

Press Release – 26/09/12 No 77

## Drivers to watch: Main title contenders in the ADAC GT Masters

- Seven drivers in championship battle ahead of finale
- Who are the main contenders?

Seven drivers are in the frame to lift the ADAC GT Masters title at the finale in Hockenheim (28th to 30th September). With the final two races of the season still to be contested, Corvette, Porsche, Mercedes-Benz and BMW ALPINA all have a chance of cracking the title. Diego Alessi and Daniel Keilwitz top the table in a Corvette. Hard on the heels of the championship leaders follow: Porsche driver Christian Engelhart, Mercedes-Benz pair Sebastian Asch/Maximilian Götz and defending champion Dino Lunardi along with co-driver Maxime Martin in the BMW ALPINA B6. But who exactly are the championship contenders in the title race?

**Championship leaders in a Corvette: Diego Alessi (40, Italy) and Daniel Keilwitz (23, Villingen), Callaway Competition, Corvette, 151 points**

Diego Alessi translates words into deeds: the Italian lawyer announced before the season began that he was in it to win it. Diego is one of the best kept secrets in the sports car scene and has long been active in GT racing. Last year, his first season in the ADAC GT Masters, Alessi was quick but lacked consistency and luck in races. Alessi has been on pole in three races so far in 2012. Who is your favourite to take the title, Diego? “Porsche will be very competitive in Hockenheim. In view of the track’s characteristics, the Porsche 911 should be our biggest competitor for the title and the car to beat at Hockenheim.”

Daniel Keilwitz did not follow the classic racing car driver route into the ADAC GT Masters via open-wheel racing but learned his craft in ADAC PROCAR and the MINI CHALLENGE. Keilwitz, the quiet but fast driver from the Black Forest already knows how to win championships from the 2010 season: he won the FIA GT3 European Championship two years ago with Callaway. Now the 23-year-old has the chance of adding a second title to his tally. Who is your favourite to secure the title, Daniel? “All the drivers who are currently in the title race are extremely strong and have been quick throughout the entire season. The one who does the best job in Hockenheim will end up champion. It’s difficult to say who I favour.”

**The Lone Ranger in the Porsche: Christian Engelhart (25, Kösching) Team Geyer & Weinig - Schütz Motorsport, Porsche 911, 144 points**

The Porsche specialist is in his first full season in the ADAC GT Masters this 2012 and is already chasing titles. Engelhart’s debut race in the 2011 ADAC GT Masters caused a sensation; he won his first race at his first attempt. Engelhart is very busy because he is contesting both the ADAC GT Masters and the Porsche Supercup. Since Engelhart has shared the Porsche with the two British drivers Nick Tandy (27) and Sean Edwards (25) during the course of the season, the 25 year old is the Lone Ranger in the battle for the championship and will be aided by Edwards at Hockenheim. Engelhart learned his motor racing craft during two years in Formula BMW ADAC. Who is your favourite for the title, Christian? “My money is on the Corvette. Firstly, Alessi/Keilwitz are currently top of the table, and I believe that the Corvette will run very well at Hockenheim.”

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04/05/12 – 06/05/12

Sachsenring  
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Nürburgring \*  
13/07/12 – 15/07/12

Red Bull Ring (A)  
10/08/12 – 12/08/12

Lausitzring  
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**The Men in Black in the Mercedes-Benz:** Sebastian Asch (26, Ammerbuch) / Maximilian Götz (26, Uffenheim) kfzteile24 MS RACING Team, Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG, 142 points

Sebastian Asch, son of touring car legend Roland Asch is an integral part of the ADAC GT Masters scene. Asch moved in his fourth ADAC GT Masters season to Mercedes-Benz, the manufacturer with whom his father enjoyed great DTM success in the nineties. Asch junior is preparing to continue the successful family tradition with the three-pointed star and in 2012 is in the title race at the finale for the first time. Asch is the most experienced driver of the seven candidates in the running for the ADAC GT Masters title; at Hockenheim, he will be lining up on the grid for races 59 and 60 in the ADAC GT Masters. Who is your favourite for the title, Sebastian? "Of course, we will take the title, so you ought to ask who will be runner-up. But seriously, the Corvettes are the strongest opponents in my opinion, but the Porsche is not to be underestimated, as I know from experience. The Corvette has not always been the most reliable and has already shown some shortcomings in the wet this season. If the race is affected by rain, however, the Porsche is the car to watch."

Maximilian Götz is one of many drivers to have come up through an ADAC development programme. In 2002, Götz was runner-up to Nico Rosberg in the Formula BMW ADAC. One year later, 26-year-old Sebastian Vettel arrived on the scene at the ADAC motor racing academy and clinched the title. In Formula 3 too, Götz has also competed with another exceptionally talented driver: his team-mate then, Lewis Hamilton. This is his second consecutive ADAC GT Masters season in the Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG. Along with team-mate Asch, Götz has driven with skill and consistency in the title race but is still without a win in the ADAC GT Masters. Maximilian, who is your favourite for the title? "A tricky question. Porsche and Corvette have good top speed and therefore the best chance of overtaking successfully. On the other hand, our Mercedes and the BMW ALPINA should come into their own in the Motodrom, where it is certainly much more difficult to overtake. I really rate the Corvette's chances. If it rains, though, then I think the BMW ALPINA will do well."

**The outsiders in the BMW ALPINA B6:** Dino Lunardi (33, France) / Maxime Martin (26, Belgium), ALPINA BMW, ALPINA B6, 133 points

As reigning ADAC GT Masters Champion, Dino Lunardi has the chance to become the first driver in the League of Super Sports Cars to successfully defend his title. With seven wins under his belt, the GT specialist from Nimes in the south of France is now approaching the end of his second full season in the ADAC GT Masters and has proved to be one of the most successful drivers so far. Who is your favourite to secure the title, Dino? "Asch and Götz will be up there with the leaders. Both have appreciated what it takes to be consistently among the front-runners throughout the season and at every track. These two have yet to put a foot wrong, otherwise they would not have been in the points so consistently. What's more, I think that the Mercedes-Benz will prove very capable at Hockenheim."

Maxime Martin is currently Belgium's hottest export item in terms of racing and is showing exactly why he is considered to be one of the fastest GT drivers on the grid in this season's ADAC GT Masters. Martin joined the ADAC GT Masters after two years competing in the FIA GT1 World Championship and can boast an impressive record: Martin has won five of the 16 ADAC GT Masters he has contested so far. Just like Sebastian Asch, Martin is the son of a racing driver and grew up surrounded by the sights and sounds of the paddock: his father is Belgian motor racing legend Jean-Michel Martin. BMW

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has also noticed the 26-year-old's talents and has invited Martin to test drive the BMW M3 DTM at the end of the season. Who is your favourite to secure the title, Maxime? "We all have a good chance still at Hockenheim in the title race, since anything can happen. If I have to pick a favourite, though, then I'm going for Mercedes-Benz drivers Asch and Götz."

**ADAC GT Masters on TV:** All 16 races of the ADAC GT Masters are broadcast live at 12.15pm on Saturdays and Sundays in Germany, Austria and Switzerland on free-to-air TV channel *kabel eins*. Sports channel SPORT1 will feature highlights of the ADAC GT Masters from the Hockenheimring in the ADAC Masters Weekend Magazine on 6th October at 13,00am. In addition, live timing from all practice sessions and races to supplement live TV broadcasts can be found at [www.adac-gt-masters.de](http://www.adac-gt-masters.de).

**Note for Press:** ADAC GT Masters Web site: access to Press Area via 'Press' in the top menu bar at [www.adac.de/motorsport](http://www.adac.de/motorsport).

Further information available at [www.adac.de/motorsport](http://www.adac.de/motorsport) and [www.adac-gt-masters.de](http://www.adac-gt-masters.de)

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