."

Ben Keating, Driver No. 3 Black Falcon Mercedes-AMG GT3: "I am very excited about this race. Circuit of The Americas is a track on which we have done well, and the Mercedes-AMG GT3 is a car that we know works well at COTA. I love 24-hour races, this one will not have any prototypes, and I am excited to experience

the 24H Series more than anything else. I am looking forward to the format I think it is awesome to do the race with a big break in the middle and I am excited that GT3 will be the fastest class on the track. We have a great driver lineup, great team and great car with the Mercedes-AMG GT3. You can't ask for anything else.

Jeroen Bleekemolen, Driver No. 3 Black Falcon Mercedes-AMG GT3: "I can't wait to get back out there. We have a great team, car and driver lineup, so we should be able to do well. It will mark my final race of 2017 after a successful year, and hopefully we can finish it off in style. I expect us to be competitive. We had a great race at COTA during the IMSA weekend but after that we had a lot of weight added to our Mercedes-AMG GT3. After that it was tough in IMSA. Luckily, I race the Mercedes-AMG GT3 in other championships too and didn't forget how good this car is. We should be able to be in the fight for the win, especially with our strong lineup. I have already had lots of success with Black Falcon. We won the 24 Hours of Nurburgring and the 24 Hours of Dubai twice together. We have a long history and I know we can do well together. I have been very lucky to work with teams like Riley Motorsports and Black Falcon."

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