

**DRAFT RELEASE**

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## **RARE MERCEDES-BENZ 500 SL RALLY JOINS 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL AMELIA ISLAND CONCOURS d'ELEGANCE'S WORLD RALLY CAR CLASS**

**Jacksonville, FL** - The 20<sup>th</sup> annual Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance will showcase a lone Mercedes-Benz factory rally car that never competed in the World Championship but was specially built for two-time World Rally Champion Walter Rohrl in 1980.

The Mercedes-Benz SLs have earned a well-deserved reputation as civilized, high speed, high-comfort grand touring coupes with the emphasis on speed and comfort. The Mercedes-Benz SL family is the antithesis of the typical smaller, radically modified versions of small, mass produced economy cars or the specially created, single purpose, sometimes single use, cars that have become common in the World Championship rallying.

All Mercedes-Benz's SLs -- for "super light" -- descend from the iconic 1952 Le Mans 24 Hour-winning 300 SL coupes with their signature "gullwing" doors. The philosophy that created world class racing grand touring cars was a solid foundation for a world championship-class rally car.

In 1978 Hannu Mikkola's 450 SLC won the brutal Bandama Rally for Mercedes-Benz On Africa's Ivory Coast. Bjorn Waldegard followed up with another Mercedes SLC Bandama victory in 1979, all clearing a path to the 500 SL Rally's role in the World Championship.

The 500 SL Rally is a one-off prototype intended for the 1981 World Rally Championship. With a shortened wheelbase, 220 pound weight reduction and a modified 5-liter 320 hp V-8 light alloy engine, the 500 SL Rally was an improved, refined and more powerful version of the 1979 and '80 Bandama winners. It was never permitted to fulfill its intended mission when Mercedes-Benz ceased its rallying activities at the end of the 1980 season.

After duty as a test and reconnaissance car for the Bandama Rally, the 500 SL Rally was assigned to Scuderia Kassel, a German dealer team, for the 1982 and '83 German Rally Championship.

"It's an unexpected treat to have this extraordinarily rare Mercedes-Benz on the field; the 500 SL Rally is a radically different take on the entire rally car ethos," said Mark Becker, vice-chairman of the Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance. "You can tell that there's Le Mans and Mille Miglia DNA in the 500 SL Rally's veins from the days when world championship sports car racing was a pure blood ancestor of today's open-road rally championship."

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***AMELIA'S RARE MERCEDES-BENZ 500 SL RALLY . . . cont.***

The unique Mercedes-Benz 500 SL Rally will join a small and exotic fleet of rally championship Lancias and Porsches on Amelia's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary field on March 15, 2015.

The 2015 Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance will be held March 13-15<sup>th</sup> on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> fairways of The Golf Club of Amelia Island at The Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island. The show's Foundation has donated over \$2.5 million to Community Hospice of Northeast Florida, Inc. and other charities on Florida's First Coast since its inception in 1996. In 2013 the Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance won *Octane Magazine's* EFG International Historic Motoring Event of the Year award.

*About the Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance*

*Now in its second decade, the Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance is among the top automotive events in the world. Always held the second full weekend in March, "Amelia" draws over 300 rare vehicles from collections around the world to The Golf Club of Amelia Island, The Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island for a celebration of the automobile like no other. The 20<sup>th</sup> annual Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance is scheduled for March 13-15, 2015. For more information, visit [www.ameliaconcours.org](http://www.ameliaconcours.org) or call 904-636-0027.*

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