



Racing History Today

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Photo by Anthony Bristol





Green flag waving the starting grid to the beginning of the 63rd running of the Rolex 24 at Daytona.

Photo by Anthony Bristol

“A Perfect Weekend” Rolex 24 Hours of Daytona

by *Luis Martinez*

Daytona International Speedway, FL—January 25-26, 2025 — “Traffic is a great problem to have” was the observation shared in the Deadline Room of the Media Center by IMSA President John Doonan at Daytona International Speedway (DIS). He was referring to the continuous growth of the tens of thousands of ticket holders coming to the World Center of Racing on this crispy cool Saturday morning. Temperatures on Saturday ranged from 46F and windy at sunrise to 52F at sunset—but still breezy enough to get the drivers’ attention at high speeds during this twenty-four-hour quest for the Rolex wrist piece.

The IMSA cup runneth over with growth and success. The 63rd annual Rolex 24 Race sports car race attracted a full-capacity entry list of 61 cars on race day, although it had started with 89 cars showing interest last summer. Significant growth is exploding in LMP2 and in GTD, with five Corvettes on grid. Mr. Doonan made it clear that, in the spirit of the founders of the Rolex 24, it’s important to allow private customers—not just corporate entities—to have a chance to qualify. In 1985, the Rolex had 85 qualifiers with 78 starters. But the attrition rate was severe, as 44 did not finish. During the interview this year, Doonan mentioned how this event is growing by various metrics. Some of the notable indicators are the 208 transporters on site, which would be a 3-mile-long string of vehicles if parked end to end. Additional evidence that size matters is that there were 18 original equipment manufacturers participating, with Aston Martin commencing at Sebring in March as the 19th OEM. Also, the marque Genesis considers launching a GTP in 2027. Another metric mentioned by Doonan in the prerace interview is YouTube: “We tried something last year at Sebring without any promotion that has taken our IMSA YouTube channel subscribers from 250,000 subscribers to knocking on the door of 700,000 before today’s race starts.” But viewer increments exceeded expectations, reaching 2 million views (Sportskeeda) while partnering with NBC and USA Network and also working with Peacock for flag-to-flag coverage.

IMSA bought Historic Sportscar Racing (HSR) while striving to increase the number of entries for the annual historic ‘race’ just hours before the 24-hour event. But due to unexpected snowstorms this year, potential entries did not make it in time for the Saturday historic event.

The GTP entries are factory racers with powerful internal combustion engines (ICE) propelling the rear wheels and electric motors powering the front wheels. However, under IMSA Balance of Performance constraints, the total combined horsepower cannot exceed 680 at any time.

These bolides have a minimum weight of 2,266

lbs. and a maximum speed of 202 mph. The technology enabling GTP entries is much more complicated than that found in street hybrids. As directed by IMSA, all GTP manufacturers use an identical hybrid system. The motor-generator unit (MGU), resting between the engine and the seven-speed Xtrac rear transaxle, is sourced from Bosch, and it produces a peak of 40 horsepower.

There were a total of 12 entries (up from nine last year) in the GTP class competing for the overall trophy: Acura (2 entries), BMW (2), Cadillac (3), Lamborghini (1) and Porsche (4).

There are three more classes of cars built to specifications for the IMSA WeatherTech-sanctioned events. They include one more prototype—Le Mans Prototype 2 (LMP2)—all with chassis and engines by Oreca 07 Gibson. Then there are cars that most people would easily recognize with brands like Aston Martin (4), BMW (3), Corvette (5), Ferrari (8), Ford Mustang (3), Lamborghini (3), Lexus (2),

There were 234 registered highly credentialed drivers (seven of them are teenagers) from 31 nations. Fourteen of them have Formula 1 experience, 107 of them are Class winners at the Rolex, and some have IndyCar titles. Among them are also 25 NASCAR wins. Forty-four are class winners in the 24 Hours of Le Mans. Adding to the excitement—a battle of American muscle cars: 3 Mustangs vs. 5 Corvettes. Then there is pilot Ben Keating, who for the 9th time is driving two cars in two classes—the 52 car in LMP2 and the #91 BMW in Grand Touring Daytona—two completely different cars. Sounds complicated? Some team owners bring as many as 108 employees to this event, occupying pit spaces of 40’x20’ with two stories and 35 technicians on tap at all times monitoring data displayed on 24 screens. Plus the pit crew and 3 or 4 drivers.

This year’s marathon race started at 1:40pm on Saturday afternoon. That means that the car that finishes more laps than any other in 24 hours—by 1:40pm on Sunday—wins this



Trouble in the opening lap for the LMP2 class as #2 United Autosports USA LMP2 spins causing trouble for other teams
Photo by Anthony Bristol

Mercedes AMG (5) and Porsche (4) in the GTD Pro and GTD classes for a total of 37 entries. The preparation specifications for all cars in GTD Pro and GTD are the same, so readers may ask, then what is the difference between these two classes? The difference is the driver. Drivers are classified and rated by their performance as Bronze, Silver, Gold or Platinum. In theory, Pro drivers drive the same car but get better results. Pros are likely to finish ahead of the GTD drivers—even with cars adhering to the same specifications.

After Security cleared the very crowded “fan walk” on the grid, the safety cars led the racers onto the track. The formation lap is in two parts: one pace car leading the GTP and LMP2, and another one a little later leading the 37 GTD Pro and GTD racers. The green flag dropped on time at 1:40 pm for this enormously challenging race of the world’s best drivers.

world-renowned sports car enduro. Why does that need explaining? Because many people have no idea that there are sports car races that last 6, 10, 12 and 24 hours, rain or shine, dark or daylight.

The start of the race was uneventful—no mishaps. By the end of the first hour, all 61 cars were still running, and the #24 BMW M Team RLL Hybrid V8 was still leading from pole position with a very fast best lap of 1:35.977. Matt Campbell, driving the #6 Penske Porsche Motorsports GTP, shared his observations of the beginning laps of the race: “Some cars were pushing really hard, and I just wanted to stay out of trouble.” Speed differentials of up to 35 mph may not sound significant at highway speeds. But closing speeds at 195 mph—at night in the windy rain—require cerebral functioning in an alternate universe.

By the first 45th minute of racing, some GTP cars started entering pit row for fuel and tires. Then the GTD cars started diving into the pits around 50 minutes for VP Racing fuel and Michelin Pilot Sport tires. Speaking of tires, the ambient track temperatures are a constant concern for tire pressures and tread deterioration patterns. Crew chiefs try different options to address the constraint of a maximum number of tires during the twenty-four hours. IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship has made efforts to minimize tire usage, so tire strategy adds one more factor in the multivariate equations. As RACER magazine explains, "GTP cars have 21 sets [of 4 tires] for qualifying and race. With 24 hours of racing and approximately 50-minute stints, that's roughly eight more stints than they have sets of tires, so some double stinting will be required... LMP2 cars have 23 sets. GTD PRO and GTD have 25 sets for the entire event, and not a specific amount for the race."

The first four hours of 5:40 were relatively uneventful, with only one retirement for mechanical reasons—the 63 GTP car, the Automobili Lamborghini Squadra Corse. Unfortunately for the #63, the race was over in 58 minutes on track, the first DNF with only 34 laps. TV announcers were surprised that there were no incidents for over 100 minutes of racing. The first Full Course Yellow had occurred at 1:43 of the race, when the Tower Motorsports 11 car in LMP2 skidded off through the marbles of a tight right-hander and into the tire wall but eventually continued.

Felipe Nasr in the Penske Porsche Motorsports #7 GTP mentioned how it felt during the early hours: "The cold temps at the beginning of the race was sliding the car a bit, so I was looking after my tires that they have to use on two stints. And it's windy going into Turn 1 when braking." This is where the cars are going the fastest, normally at 200 mph approaching T1 and then braking very hard for

the 80 mph left-hander. In a TV interview with NBC Sports on Peacock, TrackHouse Racing team owner Justin Marks remarked how much more resilient and durable, albeit much more complicated, the cars have become over the decades at the Rolex 24: "You have to do qualifying laps for 24 hours!" – a frightening task indeed. And as evidence of the power of cool air, final results indicated that the best laps for each of the 4 classes were set at the beginning of the 24, given that the 46F ambient air is welcome in the combustion chambers of the ICE (Internal Combustion Engine) power source.

Well into Saturday evening, the driver of the #40 Cadillac Wayne Taylor Racing's Kamui Kobayashi came to the Deadline room and explained his technique for maintaining the lead, in the dark, after navigating a difficult pass: "Once I take the lead, I take care of the tires, looking for traction." Kobayashi joined many of the other drivers interviewed who were reflecting that they have to survive the



#65 Ford Multimatic Motorsports GT3 Mustang GTD Pro leading a group of cars

Photo by Anthony Bristol

first 20 hours and then go racing for the last four.

On Sunday morning the living legend, Hurley Haywood, wandered around the Media Center. Haywood won the Rolex five (5) times. Speaking later to the media, he mentioned that his favorite Rolex event was in 1973 when he teamed with Peter Gregg (note: just two drivers...) and emphasized there was no downforce in that 'skinny' car—the Brumos Racing Porsche 911 RSR, number 59. Haywood complimented the fact that the platforms today allow for different power structures, and the result is many cars are still on the lead lap of their respective classes after 20 hours of breakneck racing. Haywood misses that the lead drivers for the Penske Porsche Motorsports are not American, as he and Peter Gregg and many others were in that era. On air, he mentioned how much he still admires the Porsche marque; he owns and drives different models, and he described the attributes he likes about each.

As noted above, the attrition rate for a race of this length is considerable. Given that drivers have to stay as close to the leader of their class as possible, drivers cling to the lead lap in each of four classes for hours on end, which is very stressful. A lot of unexpected incidents can manifest. This is especially the case in heavy traffic and with speed differentials that are quite significant. The slowest cars ("slow" in comparative racing terms), generally in the GT Daytona class, have top speeds of 180 mph. The fastest cars, in GTP, come up on them at 200 mph (202 was the maximum recorded on Sunday morning). At those speeds every driver is defying the laws of physics and working to maintain some connection of tires to pavement.

Another form of physical stress on drivers at the 24 is caused by very hard braking forces. Quoting from a description by Italian brake manufacturer BREMBO: "The hardest braking point at Daytona was the first turn, where drivers decelerated from 200 mph to 80 mph, experiencing a 3g deceleration, compared to 2g for GTD class drivers. Spectators could witness the carbon discs glowing red-hot due to the intense braking effort after several seconds on the banking, especially at turns 1, 3, and the chicane (turn 9). Brembo's carbon discs in the GTP class reached temperatures of 1,600°F at some points on the Daytona track."

Experienced with the challenges of racing for 24 hours, including the longest racing at night (12 hours), owner of the Rahal/Letterman/Lanigan Racing Team, Bobby Rahal, advised his drivers about the perils of Saturday night driving: "Get through the night—tomorrow we go racing!"

In the battle for the GTD Pro lead, as the Rolex 24 at Daytona approached the final two hours, a kerfuffle developed—Tommy Milner and



#83 Iron Dames Porsche 911 GT3 R (922) on track.

Photo by Anthony Bristol

Connor De Phillippi exchanged paint. With Milner at the wheel of the No. 4 Corvette Racing by Pratt Miller Motorsports Chevrolet Corvette Z06 GT3.R, he was defending the class lead from the Paul Miller Racing No. 1 car, the BMW M4 GT3. Milner was then frustrated by a block from Augusto Farfus, who was in the sister No. 48 BMW. Farfus was 40 laps down from an earlier collision. Farfus held up Milner so obviously he eventually was penalized for blocking. There was a lot of 'physicality' when Milner and De Phillippi had a lot of metal contact at the International Horseshoe, resulting in rear bodywork damage to the No. 4 Chevrolet, forcing Farfus to pit for a penalty and Milner to pit for damage. As Farfus was tracking to the pit entrance, Milner passed Farfus on the high side and deployed the international finger signal for Farfus and the world to see.

With two hours left on the race clock, the 13th Full Course Yellow came out when the 88 car, leading LMP2, disappointedly broke down and was flat-bedded away. That brought the flock back to the tail of the #6 Penske Porsche Motorsports with Kevin Estre at the wheel, which had been leading overall. The attrition had taken its toll—with one hour left on the race clock, there were 18 cars not running.

With 37 minutes to the checker, there was heartbreak in the BMW box. The BMW BLOG explains, "The 24 car, BMW M Hybrid V8 [GTP] was still in contention for victory, locked in a fierce three-way battle with the Penske Porsche 963 racing cars. However, the race took a devastating turn in the final hour when contact with the No. 021 Ferrari caused damage to the BMW's bodywork, leading to a puncture. The subsequent pit stop left the team a lap down, and they ultimately finished fourth overall."

Finally, on Sunday, January 26, at 1:40 p.m. EST, the checkered flag flew and ended the 63rd grand epreuve at Daytona International Speedway for 2025. The Porsche Penske Motorsports Porsche 963, number 7, with Brazil's Felipe Nasr at the wheel, grabbed the

checked spot, followed 1.335 seconds later by the UK's Tom Blomqvist in the Acura Meyer Shank Racing w/ Curb Agajanian piloting their 60 car, the Acura ARX-06. Then 4.43 seconds later in P3, the sister #6 PPM Porsche 963 with Australia's Matt Campbell on duty arrived. These three had dominated the final hour at DIS and had fought tenaciously in the last few laps, ending on lap 781 (a total distance of 2,780.36 miles traveled). This result afforded Roger Penske's team a second straight win in the Rolex 24 at Daytona.

Is it fair to use the word dominance to describe the Penske Porsche Motorsport GTP team? After a very embarrassing launch of the Porsche 963 early in 2023, the drivers of the PMM 6 and 7 cars led a combined 517 out of 781 laps to the checker. Another way to express it—there was a Porsche GTP out in front of the 60 other cars during 15 of the 24 hours—and critically in P1 on the last lap. Of 61 cars that started, 40 were still running 24 hours later, while 21 DNF'd.

Having attended many Rolex 24s, this year the effects of the weather, logistics, endless lines of fans, top-tier drivers, variety of cars, number of manufacturers, and most of all—the tenacity and determination of the best contingent of pilots from 31 nations—were all combined to result in—a perfect weekend. The next stage of the "36 Hours of Florida" is on the calendar—the 2025 Mobil 1 Twelve Hours of Sebring takes place on March 12-15.



#77 "Rexy" Porsche 911 GT3 R (992) side by side with #69 Mercedes-AMG GT3 during the race.

Photo by Anthony Bristol

Rolex 24 Hours of Daytona



Results



1st: Felipe Nasr, Nick Tandy, Laurens Vanthoor - #7 Porsche Penske Motorsport Porsche 963

2nd: Tom Blomqvist, Colin Braun - #60 Meyer Shank Racing with Curb Agajanian Acura ARX-06

3rd: Mathieu Jaminet, Matt Campbell, Kevin Estre - #6 Porsche Penske Motorsport Porsche 963



1st: Daniel Goldburg, PaulDi Resta, James Allen, Rasmus Lindh - #22 United Autosports USA ORECA LMP2 07

2nd: Gar Robinson, Felipe Fraga, Josh Burdon, Felipe Massa - #74 Riley ORECA LMP2 07

3rd: Rodrigo Sales, Ben Keating, Benjamin Pedersen, Mathias Beche - #52 PR1 Mathiasen Motorsports ORECA LMP2 07



1st: Frederic Vervisch, Christopher Mies, Dennis Olsen - #65 Ford Multimatic Motorsports Ford Mustang GT3

2nd: Alexander Sims, Daniel Juncadella, Antonio Garcia - #3 Corvette Racing by Pratt Miller Motorsports Chevrolet Corvette Z06 GT3.R

3rd: Mike Rockenfeller, Sebastian Priaulx, Austin Cindric - #64 Ford Multimatic Motorsports Ford Mustang GT3



1st: Orey Fidani, Matthew Bell, Lars Kern, Marvin Kirchhöfer - #13 AWA Chevrolet Corvette Z06 GT3.R

2nd: Adam Adelson, Elliott Skeer, Tom Sargent, Ayhancan Guven - #120 Wright Motorsports Porsche 911 GT3 R (992)

3rd: Casper Stevenson, Zacharie Robichon, Mattia Drudi, Tom Gamble - #27 Heart of Racing Team Aston Martin Vantage GT3 Evo

Photos by Anthony Bristol



Photo by Chris Harris



DAYTONA
500
20 ||| 25



The 2025 Edition of the Daytona 500

by Anthony Bristol

The Daytona 500, or as it's known, "The Great American Race," always marks the official start of the NASCAR season and is the biggest race on the NASCAR Cup Series schedule.

The 67th edition of the Daytona 500 was a memorable one with many fans in attendance. The weekend's events entailed 4 different classes of races. Friday evening featured the NASCAR CRAFTSMAN Truck Series Fresh From Florida 250, while Saturday brought along the ARCA Menards Series Ride the 'Dente 200 and the NASCAR Xfinity Series UNITED RENTALS 300. Sunday finished off the weekend with the NASCAR Cup Series Daytona 500. The Sunday spectacle, "The Great American Race" for 2025 came along with some special pre-race activities ranging from a performance by musical artist Pitbull, spectacular flyovers from the United States Air Force Thunderbirds and a visit from the current sitting United States President, Donald Trump.



47th President Donald J. Trump making an appearance on pit road before the start of the race.

Photo by Anthony Bristol

With the race about ready to begin, actor and 2025 Daytona 500 Grand Marshal Anthony Mackie gave the command, "Drivers! Start your engines!" Waving to the crowd from his presidential Cadillac dubbed "The Beast," President Trump headed onto the apron of the track with his motorcade, which led the

stock car field on a few pace laps before the start of the race. Trump addressed the drivers over the radio before the motorcade exited the track, and the drivers ran a few more pace laps.

After the pace car exited the race field onto pit road, pole sitter #19 Chase Briscoe led the pack next to #2 Austin Cindric in P2. The green flag flew, and engines started to roar into turn 1 as the race got underway. The drivers didn't even complete 10 full laps before a sprinkling rain around turn 2 brought out a yellow caution flag. As the rain got heavier, a red flag was waved, delaying the race. After a brief return to yellow, where about 10 more laps were run, another red flag was waved until the rain passed and the track could be dried again. Overall, the delay lasted about 4 hours and brought with it much anticipation from fans to get the race back underway.



Drivers awaiting prerace introductions before the Daytona 500.

Photo by Anthony Bristol

With the green flag waving after the drying of the track, the race restarted with #24 William Byron on the inside and #22 Joey Logano on the outside. Much side-by-side action with two- and three-wide packs running around the Superspeedway gave the fans much to watch and cheer about throughout the first stage of the race. Suddenly, with three laps to go in the stage, a yellow flag came out after #11 Denny Hamlin received slight contact from #38 Zane Smith, almost causing him to lose control. Smith also came in contact with #21 Josh Berry, causing him to hit the wall. Stage 1 of the race ended under caution, with Logano picking up the win, marking his first ever stage win in the Daytona 500. Many cars entered pit road for fuel and tires between stages.

The start of Stage 2 got underway on lap 71, with the waving of the green flag. With Logano on the outside and #48 Alex Bowman on the inside of row 1, it was not long until a huge wreck occurred. An issue with Logano's car caused it to lose pace with Bowman, which backed up the whole outside line behind him. This caused #42 John Hunter Nemechek to hit the right-hand corner of #1 Ross Chastain, who then spun out into four-time Indianapolis 500 winner #91 Hélio Castroneves. Also involved in this wreck were #56 Martin Truex Jr., #8 Kyle Busch, #35 Riley Herbst, #40 Justin Allgaier and #51 Cody Ware. Some others were involved in the wreck as well, either sustaining damage or taking precautionary action to avoid it.

While pit road was open, many drivers came in for fuel and tires. Racing resumed on lap 77 with #12 Ryan Blaney in front of the pack with Austin Cindric in P2 by his side for the restart. Between the restart and another caution caused by debris on the racetrack on lap 83, there were a handful of lead changes and mostly 3-wide racing in one pack around the entire track, which pleased the fans in attendance. For the rest of Stage 2, Cindric and Blaney remained near the front, with Blaney getting ahead on lap 130 to win the stage.

After most of the leaders pitted, Blaney led the restart on the outside lane, with Kyle Busch on the inside. #23 Bubba Wallace restarted behind Blaney, with #5 Kyle Larson behind Busch. A third lane began to form on the outside, led by #9 Chase Elliott, as Blaney took the outright lead. Wallace would then take over the lead after pulling out ahead of Elliott as Blaney dropped back slightly in the middle lane. Wallace, Blaney and Busch would continue to lead the three lanes until lap 148, when the inside lane fell behind, and William Byron pulled out from the middle lane ahead of Busch. The three drivers continued to lead the pack at the front until a caution flag for debris came out on lap 162.

After the lead lap cars pit for fuel under yellow, Austin Cindric took over the race lead



4 Cars running wide down the back straight during the Daytona 500. Photo by Anthony Bristol

and chose to restart on the inside, giving Bubba Wallace the outside. Ryan Blaney restarted behind Cindric, with William Byron behind Wallace. #84 Jimmie Johnson, who had been running third in line in the middle lane, was blocked by another driver on his pit stop and had to restart in 29th. When the green flag waved, Cindric, Wallace and Blaney would battle for the lead as a third lane quickly formed on the outside. The three lanes would not run as orderly as before, and a single inside lane began to prevail, led by Cindric, Blaney, and Kyle Busch. Wallace, Byron, and Elliott got caught in the outside lane and dropped back in the field as it failed to keep pace.

On lap 185, the middle and outside lanes finally got organized and caught up to the inside lane, setting up the next yellow-flag incident. As #47 Ricky Stenhouse Jr. pushed #01 Corey LaJoie to the lead on the outside, Joey Logano got a run and tried to sneak into the middle lane. Stenhouse came down to block and wouldn't let Logano through. Neither Logano nor Stenhouse would give up, leading to contact between the two when Logano couldn't fit through the tight space.

Stenhouse then spun into Blaney, causing Kyle Busch to wreck as well. Logano spun into the outside wall, collecting #4 Noah Gragson and Chase Elliott behind him.

On the following restart, on lap 193, Corey LaJoie led the field to green, with Cindric on the inside. Behind them were Denny Hamlin on the outside and John Hunter Nemechek on the inside. LaJoie was briefly able to get ahead, but Cindric retook the lead after getting a push from Hamlin. Hamlin would take the lead soon after, while Cindric and #20 Christopher Bell fought for 2nd. As the two lanes got more organized, Bell would lead the outside lane, with #41 Cole Custer behind him and Hamlin in front on the inside, with Cindric behind him.

A big wreck on lap 196 occurred when Bell got loose after a push from Custer and spun into the outside wall before hitting #60 Ryan Preece, bringing out a yellow flag. Preece then went airborne and flipped over after making contact with #43 Erik Jones. Kyle Larson, Bubba Wallace, Justin Allgaier and Chase Elliott were also involved, among others.

Racing resumed on lap 200, setting the stage for a green-white-checked finish. Denny Hamlin restarted out front on the inside, with Cindric on the outside. Riley Herbst and Cole Custer restarted behind them. Cindric took the outright lead over Hamlin in Turn 2 after a push from Custer. The white flag waved as Cindric attempted to block both Custer on the outside and Hamlin on the inside, which made the race "official" if another caution occurred before the finish. Almost immediately, Herbst lost control and drove his vehicle into the infield grass but saved it from making contact with anyone, avoiding a caution. However, as Hamlin tried to take the lead from Cindric, Custer tried to swing to the outside ahead of Hamlin, leading to a massive wreck that took out most of the leaders.

William Byron was the first to maneuver through all the carnage, coming from P9, making him a back-to-back winner of the Daytona 500. On the win, Byron commented that he had "some good fortune but just trusted my instinct on the last lap there." Tyler Reddick followed closely behind to finish P2, while NASCAR great and Hall of Fame member Jimmie Johnson recovered from earlier pit stop troubles and a start near the back of the field to race all the way up to a P3 finish. When asked about how his third-place finish felt, Johnson said, "I am so satisfied—so happy right now," expressing pride in being both a driver and team owner and having two of his cars finish in the top 5.





Photo by Chris Harris



Photo by Anthony Bristol

Mobil 1TM



VICTORY LANE

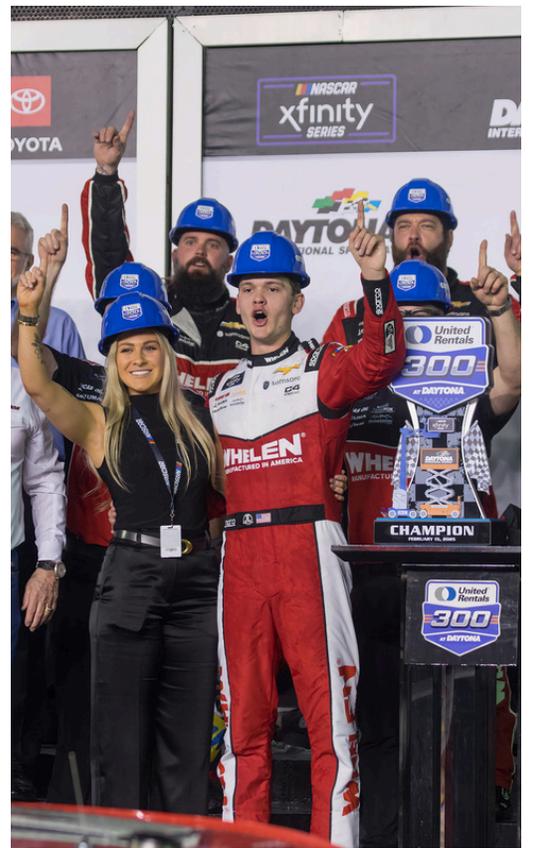


Photo by Anthony Bristol

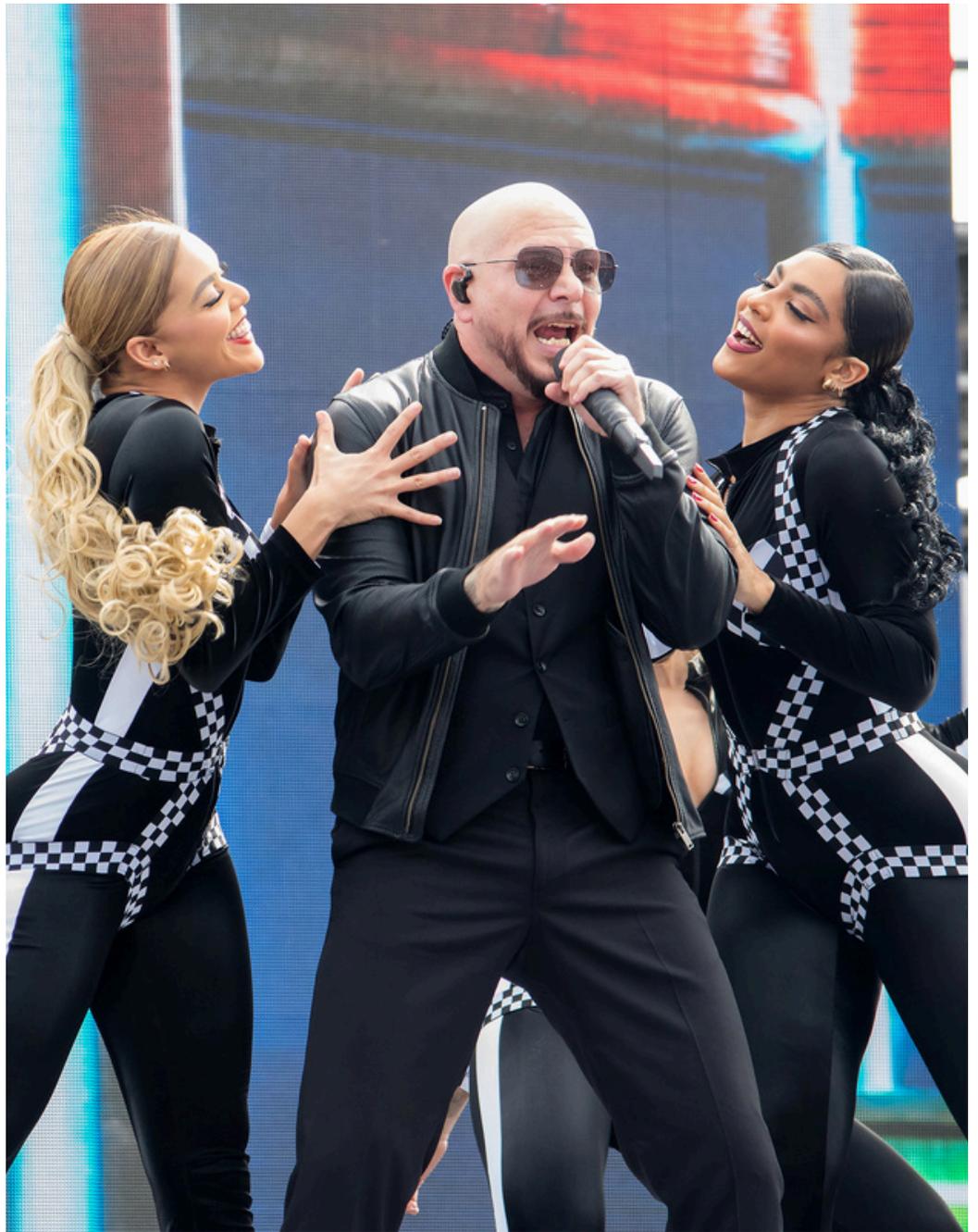
Daytona 500 Weekend Photos



Photos by Chris Harris







Firestone Grand Prix of St. Petersburg 2025

by Chris Harris

Alex Palou won the Firestone Grand Prix of St. Petersburg in the opening race of the 2025 season. The three-time IndyCar Series champion held off Josef Newgarden and Scott Dixon after battling lap traffic in the final laps to secure the victory.

Palou began the race in eighth position, just behind his Chip Ganassi teammate Scott Dixon and Team Penske's Josef Newgarden, who initially won last year's race before it was stripped from him due to a rule violation. Newgarden's teammate Scott McLaughlin began the race on pole.

When the race got underway, McLaughlin got out to a strong start ahead of the field before a bottleneck in turn 3 caused the first and only caution of the race when Will Power got into the back of Nolan Seigel. The incident had a big effect on tire strategy, as many of the drivers who began the race on the softer alternate tire made pit stops to switch to the primary tire. Meanwhile, the drivers who

started on the primary tire, including McLaughlin, would have to run the softer tires later in the race for a longer stint.

One of the key moments of the race came when Palou passed his Chip Ganassi teammate Scott Dixon after the final pit stops. Palou had made his stop on lap 72, while Dixon waited until lap 73. On the next lap, Newgarden, who also made his pit stop on lap 73, got ahead of Dixon while Dixon was still on cold tires. The move made the top 3 Palou, Newgarden, and then Dixon after pit stops were complete. After the race, Dixon told reporters that he had been without radio communication during his run, leading him to stay out on track longer than his teammate before pitting. The late move may have caused him to be slowed by race traffic and possibly even cost him a win.

After the final pit stop cycle, Palou had an over five-second lead over Newgarden, but that would change when Palou got stuck

behind Sting Ray Robb, who was fighting to stay on the lead lap. Robb would not be overtaken easily, however, and Newgarden cut the lead to under one second with under 10 laps remaining. With 5 laps to go, Palou was finally able to get by Robb in turn 1. Robb then quickly yielded his position to Newgarden and Dixon, allowing them to continue battling for the lead. At this point, Newgarden struggled to keep up, and Palou extended his lead to back over 1 second. On the final lap, Dixon took advantage of a fading Newgarden and reclaimed second position. Palou took the checkered flag with Dixon crossing the line in second and Newgarden settling for third, apparently out of gas. Scott McLaughlin finished fourth, with Kyle Kirkwood in fifth.

The win was the 12th of Palou's IndyCar career and his first at St. Petersburg. Palou said after the race, noting his past struggles there, that "to start [the] 2025 season with a win—it's amazing." Scott Dixon remained winless at the track, and instead settled for his fifth career



Start of the Firestone Grand Prix of St. Petersburg and the 2025 IndyCar season.

Photo by Anthony Bristol



#5 Pato O'ward driving hard during the Firestone Grand Prix of St. Petersburg.

Photo by Anthony Bristol



#3 Scott McLaughlin in deep thought before the start of the Firestone Grand Prix of St. Pete on pit road.

Photo by Anthony Bristol

career runner-up finish. Tire strategy played a key part in the race as McLaughlin was the first driver to finish who started on the primary tires. The top three drivers all started on the softer alternate tire and immediately switched to the primary tire under caution during the lap 2 pit stops. McLaughlin ran the alternate tire during his second stint, and had to switch off of them under green flag conditions, which proved to be a disadvantage in the end.



#8 Kyffin Simpson driving #83 Callum Ilott during the Firestone Grand Prix of St. Pete

Photo by Anthony Bristol



#2 Josef Newgarden ahead of #9 Scott Dixon during the Firestone Grand Prix of St. Pete

Photo by Anthony Bristol



Firestone Grand Prix of St. Petersburg Podium



2nd
**Scott
Dixon**

1st
**Álex
Palou**

3rd
**Josef
Newgarden**

