

IMSA Media Conference

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Daytona, Florida, USA

Jack Hawksworth

Philip Ellis

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everybody. We're pleased to be joined by our GTD Pro and GTD pole winners for the 72nd Mobil 1 Twelve Hours of Sebring, presented by Cadillac, GTD Pro, Jack Hawksworth, No. 14 Vasser Sullivan Lexus RC F GT3. Jack is right here to my left. His lap was 1 minute 58.714 seconds. It's his 12th career IMSA pole, first pole since Motul Petit Le Mans last October. He and his co-driver, Ben Barnicoat, are the 2023 IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship GTD Pro champions. He's co-driving again this weekend with Ben and Kyle Kirkwood.

Jack, congratulations. Obviously a pretty hectic session out there with all the cars in both classes. You and Philip will be sharing the front row. Tell us about what it took to get the pole.

JACK HAWKSWORTH: Yeah, no, we got a lot of cars in GT, right? Maybe 34, 35, something like that. Getting track position, trying to find a gap, then whilst doing that, trying to bring your tires in. It's really hot today. How you bring your tires in, the peak of the tire, the window is smaller than it would be, say, if we were here and it was 60 or 70 Fahrenheit.

The team did a really good job kind of dropping me into a nice gap. Completely clear track. Could bring my tires in the way I wanted to, then could put a nice lap in.

That was good. As a whole, the weekend has been really good for us so far. We struggled a little bit with setup early on, not feeling super comfy. Last night we found a couple things. Ever since then we've felt pretty good.

Excited for the race tomorrow and look forward to it.

THE MODERATOR: We'll slide over to our GTD pole winner in the No. 57 Winward Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3, Philip Ellis. Philip's best lap was 1 minute 58.714 seconds. It's his second career pole since the 2023 Rolex 24 at Daytona. He's co-driving with Russell Ward and Indy Dontje. They won the Rolex 24 at Daytona in January.

Just a note, Mercedes has won at least one class in each of the last three consecutive WeatherTech Championship races, dating back to last September at Indianapolis.

Philip, congratulations on your pole position. Second one of your career. Tell us about how big this is for you and how the momentum that you are continuing from Daytona.

PHILIP ELLIS: Yeah, I mean, thank you very much. It's been a great start to the weekend. I think we had a great car. The last few years we came here, we never really put it together unfortunately in the race, so the results didn't reflect our performance.

Today the team was spot on, put me in a good gap, gave me a good car to do one good lap that was enough to put us in pole.

It would have been nice to be in front of Jack, of course, but I'll hand that to him, and, yeah, looking forward to tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: We'll go to any questions for either Jack or Philip.

Q. Jack, you said changes overnight. I'm assuming that was in reference to night practice. How can you be sure no running after that, quite a lot cooler than it is now, how can you be sure those changes will pay off?

JACK HAWKSWORTH: It was more of a direction. We have a new tire this year. With that new tire, we're having to adapt ourselves a little bit to get the most out of the car. It was a direction which we started to kind of look at last night. I think it was showing some promise.

Yeah, we kind of just carried on down that path. Obviously the qualifying car is a little bit different to the race car in terms of setup. We set it up more aggressively than the race car.

In terms of the philosophy of what we were doing with it, it was heading down the same direction, which was looking good last night. In qualifying it felt really good.

We kind of know where we're going to go for the race with



the race car based off of what we did last night. It was nice to run again today, different circumstances, less fuel in the car, a little bit more aggressive setup, but it was looking better.

Q. Philip, pretty good gap between you and second place. Question about the gap between first and second place.

PHILIP ELLIS: I think it's a couple of factors playing in. As Jack mentioned, we have a new tire this year, so it's a bit harder to bring in. The last couple years it was easy, bring it in slowly, you have quite a few laps where you can put down a good lap. Now it's really a peaky tire. If you're lucky you get one good lap, then it starts dropping.

If you're in a bad gap and have some traffic or run into traffic, maybe you can't bring it in as you want. That will definitely cost lap time already.

I think for Jack and I, we were both in the perfect spot to do it on our pace. We want to bring it in in one clean lap. Actually, I tried a second lap, but already then I was way off. Maybe the cars just didn't get that one lap in.

Q. (No microphone.)

PHILIP ELLIS: Yeah, I mean, I think everybody knows that the Mercedes is quite a good all-around car. It's never been the top dominant car at any track we go to specifically, but it's always been one of the top contenders for podium position or maybe a class win.

And especially with Winward, we have two programs. We have the one here in America, and we have one in Europe. So there's a lot of information going back and forth between the teams, the mechanics and engineers. I think the team just developed really well the last two years.

It shows now when we have a new tire coming in. It's a new playground for everybody. I think we're just a bit ahead of some of the other teams that don't have that experience with new tires.

For sure it's a little bit of an advantage on our side that we have those two teams operating separately and that information flow going forward.

Q. (Off microphone.)

JACK HAWKSWORTH: I mean, for sure. The tire is faster. I think that was Michelin's target. Obviously there's also with this tire the, I guess, opportunity to double stint. Probably don't want to double stint around this track tomorrow. But that's kind of the philosophy of the tire. It

should be better in all aspects, peak performance, like we saw in qualifying, and then longevity during the race should be better.

These conditions are, like, the hardest test of a tire, right? Yesterday when it was super hot, tomorrow in the middle of the day, even with a great tire, the degradation is pretty big.

I like the fact we have a new tire this year. It's mixed things up a bit. Keeps the engineers on their toes, everybody on the team, because it's kind of a lot to delve into.

Q. (Question about the tires.)

PHILIP ELLIS: Yeah, I think it's going to be a completely different picture than qualifying. We'll have other cars being at the front after one hour of green flag running that maybe weren't that fast on a one-lap stint now.

We as a driver have a lot of input now on the tire that maybe last year was a bit easier to manage. We already saw in Daytona, which is not a high tire deg track, we suffered a lot if you didn't manage your tire throughout the stint.

As I say, keeps everybody on their toes, not only the engineers, but the drivers. Mercedes, we had to adapt a lot of driving lines as well, which the tire just couldn't handle anymore. Especially combined load is quite tough to do on this tire.

It just opens up, as Jack says, a new window for other cars and teams to come up to the front. I think it's a good thing.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations, guys. Thanks for coming in.

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