

IMSA Media Conference

Sunday, October 12, 2025

Daytona, Florida, USA

Indy Dontje

Philip Ellis

Russell Ward

Press Conference



championship, to be honest, after seeing the race start, to be honest, and knowing that you've won it. It's nice, but I would have liked to win it on the track.

THE MODERATOR: Russell, as I said, second consecutive championship, and Winward Racing has turned into quite a juggernaut in the WeatherTech Championship and other places in the world. Just tell us a little bit about the team that you all have put together and how proud you are of what's going on here.

RUSSELL WARD: I think they're the unsung heroes of racing. These are the guys that are up until 9:00 every night with the car and making it perfect and just getting everything 100%.

So we had the same group as last year, and you know, we're going to have the same group next year that we have this year. So I think we're going to be an equal force next year, and just really hats off to the guys. They provide such an amazing piece of equipment for us to drive. As long as we don't put a foot wrong, I mean, it tends to come our way.

Yeah, just really hats off to the guys back at the shop in Houston and all the work they put into the car.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Russell, what would you say was the defining moment of your season? Was it any of the three wins, or was it perhaps digging from however many laps down you were at Daytona after the throttle issue to come back and finish forth with a chance to win?

RUSSELL WARD: Yeah, you know, it was an interesting year. A lot of new equipment in the car with the torque sensors and a little bit uncertainty on our part going into Daytona. I think that really set us up for the remainder of the year.

You saw pace we had at Daytona and how we were able to come back seven laps down. For us I think you hit it right on the head. That was the defining moment. When we left that race, I mean, although we didn't have the result that we wanted, I mean, we left there with our heads held high and knew that we had a really good car, and we had done a lot of development on the system.

THE MODERATOR: We have our GTD champions in the No. 57 Winward Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3. We have Indy Dontje, Philip Ellis, and Russell Ward. Tell us what it meant to you to help contribute to a second championship with this group.

INDY DONTJE: Yeah, it's really special. I mean, to help these guys win their second championship is some pressure, but Winward gave me a great car. The team did great pit stops, and my teammates did also a fantastic job.

In the end it almost feels like an easy job, but we made it stick, and proud to be part of it, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Philip, coming into this race, it wasn't as close in your GTD Championship as some other championship battles or any of the other championship battles in the WeatherTech Championship. Maybe what kind of pressure was there on you guys coming into this race, knowing that you didn't have to do a lot to win it, but you had to do something?

PHILIP ELLIS: I mean, there's always stuff that can go wrong. Until it's done, it's not done. Then, obviously, we still had the manufacturer's title to fight for, so that's what we raced for today. Glad we got that as well. Super happy with that.

Not so happy that we couldn't finish it off with a podium. That would have been nice. Honestly in the end it's still our best finish to date with a P5 in Atlanta. It is something to work on for next year, for sure.

As you say, it wasn't a lot of pressure on us. I think it was a lot of pressure on the other teams, the competitors. As you have seen throughout the season, it's been a lot of up and downs for a lot of people. We had our mix of bad luck, and so did our competitors, fortunately.

But, yeah, it's not the most satisfying way to win the



And then went into the next race, which is arguably more difficult than Daytona, and we won it. For us it's just consistent, just plug away, I mean, every day making improvement.

Also, really the key that we found to being successful here in the IMSA Championship is you've really got to finish every single race and do the best that you can to finish every lap of every single race because it's incredibly difficult out there for the GT cars with all the different traffic and things like that and it breathes a lot of incidents.

So thankfully I've got a really experienced group of drivers here who take care of the car and are incredibly quick. I think just the whole package together is really firing on all cylinders, and really proud of the group.

Q. Earlier in the week during practice you shared a little bit about expanding Winward's footprint at IMSA. Why now is this the right time to start thinking about adding to it in IMSA?

RUSSELL WARD: Yeah, you know, we've really got a good group of people that are enjoying working with us and are consistently wanting to be a part of the team. With the new facility in Houston, it's really opened up kind of the amount of space that we have, and I think it's just the natural progression for us to extend the amount of cars that we have here, but personally I think this will be the limit.

It's difficult to put the group together and really keep that group continuity. For us, I mean, we're really excited about the new program, and hopefully we can put on a good show.

Q. What is it about y'all's relationship, the chemistry that just clicks well together? You guys continue to win races, and as you have said, Indy was a great example. Daytona, another great example of the season you guys have. What is it about you two as a team together that just works so well?

RUSSELL WARD: Yeah, you know, I am totally new to racing compared to some of the pros here that have been here for several decades. What I tend to have found is some teams, you know, you try to put the best sports players together, and they don't tend to click well. What you need to find is a group that is pushing for the result of the team does not the result for yourself.

Definitely Indy and Philip do an incredible job of how do we improve the car and what's the problem with the car, not necessarily focusing on themselves. I just think that's the key to having a good relationship with the racers and

coming in there without any expectations and just racing the racetrack and trying to go as hard as you can.

These two are incredibly special race car drivers. They're humble, and they just want the best. We all put the work in before a racetrack and come here and are able to perform.

PHILIP ELLIS: Yeah, I mean, Russell touched on everything. I think the only thing you can add to that is we are really close friends off track as well, so the work doesn't really stop when we leave the race weekend.

We are all super close. We've known each other for a couple of years now, and as he said, we just click. It's just a tight group of friends. On track we just work really well together. The same with the team as well. I think that's our key to success.

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