

Corvette duo Pommer and Kirchhöfer win season opener at Oschersleben

- Corvette pairing secure victory in Saturday's Super Sports Car League race
- Three Audis in P2 to P4 as rain produces dramatic finish

Oschersleben: Markus Pommer (28, GER) and Marvin Kirchhöfer (25, GER, both Callaway Competition) are the first two winners of the 2019 ADAC GT Masters. In a thrilling rain-affected race on the Saturday of the opening weekend at Oschersleben, the Corvette came home ahead of second-placed Patric Niederhauser (27, CH) and Kelvin van der Linde (22, ZA, both HCB-Rutronik Racing) in an Audi and third-placed Jeffrey Schmidt (25, CH) and Christopher Haase (31, GER, both BWT Mücke Motorsport), also in an Audi. "A dream start," said winner Markus Pommer. "We were aiming for a place in the Top Five and certainly weren't expecting to actually win."

Key facts, Motorsport Arena Oschersleben, Oschersleben, Round 1 of 14

Track length: 3,667 metres

Weather: 17°C, cloudy with light rain towards the end

Pole position: Marvin Dienst (Schütz Motorsport, Mercedes-AMG GT3), 1:23.220 mins

Winners: Markus Pommer and Marvin Kirchhöfer (Callaway Competition, Corvette C7 GT3-R)

Fastest race lap: Marvin Dienst (Schütz Motorsport, Mercedes-AMG GT3), 1:24.798 mins

Two-way battle for lead dominates first stint of race

Up until the round of mandatory pit stops, the opening race of the 13th ADAC GT Masters season was effectively a contest between two drivers: pole-sitter Marvin Dienst (22, GER, Schütz Motorsport), who successfully defended pole position in his Mercedes-AMG to maintain the lead, and Corvette man David Jahn (28, GER, RWT Racing), who moved up from fourth on the grid to take second place on the first lap. Separated by a gap of just under half a second, the two of them reeled off the laps up front while gradually drawing away from the rest of the field. Their lead on the car in third place was around seven seconds when the pit stop window opened. The Mercedes-AMG and the Corvette stayed out in front after team-mates Aidan Read (20, AUS) and Sven Barth (38, GER) had taken over.

Rainy closing phase produces drama

The battle for P1 between the two drivers out in front developed into a three-way contest just a few laps after the pit stops. Eventual race winner Marvin Kirchhöfer took over the Callaway Corvette in fifth place from team-mate Pommer. Following the driver handover, Kirchhöfer moved up into third place and was able to close the gap on the two leading cars after posting a succession of hot laps. Rain began to fall with less than ten minutes to go before the end, causing positions at the front to change hands several times. Barth and Kirchhöfer briefly made contact with six laps to go. Barth ran over the wet kerbs as a result, spun and dropped out of the leading group. On the next lap, Kirchhöfer also passed Aidan Read in P1 to move into first place on a track that was continually getting wetter. Audi driver Kelvin van der Linde (22, ZA, HCB-Rutronik Racing), who was directly behind them, also seized the chance to overtake and slipped past the Australian to take P2. The first two positions were now effectively in the bag. With a lead of 3.6 seconds, Pommer and Kirchhöfer secured victory in this first race of 14, leaving van der Linde and Patric Niederhauser (27, CH) to take the runner-up spot.

MEDIA INFORMATION

Meanwhile, series newcomer Aidan Read had a battle on his hands with two other Audi R8 LMSs in the closing stages. In the end, the man from Perth and his partner Dienst had to settle for fifth place as Jeffrey Schmidt and Christopher Haase as well as Ricardo Feller (18, CH) and Dries Vanthoor (21, BEL, both Montaplast by Land-Motorsport) surged past. It was an outcome that also gave Schmidt the win in the Pirelli Junior classification for drivers under 25 years of age.

Sixth place went to defending champion Robert Renauer (34, GER) and his new team-mate Thomas Preining (20, AUT, both Precote Herberth Motorsport) in the best-placed Porsche 911 GT3 R. Rookie Preining impressed with a combative stint in which he gained five positions. In seventh place were Max Hofer (19, AUT) and Christopher Mies (29, GER, both Montaplast by Land-Motorsport) in yet another Audi R8, ahead of Corvette drivers Jahn and Barth. Barth was relieved to have at least won Saturday's Pirelli Trophy.

Indy Dontje (26, NL) and Maximilian Götz (33, GER, both Mann-Filter Team HTP) in a Mercedes-AMG GT3 mounted a charge from 23rd on the grid to finish ninth. The Aston Martin Vantage GT3 driven by Daniel Keilwitz (29, GER) and Maxime Martin (33, BEL, both Propeak Performance) had originally made it into the Top Ten on its series debut. However, it was subsequently disqualified for having an incorrectly installed fire extinguisher on board. As a result, the Ferrari of Luca Ludwig (30, GER) and Sebastian Asch (32, GER, both HB Racing) moved up into tenth.

ADAC GT Masters newcomer Fabian Vettel (20, GER) and partner Philip Ellis (26, GB, both Mann-Filter Team HTP) finished well down the field in 26th place after incurring a penalty for cutting the mandatory stop too short.

Comments from the winners:

Markus Pommer (Callaway Competition, Corvette C7 GT3-R): "I had a very good start, but I was unable to get past Patric Niederhauser on the inside. That's why I held back, because it's important to reach the end of the race without getting involved in any incidents. The weather towards the end played into our hands. Marvin is very strong in the rain. I have already had wins with Audi and Mercedes-AMG in the ADAC GT Masters, but never in the very first race, as I have now in a Corvette."

Marvin Kirchhöfer (Callaway Competition, Corvette C7 GT3-R): "I'm very happy. Last year we scored two ducks here at Oschersleben, so with this first race alone, we've already done a better job. The race was a bit chaotic. I'm really sorry for the second Corvette, which was so well placed before it had a spin. It was a misunderstanding with Sven Barth. I think he wanted to let me past but went a bit too far wide onto the kerbs. With the rain having got heavier at this stage, it was very slippery and he spun. I drove in a wet race at Monza last weekend, so the conditions today didn't come as a shock to the system. I'm used to the rain. During my time in Formel ADAC, I drove here at Oschersleben in changeable weather and always managed to cope quite well. So in the end, it was a bit easier for me to go on the attack and overtake."

MEDIA INFORMATION

ADAC GT Masters: Race calendar for 2019

26/04/19 – 28/04/19	Motorsport Arena Oschersleben
17/05/19 – 19/05/19	Most (CZ)
07/06/19 – 09/06/19	Red Bull Ring (A)
09/08/19 – 11/08/19	Circuit Zandvoort (NL)
16/08/19 – 18/08/19	Nürburgring
13/09/19 – 15/09/19	Hockenheimring Baden-Württemberg
27/09/19 – 29/09/19	Sachsenring

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