

Rolex 24 At DAYTONA

Sunday, January 25, 2026

Daytona, Florida, USA

Russell Ward

Philip Ellis

Indy Dontje

Lucas Auer

Bryce Ward

Media Conference



And obviously I'm super stoked that we came out on top. It was super rough. It changed as well as the race went on. Sometimes other cars had the upper hand when it was a bit colder and then it looked like we got the upper hand when it was a bit warmer towards the end.

Of course the team put us in a great spot as well with good strategy calls, so that was the basis of all of it.

And then yeah, can't thank my teammates enough. They've done an outstanding job this entire week and in the race, and the team of course gave us a sort of rocketship. Yeah, couldn't be happier.

Q. Bryce, can you just be a proud father and maybe say a few words about Russell, both as a driver and as the general manager of Winward?

BRYCE WARD: Honestly, these are my four sons. Not just Russell. I've driven with all of them in the GS class, except for Lukey, because he's platinum. But it's been such a pleasure to drive with these guys and also watch them be so successful in IMSA.

Q. Philip, were you aware that Nicky already had a warning, and how much did your warning change the complexity of the battle?

PHILIP ELLIS: What was the warning for, do you know, for him?

Q. I think it was incident responsibility. He had a duel with the other Aston Martin and pushed him off the track a little bit.

PHILIP ELLIS: I had no idea. I know I got a warning after the oval incident, so I was like, okay. But again, that didn't really change much. I think we put on a really good show for the fans and it was a good hard-fought battle between the two of us.

To be honest, I was a bit surprised once I got by. I thought I could just drive away, and I was very surprised that he stuck with me so much, and suddenly he found -- I don't know if he found pace or if it was something that helped

THE MODERATOR: Now we are joined by the GTD winners here at the 64th Rolex 24 at Daytona in the No. 57 Winward Racing Mercedes AMG GT3. Drivers from your left to right, Russell Ward, Philip Ellis, Indy Dontje, Lucas Auer, as well as team owner Bryce Ward.

This is the team's third Rolex 24 win. Others came in 2021 and 2024, all in the GTD class. This is their 12th IMSA victory.

For Russell, third Rolex 24 win, 12th IMSA win.

Same for Philip.

Indy, this is his third Rolex 24 win and his sixth IMSA win.

For Lucas, first Rolex 24 and first IMSA win.

I'll do one quick opener and then we'll get questions going.

Philip, take us through that amazing sequence at the end and how scared were you when you were at about a 45 degree angle on the frontstretch with a couple minutes to go.

PHILIP ELLIS: Yeah, a little stressful. Not ideal when you look at your teammates and team crew on the oval.

No, it was a super hard fight with Nicky. And to be fair I think I just misjudged it a little bit. Wanted to stop his run, get the side draft off of him, and to be fair, I didn't even know that he was so close up to the wall. A bit on my part, obviously, but I'm happy that we both continued and nothing bigger happened and that we continued on a good file and a good show.



him when he was behind me.

But I didn't expect him to fight back so hard and lost 15 minutes. Made my life very hard. At that point I think I would have preferred to stay outside of the car and watch the end of the race and not be inside of it.

But it was a good race. And I haven't spoken to Nicky yet, but I think everything is good. It was a hard-fought battle, very on edge, but good motorsport.

Q. Would it have made a difference if you knew he had a warning?

PHILIP ELLIS: I don't think so. I know IMSA is pretty hard cut on their blocking rules. We saw it last year in the last three races and we also saw it before leading up to Road America when they didn't.

I think drivers that are not doing the full IMSA season might be a bit more open to getting called out by the ruling that we since a couple races that is so hard cut, because we don't have it in Europe. But I don't think it would have really changed anything.

If anything I would have maybe tried to bait him into blocking me a bit more and maybe getting a penalty for him. But I'm glad that we sort of did that on track and not with penalties.

Q. Indy, you're now the most successful Dutch driver in the history of the Rolex 24. There was some talk about the Rolex Renger with Renger having won it twice, but now we should say Rolex Indy. What does it mean to you, and also how does this one stack up against the two previous ones?

INDY DONTJE: Well, it's always special to win in the Daytona 24 or the Rolex 24. Every year I'm not watching the race the last 30 minutes. I'm just like eyes bear walking at the back of the pit box because I cannot watch.

Even if I saw the move of Philip after the finish, I think my heart rate would go up and maybe I would pass away.

It's really special. I'm really happy that I've done it also with Philip and Russell three times already. It's my fifth attempt for this race, so I'm pretty successful, I can say, at this event, and I'm happy that Luke has also got his watch after some attempts. I'm really proud. I'm really proud also to be part of this team, and really cool to add another watch to my collection because there are a couple.

RUSSELL WARD: Yeah, he wouldn't watch it. He was texting me on the pit box asking me what happened.

Q. Russell, three wins in this race is significant. But also, the core group has stayed the same for each of those races in you, Philip and Indy. Talk about the significance of going for three and how valuable it's been to have the same core group and the extent that that has played a role in being so successful here at Daytona?

RUSSELL WARD: Yeah, having a core group of drivers like this I think is really important because none of us are here to try to outdo one another. We're here to just come here and race as hard as we can and win.

There's really no animosity between us. When one of us does a good lap, we look at it and see if we can recreate it.

I met Indy in 2017 and met Philip in 2018, and really we've just hit it off from the beginning and seem to have a great group. Looking forward to the rest of the season and racing more with these guys.

Q. Lucas, you had the very big crash here a couple years ago. Is it fair to say that you had your lowest point of your career here in Daytona and also the highest point of your career, having yet to win the DTM title of course?

LUCAS AUER: Yeah, it's for sure a happy end to the story. In '23 it was a tough crash, and to win it now is amazing. It's really an amazing story.

I have to thank these guys for giving me the opportunity. Our car was absolutely great. The crew did a mega job. It's really a happy end to a tough crash in '23 with a long recovery.

It really means a lot for me.

Q. Philip, towards the end of the race there was a pretty intense moment in the tri-oval where you were essentially sideways. Can you take me through that as a driver?

PHILIP ELLIS: Well, essentially you're trying to stop the run of the other car, right, so you try to get the side draft off of him before he actually passes you with the entire car, so you have to get super close.

I was a bit too close for comfort, and I think it was just a misjudgment. Initially I thought we both moved towards each other, but I saw it just here from the outside for the first time, and I think I just misjudged it just slightly, and we made contact.

At that speed it has a lot of consequences. Both got a little sideways. Again, like I said earlier, I'm just glad that we both continued the race, and it didn't impact the battle that we had for the last half an hour.

Again, I think we put on a good show, and even after that, what was a big "oh, shit" moment. We still kept it really good fair, hard racing, and I think that's what people come out here to watch.

You see it with the record crowds every year, and I think that's what makes IMSA.

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