

Beat: Sports

Formula One & DTM drivers ready for challenging new season

2016 motor racing season

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USPA NEWS - Mercedes-Benz begin title defence in Formula One and in the DTM. Dr Dieter Zetsche: "All those who know us are aware that we relish facing new tasks and will do everything in our power to ensure that we are just as successful in the 2016 season."

The curtain is going up on the 2016 motor racing season. The brand with the three-pointed star officially opened the new motor racing year at a special media event in the "Hallowed Halls" in Fellbach near Stuttgart. Formula One and DTM drivers and their management teams looked ahead to the tasks that face them this year against the backdrop of treasures from the successful motor racing heritage at Mercedes-Benz.

The 2015 motor racing season was the most successful to date in the annals of the brand with 19 championship titles in Formula One, DTM, Formula 3, GP3 and in the AMG Customer Sports Programme. The hunt for success begins all over again this year for the Mercedes-Benz motor racing family.

The Silver Arrows of Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg will line up in the Australian Grand Prix next weekend (March 18th-20th) to get the new Formula One season under way, while the DTM drivers will begin their hunt for points this season on the weekend of May 6th-8th in a home race for Mercedes-Benz at Hockenheim.

Dr. Dieter Zetsche, Chairman of the Board of Management of Daimler AG and Head of Mercedes-Benz Cars: "2015 was an amazing year. We have shown that the fastest cars are the ones with the three-pointed star. Motor racing is part of the DNA of the Mercedes-Benz brand and is one of our core activities as far as the company is concerned. We compete in motor racing in order to be the best, as in all other areas. However, we expect fresh challenges in 2016. The competition is not sleeping and will be stronger than ever in all classes in the season to come. But all those who know us are aware that we relish facing new tasks and will do everything in our power to ensure that we are just as successful in the 2016 season."

Toto Wolff, Head of Mercedes-Benz Motorsport: "We are very proud of our successes last year when we achieved excellent results in Formula One, the DTM, Formula 3 and the AMG Customer Sports Programme. But now the scoreboard is reset to zero and we have to work hard to repeat those successes. First of all, we have the Formula One season opener in Melbourne next week. It's always difficult to gauge the respective performances of the teams after the tests, but we had excellent reliability and completed our entire programme. However, the competition are also looking good. Consequently, we're expecting a really exciting first race of the season in Australia next week."

Ulrich Fritz, Head of Mercedes-AMG DTM: "We had a successful year in 2015, but the DTM is an extremely hard-fought racing series. We're going up against two major brands and will have to be really on our toes again this year in order to be in front. We've got another excellent squad of drivers, three very strong teams, and everyone in our team is working incredibly hard. Now it's up to us to carry over the strengths of the past to the new season and make the best of it."

Lewis Hamilton, MERCEDES AMG PETRONAS Formula One Team: "The winter tests went fantastically well, and our new car is absolutely incredible. I never thought that we would be driving quite so many kilometres in preparation. We were with the team yesterday and congratulated everyone involved on this great Silver Arrow. This is a real team effort from all our colleagues in Brackley, Brixworth and Stuttgart. Nevertheless, I'm expecting this season to be an uphill battle. Ferrari have caught up and Nico is always a strong opponent. I believe that we have a good car, but Ferrari were posting some impressive times during the tests "" both on the fast laps and on longer runs.

Nico Rosberg, MERCEDES AMG PETRONAS Formula One Team: "We had a good start to this year with the winter testing. So far, everything is going according to plan, and we can travel to Melbourne feeling optimistic about the first race of the campaign. As soon as I saw our new Silver Arrow for the first time, I had a good feeling. You could clearly see from the innovative features that it represents a step forward. In motor racing "" and this is especially true of Formula One "" development never stands still. To stay ahead, you need to continue to develop and to find new ways of doing things that no ""one else has thought of before. We don't yet

know where we stand compared to the opposition, but Ferrari looked very strong in testing,

Lucas Auer, Mercedes-AMG DTM Team: "The sense of expectation going into my second DTM season is massive. I kept myself fit with karting and physical exercise, and I visited my team "" Mücke Motorsport "" in Berlin as often as I could. I'm aiming to perform more consistently this season and above all to get better in qualifying. Then I might even manage a podium appearance or two."

Paul Di Resta, Mercedes-AMG DTM Team: "I became a father during the winter break, which has changed my life enormously, especially since there are now more pit stops than in racing! But a sweet smile can brighten up your whole day. Still, I'm now looking forward to getting back in my Mercedes-AMG C 63 DTM. We were able to gain some first impressions of the new car in testing, but the truth will out in Hockenheim."

Maximilian Götz, Mercedes-AMG DTM Team: "What does 2016 mean to me? Well, a new team, new engineers, a fresh challenge. I'm looking forward to it immensely, but I'll first have to get used to things, which makes me even keener to get started on testing in Hockenheim. The second half of the season went well for me last year. I still have to improve a little in qualifying, but my race pace was okay. That's what I would like to build on in 2016."

Daniel Juncadella, Mercedes-AMG DTM Team: "2015 was a tremendously successful year for Mercedes-Benz, and I was the last driver to finish on the top spot of the podium at Stars & Cars in December here in Stuttgart. Of course, it was just a show race, but everyone wanted to win. We are racing drivers after all! There were so many spectators in the Mercedes-Benz Arena. Amazing! It was a fantastic way to round off the year. Now I want to get back on the podium this season in the DTM."

Esteban Ocon, Mercedes-AMG DTM Team: "I'm really keen to take on the DTM challenge this year. Obviously, I'm quite excited to be part of such a competitive series as the DTM, but it also makes me proud to be driving for Mercedes-Benz. I'm very familiar with the series from my role as test and reserve driver last year and would like to transfer this experience to the cockpit this season."

Gary Paffett, Mercedes-AMG DTM Team: "I'm fully focused on the new DTM season. My team ART have been successful in lots of racing series, and we got on well together last year. Our car was very strong towards the end of the year, and we've put together a strong team for this season, one with which I aim to continue the positive trend from the previous year."

Christian Vietoris, Mercedes-AMG DTM Team: "This season, I would like to follow up from where I left off the year before last. Last season was very tough and didn't go all that well for me. Over the winter, we've been analysing what went wrong and preparing for the new challenges in 2016. This year, I want to stay in the flow and to continue the positive steps that I have taken with the team during the winter."

Robert Wickens, Mercedes-AMG DTM Team: "It was good to get back in the car again for testing after the long winter break. I'm now looking forward to the next round of tests and, of course, to the season opener in Hockenheim. The Hungaroring, one of my favourite European circuits, returns to the DTM racing calendar this year. I really love the city and the track. It's like a more permanent version of Monaco with plenty of bumps and kerbs. Very demanding for driver and car!"

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