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Masterly display earns Landgraf their third win of the season

- **Kalender and Seppänen lead from start to finish to win endurance race**
- **First podium of the season for Emil Frey Racing**
- **Endurance format a huge success again at Spa-Francorchamps**

Spa-Francorchamps. Tom Kalender (Hamm/Sieg) and Elias Seppänen (FIN) from Landgraf Motorsport were in unstoppable form on Saturday at Spa-Francorchamps in Belgium: the Mercedes-AMG drivers left no doubt as to their title ambitions, producing an emphatic display to cross the finish line in first place at the end of the ADAC GT Masters endurance race. In doing so, they also extended their lead in the championship. "I had a good start and was immediately able to pull clear of the rest of the field. The strategy really paid dividends and the car was perfectly set up. I hope we can continue this way on Sunday," said Seppänen after race seven of the championship. The Swiss duo of Alain Valente and Jean-Luc D'Auria (both Emil Frey Racing) finished runner-up in their Ferrari 296 GT3 to earn their first podium of the season. Third place went to the Walkenhorst Motorsport pairing of Denis Bulatov (Cologne) and Mike David Ortmann (Ahrensfelde) in an Aston Martin Vantage GT3.

The GT3 racers started the race at the prestigious and impressive Ardennes Rollercoaster in sunny conditions and with temperatures around 22 degrees Celsius. Seppänen managed to open a 4.6-second lead over the Emil Frey Racing Ferrari at the start. However, a crash involving Switzerland's Grégory de Sybourg (FK Performance Motorsport) in the first quarter of an hour resulted in a safety car phase, which saw the field draw back together. The Landgraf driver again had the upper hand at the re-start, and again raced away from his pursuers before pulling into the pits from first place. The Finn handed the car over to Kalender, who returned to the track in seventh place, as various teams opted for different strategies. Alexander Schwarzer (D) and Swiss driver Alexander Fach now found themselves out in front in a Porsche 911 GT3 R run by Fach Auto Tech. However, a few laps later, Schwarzer was overtaken by Finn Wiebelhaus (Obertshausen) from Haupt Racing Team in a Mercedes-AMG GT3. One lap later, Wiebelhaus was forced to return to the pit lane for setting off too early after his stop. He consequently lost time and a number of positions. In the meantime, Kalender had fought his way back to third place: "Elias was lightning fast at the start and put our car in a very promising position. When it was my turn, I had to hold my own against a few rivals in the midfield, which I very much enjoyed."

After the second stop, it was again Seppänen who set the pace at the front of the field, and skilfully guided the Mercedes-AMG home to take a commanding victory. In second place, the Emil Frey Racing team celebrated its best result of the season. "Our race pace was super. We gave it everything and are mega happy with our first podium," said D'Auria after Saturday's race. Ortmann came home third and summed up his race as follows: "Unfortunately, the start was not ideal. However, with a super strategy and a strong second stint, we were able to make up a few positions and finally make it back onto the podium. We want to go on the attack again in the sprint race on Sunday."

Media Information

Fourth across the finish line were Maxime Oosten (NL) and Leon Köhler (Erlenbach am Main) from FK Performance in a BMW M4 GT3. Rounding out the top five was the Aston Martin Vantage GT3 of Chandler Hull (USA) and Nico Hantke (Hürth/both Walkenhorst Motorsport), who also claimed victory in the ProAm class. Twins Sandro and Juliano Holzem (both Polch) finished third in an Audi R8 LMS GT3 for Land Motorsport, ahead of the second pair of twins, Michael and Johannes Kapfinger (both Passau/Team Joos by TwinBusch). The Lamborghini Huracán GT3 Evo2 of Grasser Racing Team, with Chilean Benjamin Hites and Tim Zimmermann at the wheel, ended the race in eighth place. American Taylor Hagler and Austria's Gerhard Tweraser (both Grasser Racing Team) came home ninth, ahead of Fittje and Wiebelhaus in tenth.

Sunday's qualifying session starts at 09:00 and will determine the starting positions for the sprint race, which promises to provide plenty of action when it gets underway at 13:55. Both sessions will be streamed live and free of charge, with commentary in German and English, on the ADAC Motorsport YouTube channel at youtube.com/@ADACMotorsports. Television partner Sport1 will show the key scenes from the race at 17:00 on free-to-air German TV.

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