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Breath-taking finale at the Salzburgring: Fourie and Zimmermann take victory

- **BMW duo Fourie and Zimmermann new ADAC GT Masters leaders**
- **Double podium for Ford team HRT, with Gjerdrum and Dybionka ahead of Blum and Kalus**
- **Local favourite Leo Pichler fourth in a Porsche for Razoon – More than Racing**

Plainfeld. The opening ADAC GT Masters race at the Salzburgring came to a thrilling conclusion. Tim Zimmermann (29/Langenargen) and Leyton Fourie (20/ZAF/both FK Performance Motorsport) took the chequered flag in their BMW M4 GT3 Evo, just 0.493 seconds ahead of debutant Fabian Dybionka (17/POL) and Emil Gjerdrum (19/NOR/both Haupt Racing Team) in a Ford Mustang GT3. The victory was enough to catapult the winners to the top of the table. Third place went to the second HRT Ford, with Niklas Kalus (21/Duisburg) and Kiano Blum (19/AUT) at the wheel. "I am thrilled with this win, because it was totally unexpected. The tests prior to this event did not point towards this happening. I was all the more surprised by the pace of the car - particularly in the middle stint. However, even after the field had settled down again towards the end of the race, it was so tight with the Ford that I did not really believe we were going to win," said a delighted Zimmermann after his seventh victory in the ADAC GT Masters. Team-mate Fourie added: "I am really pleased. I was thinking P4 after the first stint, but the decision to make the first stop and change the tyres was a great one. We got the maximum out of the situation, but I was still very surprised when my engineer told me that we were out in front. It was very tough to keep the Ford behind me at the end, especially as I was on older tyres. We are now happy, confident, and know what we have to do with regard to the championship. Despite that, I feel sorry for our rivals, as that is not the way we wanted to pick up points on them."

Before the race even began, pole-sitter Finn Zulauf (22/Königstein im Taunus/Liqui Moly Team Engstler Motorsport), the championship leader coming into the race, was forced to return his Lamborghini to the garage with a technical issue. Once the car had been repaired, Zulauf and Felix Hirsiger (28/CHE) did make it back onto the track, and went on to finish twelfth and pick up four valuable points. They now trail the new leaders Fourie and Zimmermann by 17 points. The race itself took place in mixed conditions, with rain falling on multiple occasions. Leo Pichler (24/AUT/Razoon - More than Racing) inherited pole position in the Porsche, and took an early race. Behind him, Simon Connor Primm (21/Großschirna/HGL Racing) slotted into second place in an Audi, followed by Kalus in a Ford and his team-mate Gjerdrum, who had sliced his way through to fourth place from eighth on the grid. Fourie was unable to make up any ground, and had to take up the chase in seventh place.

In the first pit stop phase, FK Performance was one of the few teams to call Fourie and Zimmermann straight in for a tyre change, while the other teams in the leading group opted for a shorter stop. Pichler's team-mate Colin Bönighausen (21/Isernhagen) returned to the track as the race leader. Behind him, spectators were treated to a fierce battle between the two Fords of Dybionka and Blum, with Austrian Blum coming out on top about halfway through his stint. The local favourite then set about putting pressure on the leading Porsche. However, the tables turned in the second phase of pit stops. With cold tyres on his Porsche, Pichler could do nothing to prevent himself from dropping back

to fourth. Fourie, on the other hand, now benefitted from a shorter stop than his rivals, and initially climbed from seventh to second place. With significantly more heat in his tyres, he was then able to overtake Kalus shortly after he had left the pit lane, and to move into the lead. The Ford racer was also passed by his team-mate Gjerdrum, who was then embroiled in an intense duel with Fourie right down to the finish line. "Leyton is my friend, and we know each other very well. I knew he would defend for his life, and that proved to be the case. It was really tight in turn five, but he hit the apex perfectly and I was not able to get past him," said Gjerdrum after finishing second. "I am really happy with the result. The car was like it was on rails, and we only missed out by a hair's breadth. If we can improve a little on Sunday, we will be challenging for the win."

Their team-mates Kalus and Blum were less thrilled with their third place, having been in contention for the win at one point. They lost roughly four seconds during their second stop, as a technical issue meant they had to count the time manually. "When I eventually returned to the track, our second car already had warm tyres and easily overtook us. Just one lap later, my tyres were there. However, I did not get another opportunity in the dirty air. I did my best and tried to close in on the brakes. Then, at some point, my front tyres gave up on me," said third-placed Kalus.

Fourth place eventually went to the duo that had led for much of the race in their Porsche: Pichler and Bönighausen. They too lost ground on cold tyres after the second stop. In fifth were Sandro and Juliano Holzem (22/Polch/both Schubert Motorsport), who fought back strongly from twelfth place on the grid. Robin Rogalski (26/POL) and Simon Connor Primm (21/Großschirma/both HGL Racing) were sixth in their Audi, having been passed by several opponents in their middle stint. They were followed home by Storm Gjerdrum (16/NOR) and Fabio Rauer (19/Stolberg/both FK Performance Motorsport) in another BMW, ahead of John Paul Southern (24/USA) and Jonas Karklys (36/LIT/both Liqui Moly Team Engstler Motorsport) in a Lamborghini Huracán GT3 Evo 2. Ninth place went to their team-mates Tim Hütter (19/AUT) and Ethan Brown (21/SGP). Completing the top ten were Jamie Day (20/GBR) and Baudouin Detout (25/FRA/both Comtoyou Racing) in an Aston Martin Vantage GT3 Evo.

The second qualifying session of the weekend takes place at 09:15 on Sunday and can be seen live at [Youtube.com/ADACMotorsports](https://www.youtube.com/ADACMotorsports). The race again gets underway at 14:05 and will be streamed in full length on [Joyn](#), [Servus TV On](#), and [YouTube](#).

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