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Here we go: The 2022 LIQUI MOLY Motorcycle Grand Prix of Germany is up and running

- Last year's runner-up Francesco Bagnaia lauds Fabio Quartararo
- Stefan Bradl "feels the atmosphere"
- Six world championship riders enjoy a friendly E-bike race ahead of the race weekend

Hohenstein-Ernstthal. The stage is set for the big motorsport party at the 2022 LIQUI MOLY Motorcycle Grand Prix of Germany. The first two races of the weekend took place on Thursday: At a media event at Arena-E in Mülsen, six MotoGP stars went head to head on electric pit bikes and in karts. The traditional press conference on Thursday afternoon heralded the official part of the race weekend at the Sachsenring. The big question: Who will succeed eight-time world champion Marc Marquez as the new "King of the Ring"? The Honda factory rider misses this weekend's race as he recovers from a shoulder operation.

Francesco Bagnaia: Fabio Quartararo "the best rider at the moment"

Reigning MotoGP world champion Fabio Quartararo looks a good bet for the throne. The 23-year-old Frenchman travels to the 3.7-kilometre Sachsenring as championship leader. The Yamaha rider dominated the most recent race at Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya. Quartararo finished third in last year's LIQUI MOLY Motorcycle Grand Prix of Germany. Last year's runner-up in the world championship, Francesco Bagnaia, is full of praise for his rival: "Fabio is the best rider at the moment," said the Ducati rider. "He is simply riding in perfect harmony with his bike."

Quartararo was keen to point out the perils of the demanding Sachsenring: "The race is one of the longest on the calendar. Once you have 15 laps behind you, you still have another 15 to come. Mentally, that is a big challenge. The race feels as though it lasts two hours." It took Marquez just 41:07.243 minutes to seal his victory last year.

Aprilia rider Aleix Espargaro is second in the championship heading to Germany. The Spaniard claimed the first MotoGP victory ever for himself and Aprilia at this year's Grand Prix of Argentina. He also finished on the podium four times in a row, courtesy of four third places, and came very close to adding to that run last time out in Barcelona. "The Sachsenring has always been a good circuit for me. We have always been competitive here for the past two or three years," says an optimistic Espargaro. In 2021, he crossed the finish line in seventh place.

Local favourite Stefan Bradl is standing in for the injured Marquez. The German will be in Repsol Honda colours for the second time at the Sachsenring, having previously represented the team there in 2019. However, his own expectations are relatively low: "We are not in a situation, in which we can think

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about victories or podiums. Of the four Honda riders, that rings particularly true for me. If Marc were here, it would be a different story.” Having said that, Bradl did finish in the top ten three years ago.

Should results not go his way, it will not be down to the atmosphere at the circuit, which promises to be spectacular: “We have fans back at the track for the first time since 2019. I can already feel the excitement and atmosphere. We will see packed grandstands at the weekend.” Bradl is aware of the situation he finds himself in: “I feel really privileged to be contesting my home GP on a factory Honda. I don’t know when that will happen again. For this reason, I want to enjoy it from the first lap of the first free practice to the race on Sunday.”

Many fans flocked to the Sachsenring on Thursday and used the pit walk to get really close to their stars. There has also been a fantastic atmosphere as anticipation builds ahead of the LIQUI MOLY Motorcycle Grand Prix of Germany in the campsites around the circuit.

E-bike race to warm up

This morning, six world championship riders sharpened their knives for the first time at this event. MotoGP rider Johann Zarco, the Moto2 duo of Marcel Schrötter and Jeremy Alcoba, and Moto3 riders Sergio Garcia, Tatsuki Suzuki and David Muñoz took to the kart track at Arena-E in Mülsen, not far from the Sachsenring, for an E-bike race, in which they fought hard for every centimetre and fraction of a second. Victory went to young Spaniard Muñoz. Frenchman Zarco got the upper hand in the subsequent kart race.

The serious action on the real track gets underway at 09:00 on Friday morning. The Moto3 class kicks off proceedings at the Sachsenring with its free practice session. All the world championship classes, as well as the young riders in the Red Bull MotoGP Rookies Cup and the Northern Talent Cup, will complete two free practices. Qualifying also awaits the stars of tomorrow early on Friday evening. Motorcycle fans can also look forward to the historic motorcycle exhibition, powered by MOTUL, and the Red Bull racing circus on Friday. From 19:00, the kart hall at the entrance to Goldbachstraße will be transformed into a party mile: DJ Fladsound and the band Stinger will provide the entertainment.

Tickets for MotoGP at the Sachsenring are still available from the online ticket shop at adac.de/motogp, as well as by phone on 03723/8099111 and E-mail (info@sachsenring-event.de). Tickets purchased for the 2020 and 2021 Motorcycle Grands Prix remain valid for the 2022 race weekend.

Media Contact

ADAC e.V.

Oliver Runschke, T +49 89 76 76 69 65, E-mail oliver.runschke@adac.de

Kay-Oliver Langendorff, T +49 89 76 76 69 36, E-mail kay.langendorff@adac.de

adac.de/motogp

adac.de/motorsport

