

10/05/2013 – No 24

Verdonck & Kechele set record lap to secure pole for Ford GT

- Local favourite Nico Verdonck notches up first pole for Ford GT in five years
- Frank Kechele claims pole for Sunday's race in same car
- Kechele posts highest average lap speed in history of series

Rain at the beginning and end of the session ensured that qualifying for the first ever ADAC GT Masters at the Spa-Francorchamps Formula 1 circuit would be a thrilling affair. The driver partnership who best mastered the changeable weather in the Ardennes were Nico Verdonck (27, Belgium) and Frank Kechele (26, Ulm) in their Ford GT. In fact, the Lambda Performance duo qualified for pole position in both ADAC GT Masters races to be contested this weekend in Belgium. Furthermore, they not only secured the first Super Sports Car League pole position in five years for the iconic American sports car but also broke an existing record: in the second qualifying heat, Kechele averaged 181 km/h on his hot lap to book first place on the grid for the ADAC GT Masters race on Sunday.

Key facts: Spa-Francorchamps (Belgium)

Length of track: 7,004 metres

Weather: 11 °C, cloudy, light rain

Pole position for Race 1: Nico Verdonck (Lambda Performance, Ford GT), 02:20.789 mins

Pole Position for Race 2: Frank Kechele (Lambda Performance, Ford GT), 02:19.390 mins

Local favourite Verdonck dominates qualifying in changeable conditions

The pole position claimed by Nico Verdonck for the first race on Saturday resulted from perfect strategy. Although there was light drizzle at the start of the session, the Belgian left the pit lane on slicks. Verdonck was consistently the fastest driver – at first on a wet track, then in drying conditions and finally on a dry surface. Both Simon Knap (24) from the Netherlands in a DB Motorsport BMW Z4 and Maximilian Buhk (20) in a Polarweiss Racing Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG made one more attempt to crack the Ford driver's lap time but were unable to displace him from the number one spot. The strength of performance in qualifying suggests that Saturday's race will be a close-fought encounter: the first eight places on the grid have been booked by cars displaying no fewer than six different badges on their grilles.

"The team had a perfect strategy in qualifying today," said a delighted Verdonck. "I went out right at the start of qualifying onto a wet track and then stayed out because I saw that the rain was easing off. That was a smart decision. When the track was dry, my YOKOHAMA tyres had perfect grip, while the other drivers were still trying to get their tyres up to operating temperature."

Kechele makes it a double pole for Lambda Performance

Verdonck's team-mate Frank Kechele then showed that he had nerves of steel in the second qualifying heat for Sunday's race. Kechele bided his time until the halfway point before emerging from the pits. On his first flying lap, the 26-year-old moved into third place. A second hot lap followed immediately, catapulting him to the top of the timesheets and displacing Austrian driver Martin Ragginger (25) in the Tonino - Herberth Motorsport Porsche 911. When the rain set in again five minutes before the end of the qualifying, Kechele had his sixth ADAC GT Masters pole in the bag. "Getting pole position was the result of great teamwork," said a jubilant Kechele. "Our engineer sent us out onto the track at just the right time. Spa-Francorchamps is perfect for our Ford GT; there is probably no other track on the calendar that suits our car better."

Media information

Starting from the second row on Sunday will be defending champion Maximilian Götz (27) in a Polarweiss Racing Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG and René Rast (26) in an Audi R8 entered by Prosperia C. Abt Racing. The grid for the second race of the weekend is also an eclectic mix of vehicles, with six different marques having qualified in the Top Seven.

ADAC Sports Foundation protégé Marioneck is 'Speed King'

Corvette driver Lennart Marioneck (Callaway Competition) wrote his name into the history books on Friday. The 24-year-old ADAC Sports Foundation protégé from Munich reached a top speed of 271 km/h at the end of the long Kimm straight in the second qualifying session at Spa. No ADAC GT Masters driver has ever been clocked at a higher speed.

The 2013 ADAC GT Masters will once again be contested over 16 rounds on eight race weekends throughout the year. All 16 races of the ADAC GT Masters will be shown on free-to-air TV station *kabel eins*. The live broadcasts to audiences in Germany, Austria and Switzerland commence at 12 noon on both the Saturday and the Sunday. The Super Sports Car League is being hosted by two new venues this time: the Formula 1 circuit at Spa-Francorchamps and the Slovakia Ring in Slovakia.

Tickets for all ADAC GT Masters races start at €20 and can be purchased online at www.adac.de, from any ADAC branch office, online at www.eventim.de or from one of the more than 20.000 Eventim outlets throughout Europe.

Qualifying 1: Top Five

1. Nico Verdonck (Lambda Performance, Ford GT), 02:20,789 mins
2. Simon Knap (DB Motorsport, BMW Z4 GT3), +0.413 sec
3. Maximilian Buhk (Polarweiss Racing, Mercedes Benz SLS AMG GT3), +0.465 sec
4. Claudia Hürtgen (PIXUM Team Schubert, BMW Z4 GT3), +0.553 sec
5. Diego Alessi (Callaway Competition, Corvette Z06.R GT3), +1.020 sec

Qualifying 2: Top Five

1. Frank Kechele (Lambda Performance, Ford GT), 02:19,390 mins
2. Martin Ragginger (Tonino by Herberth Motorsport, Porsche 911 GT3 R), +0.399 sec
3. Maximilian Götz (Polarweiss Racing, Mercedes Benz SLS AMG GT3), +0.615 sec
4. René Rast (Prosperia C. Abt Racing, Audi R8 LMS ultra), +0.821 sec
5. Dominik Baumann (PIXUM Team Schubert, BMW Z4 GT3), +0.925 sec

Dates and venues: 2013 ADAC GT Masters

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| 26th - 28th April: | etropolis Motorsport Arena Oschersleben |
| 10th - 12th May: | Circuit Spa-Francorchamps (Belgium) |
| 7th - 9th June: | Sachsenring |
| 2nd - 4th August: | Nürburgring |
| 9th - 11th August: | Red Bull Ring (Austria) |
| 30th August - 1st September: | Lausitzring |
| 13th - 15th September: | Slovakia Ring (Slovakia) |
| 27th - 29th September: | Hockenheimring, Baden-Württemberg |

ADAC GT Masters website: Access to Press Area via 'Press' in the top menu bar at www.adac.de/motorsport.

Media information



Media contact

ADAC GT Masters

Oliver Runschke

Mobile: +49 (0) 176 222 18308, E-mail: oliver.runschke@mac.com

ADAC e.V.

Kay-Oliver Langendorff, Head of Motorsport Communication

Tel: +49 (0) 89 7676 6936, Mobile: +49 (0) 171 555 5936, E-mail: kay.langendorff@adac.de

www.adac.de/motorsport



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