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Sachsenring fever: Charity Run, Pit Walk and Márquez's record quest

- **Marc Márquez sets his sights on championship leaders and another piece of MotoGP history**
- **BplusL Charity Run and Pit Walk excellently attended**
- **Minute's applause for Marc van der Straten**

The 2026 Liqui Moly Motorcycle Grand Prix of Germany is under starter's orders. The first events on the varied and entertaining programme for the German round of the MotoGP championship made for an exuberant atmosphere, with the popular BplusL Charity Run on Wednesday evening, and the traditional Pit Walk and press conference on Thursday. On the track, Spanish world champion Marc Márquez will be hungry to continue his pursuit of world championship leader Jorge Martín. Despite a short period out of action with an injury, the Ducati star now trails his compatriot by just 40 points - with a maximum 37 up for grabs at the weekend.

Márquez could also make yet more history this weekend: should he claim his tenth MotoGP victory at the Sachsenring, he would equal Giacomo Agostini's record for the most victories at a single circuit in the top class of motorcycle racing. The Italian motorcycle legend won ten times in Imatra, Finland. "You need a different approach here to the last round in Assen," explains the nine-time world champion. "I will give it everything from the first practice session, in order to understand exactly what level we are at. I would like to challenge for the podium. However, there are a few riders who are currently stronger than me: Martín, Marco Bezzecchi and Fabio Di Giannantonio."

Fifth place in the sprint and third in the Grand Prix at the Dutch TT in Assen a fortnight ago was enough to see Aprilia rider Martín climb to the top of the world championship table, ahead of his team-mate Bezzecchi from Italy. The momentum in the internal battle between the two team-mates is with the 2024 world champion. "Together with Aprilia, we are doing a great job," says Martín. "However, I am not particularly bothered about who is first, second or third in the overall standings at the moment. The championship is very evenly balanced. All the riders are strong, and you never know whether you will hold onto the lead at the top of the table for long. With that in mind, I am focussing solely on making progress with Aprilia."

Ai Ogura from Aprilia customer team Trackhouse Racing claimed his maiden MotoGP win in Assen. In doing so, he became the first Japanese rider to taste victory at the pinnacle of motorcycle racing since Makoto Tamada's success at the Grand Prix in Motegi, Japan, in 2004. At the Sachsenring, the 25-year-old could become the first Japanese to win to Grands Prix in a row in the top class. However, Ogura has been keen to play down expectations: "Last year, we had big problems here. For this reason, my goal is to finish in the top six."

BplusL Charity Run and Pit Walk again prove to be crowd-pullers

The first eye-catching sporting performances came on Wednesday evening, when the BplusL Charity run around the Sachsenring opened the diverse event programme. The pit lane was also extremely busy on Thursday afternoon: the unique Pit Walk allowed MotoGP fans to watch their heroes at work

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from close quarters, and to grab an autograph or selfie - a real highlight for any fan. The premiere of the MotoGP Family Day also attracted motorcycle fans big and small to the kart hall, where there was an entertaining programme.

On Thursday afternoon, thoughts were with Marc van der Straten, who passed away recently. The Belgian was 78 years old and was the original founder of the Marc VDS team. The team has raced in the world championship since 2010 and guided Spaniard Esteve "Tito" Rabat (2014), Italy's Franco Morbidelli (2017) and Marc Márquez's brother Álex (2019) to the world title in the Moto2 class. As a mark of respect to van der Straten, The world championship entourage paid their respects to van der Straten with a minute's applause on the start/finish straight, rather than a minute's silence.

On Friday, the action at the 3.7-kilometre Sachsenring kicks off with the first practice session for the Moto3 class at 09:00. The programme features two practice sessions for all world championship classes, as well as the Red Bull MotoGP Rookies Cup and the Moto4 Northern Cup. The two junior series will also hold their qualifying sessions on Friday evening.

There are still some tickets available for the Liqui Moly Motorcycle Grand Prix of Germany. Prices start at € 39 and tickets can be purchased online at adac.de/motogp, by phone on 03723/8099111, or by E-mail to info@sachsenring-event.de. Admission to the standing areas is free for under 14s when accompanied by a paying adult.

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