



FOR MERCEDES-AMG, DUBAI 24-HOUR RACE MARKS THE START OF A NEW ERA

DUBAI: With the first competitive outing of the Mercedes-AMG GT3 by AMG Customer Sport Teams, an extensive phase of testing and development is coming to an end. Following the car's world debut at an exhibition in March, 2015, the first tests in competitive conditions were carried out at the occasion of the VLN endurance championship. After successful outings on the Nürburgring-Nordschleife and an extensive 30-hour-test at Portimao, the car now has to prove its potential in the demanding conditions of the 24-hour race in the Dubai desert.

With Black Falcon and RAM Racing, two of the most successful AMG Customer Sport Teams are responsible for running the new Mercedes-AMG GT3. Since 2012, Black Falcon has won the Dubai 24 Hours on three occasions. RAM Racing came second overall with the SLS AMG GT3 last year and won the GT3 class teams' title in the 24H Series. In the upcoming weeks and months, further

Mercedes-AMG GT3 will be delivered to AMG Customer Sport Teams for competitions all over the world. Based on the great demand for the new car, production capacity was significantly increased.

Additionally, a total of eight SLS AMG GT3s will also be on the grid in Dubai. AMG Customer Sport Teams Gravity Racing International, Hofer-Racing, V8 Racing, Preci-Spark, SPS automotive-performance, IDEC Sport Racing and GDL Racing are running one gullwing each. Next to its pair of Mercedes-AMG GT3s, Black Falcon is also running an SLS AMG GT3. AMG Customer Sport Teams will also be scoring points for the AMG Customer Sports Championship in Dubai. The internal championship, held for the second time in 2016, rewards the most successful AMG Customer Sport Teams and drivers.

The 24-hour race in Dubai got underway on Friday, 15 January, at 14.00 hrs (local time). Live streaming and live timing were available

on the organiser's website (www.24hseries.com).

Tobias Moers, Chairman of the Board of Management of Mercedes-AMG GmbH: "We are delighted that we can hand over the first Mercedes-AMG GT3s to our customer teams after an intense and successful time of testing and development. We are certain that our new car will enable the teams to build on the great achievements of the SLS AMG GT3. For us, the Dubai 24-hour race is the first benchmark for the new racing season."

Jochen Bitzer, Head of AMG Customer Sports: "We wish all the AMG Customer Sport Teams a good start into the new season. For us, the Dubai 24 Hours always have been a highlight at the start of the new year in the past couple of years. With three Mercedes-AMG GT3s and eight SLS AMG GT3s, we have a very strong line-up in Dubai. Moreover, we are delighted to welcome a new AMG Customer Sports Team with IDEC Sport Racing."



WENGEN: From left, second placed Italy's Giuliano Razzoli, first placed, Norway's Henrik Kristoffersen and third placed Italy's Stefano Gross celebrate at the finish line at the end of a men's Alpine Skiing World Cup slalom in Wengen, Switzerland yesterday. —AP

KRISTOFFERSEN WINS WORLD CUP SLALOM

WENGEN: It was Norway all the way, all weekend at Wengen.

Henrik Kristoffersen won a World Cup slalom yesterday to follow teammates Aksel Lund Svindal and Kjetil Jansrud in making Switzerland's signature Alpine ski meeting a three-race Norwegian sweep.

Kristoffersen's fourth win this season, all in slalom, was also a record 12th for Norway in a men's World Cup campaign. This one is still only 19 races old, and has two months and 24 scheduled races to go.

"It's pretty unique, it doesn't happen every year," said Kristoffersen, who also won last yesterday at nearby Adelboden. "I don't think it's a secret. The work that the individual athlete does makes the difference."

A bonus for Norway was Austrian Marcel Hirscher's failure to finish the race, meaning the four-time defending overall World Cup champion missed the chance to take back the standings lead from Svindal.

Kristoffersen added to his first-run lead to finish .30 seconds faster than Giuliano Razzoli, the 2010 Olympic champion from

Italy. Another Italian, Stefano Gross, was .68 back in third.

The 21-year-old racer's surge down the final section, after slipping .05 behind Razzoli's time split, carried him through the finish area and almost over a protective airbag at the back.

"I told the coaches, 'If I'm behind on the last steep, don't worry, I'm going to get it back,'" Kristoffersen said.

Hirscher made a surprise exit in the second leg, though he was only 10th fastest in the morning on a flat course that did not suit him.

"It could be that everything is over, the slalom and the overall globes," Hirscher said. "Now others are the favorites."

Kristoffersen made it four straight wins for Norway in eight days after Svindal won Saturday's downhill and Kjetil Jansrud took the combined event on Friday.

Norway is typically a cross-country skiing nation and Kristoffersen showed some Nordic skills on the flat course. The race was run in steadily falling snow on the lower part of the

downhill course rather than the adjoining slalom hill that was too difficult to prepare during recent warm weather with little snow.

On an uphill section of gates, Kristoffersen preferred to use a skating-style move while some rivals chose an aerodynamic tuck position typical of downhill racers.

"I haven't done that much (cross-country skiing) in my life, but I'm from Norway so I guess it's in my body," the 21-year-old Kristoffersen told The Associated Press after his first run in the morning.

"This is maybe a little bit too flat. But it's better to have a race than not."

While Wengen welcomed the Norwegians this weekend, it was unkind to Hirscher yet again. He has 36 career World Cup wins - tied for sixth in the circuit's 50-season history - but none at Wengen in nine tries.

Sunday's race was also the first time this season that Kristoffersen and Hirscher did not combine to finish 1-2 in slalom.

The World Cup now moves on to Austria's season highlight, the four-event Hahnenkamm meeting at Kitzbuehel. — AP

COE SAYS TRUST MAY TAKE OVER FOUR YEARS TO RETURN

LONDON: Sebastian Coe, the head of athletics' crisis-hit governing body, says trust in the sport may not return until "way beyond" his four-year term as president of the IAAF.

An independent commission of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) said in the second part of a damning report on Thursday that "corruption was embedded" at the International Association of Athletics Federations.

The report, whose first part was published in November, said Coe's predecessor, Lamine Diack, ran a clique that covered up organised doping and blackmailed athletes while senior officials looked the other way.

"Trust is not going to come overnight, it is not as if you make five changes and trust will follow in two weeks' time," Coe, who

came out from the report relatively unscathed, told the BBC on Sunday.

"It may be the case that trust does not return until way beyond my term in office," The WADA report's co-author Dick Pound said he thought Coe was the best man to reform the sport.

The Briton, a double Olympic 1500 metres champion who was elected president in August, said he took some comfort that the report found that the IAAF's systems were not chronically broken and that officials were not "asleep on the job". He said he understood that people would be sceptical that the IAAF's council, of which he had been a member since 2003, did not know about doping cover-ups, and added that his own focus had been "limited" due to his other commitments. — Reuters

CLARKE 'STILL HAS MUCH TO LEARN' AFTER EURASIA WIN

KUALA LUMPUR: Victorious EurAsia Cup captain Darren Clarke admitted yesterday he still had much to learn ahead of leading Europe in September's Ryder Cup against the US. Clarke led his team to an emphatic 13-point demolition of an Asian Tour team to win the EurAsia Cup in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

His 12-man team was never headed over the three days leading by three points after Friday's opening fourballs, six points after the second day foursomes before winning nine of the singles and sharing one in an 18.5-5.5 points triumph at the Glenmarie Golf and Country Club.

It was Clarke's first taste of team leadership victory. The Northern Irishman joins recent European Ryder Cup captains Paul McGinley (Seve Trophy 2009, 2011) and Colin Montgomerie (Seve Trophy 2002, 2003, 2005, Royal Trophy 2010) in having led a team to victory ahead of captaining in the Ryder Cup.

"There are a lot of things I have learnt this week-time being one of them that I didn't have an awful lot of," said Clarke.

"But there are a lot of positives I can take from this week and... hopefully I will do a better job when it comes to September.

"At the end of the day if your players don't perform you can be the best captain in the world but you're not going to win."

"But this week belongs to the players as they have just done fantastic. The quality of golf they have played has been impressive."

Right from the outset each of Clarke's dozen players have been praiseworthy of his captaincy including his two picks in Lee Westwood and Ian Poulter. Clarke indicated earlier in the week the veteran English pair will be a part of his Hazeltine Ryder Cup side whether competing or as one of five non-playing vice-captains.

"I have enjoyed this week immensely and it's been a wonderful learning experience," said Clarke. "As everyone knows I have been around the game for a long time and done most things in the game."

"But this week has been different with the guys seemingly keen to listen to what I have had to say and if my little part in this week has helped them along then well be it. "We will now go back after this week and sit down with the European Tour what I did well as a captain and what I could have done better, and then work on those areas so that we can get the whole package even better come September." — AFP



SUBANG: Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak, right, presents the winning trophy to Team Europe's captain Darren Clarke of Northern Ireland during the EurAsia Cup golf tournament at the Glenmarie Golf and Country Club in Subang, Malaysia, yesterday. — AP