

Masterstroke by Patric Niederhauser and Kelvin van der Linde

- Audi duo clinch ADAC GT Masters title early with victory in Sunday's race
- Ricardo Feller winner on the day in the Pirelli Junior class
- Sven Barth champion in the Pirelli Trophy with races to spare

Hockenheim: In a masterful display on Sunday, the Audi R8 LMS pairing of Patric Niederhauser (27, CH) and Kelvin van der Linde (23, ZA, both HCB-Rutronik Racing) wrapped up the ADAC GT Masters drivers' championship with a lights-to-flag victory at the Hockenheimring. The new champions won the twelfth of 14 races in the 2019 season ahead of fellow Audi drivers Ricardo Feller (19, CH) and Dries Vanthoor (21, BEL, both Montaplast by Land-Motorsport) and third-placed Rolf Ineichen (41, CH) and Franck Perera (35, FRA, both Orange1 by GRT Grasser) in a Lamborghini Huracán GT3 Evo. Matters were also settled early in the 2019 Pirelli Trophy, with Corvette man Sven Barth (38, GER, RWT Racing) establishing an unassailable lead in the classification for amateur drivers. "I really don't know what to say," said Patric Niederhauser afterwards. "It's difficult to put my thoughts into words. An incredible feeling. I still have tears in my eyes."

Key facts, Hockenheimring, Hockenheim, Round 12 of 14

Length of track: 4,574 metres

Weather: 29°C, sunny

Pole position: Kelvin van der Linde (HCB-Rutronik Racing, Audi R8 LMS), 1:38.326 mins

Winners: Patric Niederhauser and Kelvin van der Linde (HCB-Rutronik Racing, Audi R8 LMS)

Fastest race lap: Kelvin van der Linde (HCB-Rutronik Racing, Audi R8 LMS), 1:39.899 mins

Spectators over the weekend: 18,000+

Niederhauser and van der Linde live up to role as favourites

In a victory that could hardly have been more decisive, Niederhauser and van der Linde wrapped up the title win before the season end, having started the third-to-last race of the season with a massive points advantage. Van der Linde lined up in pole position and was still in P1 when he handed over the car to Swiss team-mate Niederhauser at the mandatory pit stop. Niederhauser was uncatchable after that, going on to secure a second win of the season by a margin of 5.158 seconds. As a result, the two HCB-Rutronik Racing drivers are the new 2019 ADAC GT Masters champions. With a lead of 55 points and only 50 on the table in the finale at the Sachsenring, no one can now beat them, so for the first time in ADAC GT Masters history, the championship has been decided before the final weekend. This is Niederhauser's first title in the Super Sports Car League and van der Linde's second following his triumph in 2014.

Lamborghini drivers Rolf Ineichen and Franck Perera battled it out with the Audi of Ricardo Feller and Dries Vanthoor to decide the runner-up spot. Perera was in second place before pitting, but Feller took over in P2 and effectively won the Pirelli Junior class when the Lamborghini's V10 engine failed to fire up again immediately after the driver handover. Perera and Ineichen in the Lamborghini finished third behind the Audi with a deficit of 7.3 seconds. Ineichen secured a win in the Pirelli Trophy stakes for the sixth time in 2019, but the title itself went to Sven Barth today, as he and partner David Jahn (28, GER) finished 15th overall and second in class. This is Barth's first title win in the ADAC GT Masters.

Timo Bernhard (38, GER) and Klaus Bachler (28, AUT, both K&S Team75 Bernhard) finished fourth in their Porsche 911 GT3 R. Filip Salaquarda (35, CZ) and Frank Stippler (44, GER, both Team ISR) in another Audi R8 were fifth, recording their best result of the season to date, followed by the Porsche

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911 of Robert Renauer (34, GER), now relegated to the status of former champion, and Thomas Preining (21, AUT, both Precote Herberth Motorsport). P7 went to Indy Dontje (26, NL) and Maximilian Götz (33, GER, both Mann-Filter Team HTP) in the best of the Mercedes-AMG contingent. Saturday's winners, Christian Engelhart (32, GER) and Mirko Bortolotti (29, ITA, both Orange1 by GRT Grasser), currently second in the standings, battled their way up into eighth place from tenth on the grid. They had been the closest rivals of Niederhauser and van der Linde going into the race.

Daniel Keilwitz (30, GER) and Jimmy Eriksson (28, SWE) took ninth place for the second time this weekend on their first joint appearance in the Mercedes AMG of Team Zakspeed BKK Mobil Oil Racing. Rounding off the Top Ten were Adrien de Leener (30, BEL) and Matteo Cairoli (23, ITA) in the second of two 911s fielded by Küs Team75 Bernhard.

Comments from the winners:

Patric Niederhauser (HCB-Rutronik Racing, Audi R8 LMS): "For me, it was definitely more nerve-racking to watch from the garage than to be in the car. It was actually Kelvin who did all the work and laid the foundation for our victory with the pole. In the race, he was able to keep Franck behind him right up until the round of pit stops. After the driver change, I was initially unsure of where we were. That's why I pushed until it became clear that I still had the lead. I was then able to manage the gap. The car was good today. A big thank you to the whole team – they always do such an incredible job. It's simply awesome to work with a team of this quality."

Kelvin van der Linde (HCB-Rutronik Racing, Audi R8 LMS): "Unbelievable. The day got off to a great start with the pole position – my first for several years in the ADAC GT Masters. And now we have clinched the title with a perfect race. We knew we had a chance of winning the championship, but we didn't want to dwell on it too much. We tried to drive our own race without being too aggressive. The second half of the race, when I was in the pits, was amazing. There were so many people in the garage, I could barely move. I still don't have the words. I think it's going to be a while before it sinks in that we've won the title. We now intend to celebrate – and we won't be holding back!"

ADAC GT Masters race calendar for 2019

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|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| 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 |

Further information can be found at www.adac.de/gt-masters

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