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Ford duo Verdonck and Kechele win at rain-soaked Spa

- Maiden ADAC GT Masters victory for Nico Verdonck and Frank Kechele
- Difficult weather conditions with persistent rain at Spa
- Bourdeaux prevails in Gentlemen class

Spa-Francorchamps lived up to its reputation for capricious weather as the Belgian Formula 1 track staged its first ever ADAC GT Masters weekend. Race 1 started on a dry surface, but after the first twenty minutes, there was a heavy downpour, which made for difficult conditions on one of the world's most challenging circuits. The Lambda Performance duo of Nico Verdonck (27) from Belgium and Frank Kechele (26, Germany) were undismayed, steering their Ford GT to a comfortable victory over defending champion Maximilian Götz (27, Germany) and Maximilian Buhk (20, Germany) in the Polarweiss Racing Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG. Third place went to the Dutch partnership of Simon Knap (24) and Jeroen den Boer (25) in a BMW Z4 entered by DB Motorsport. "After having been on pole position for six previous ADAC GT Masters races, it's nice to have got that first win at last," said a jubilant Frank Kechele. "I hope there will be many more victories to come this year." Kechele has now claimed his first Super Sports Car League winner's trophy in 61 attempts.

Key facts, Circuit Spa-Francorchamps (Belgium), Race 1

Length of track: 7,004 metres

Weather: 13 °C, rain

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

Winners of Race 2: Nico Verdonck / Frank Kechele (Lambda Performance, Ford GT)

Fastest race lap: Nico Verdonck (Lambda Performance, Ford GT), 02:21.992 mins

Nico Verdonck controls race from the off

The race over hill and dale in the Ardennes was controlled from start to finish by Verdonck and Kechele. Initially, pole-sitter Verdonck was unable to shake off the BMW Z4 of challenger Simon Knap, but a shower of rain after about twenty minutes changed matters. The leading Ford team executed an extremely speedy change of drivers and tyres in the mandatory pit stop. When Kechele completed the first lap of the second stint, his Ford was more than 18 seconds ahead of the BMW Z4. In the second half of the race, it was no longer the Dutch pair of Knap and den Boer in their BMW who were in contention for second place, but rather Maximilian Götz in his Mercedes Benz. The defending champion had overtaken the BMW in the pit lane after a faster pit stop and held on for P2 and his first podium finish of the season.

However, this was by no means a cruise to victory for Verdonck and Kechele. Ten minutes before the end, Kechele briefly spun off track, but was able to right his car with a loss of only five seconds. Kechele: "Towards the end of the race, the track was drying out. I was looking for wet patches to cool my tyres, but in this case, I obviously spread my search a bit too wide." The Lambda Performance outfit claimed their first ever ADAC GT Masters victory in Verdonck's home race by a seven-second margin. "Until late last night, the team were practising pit stops, and today that has really paid off," said Kechele

"That was fantastic," said a delighted Verdonck. "Things really couldn't have gone any better in my home race. Starting from pole, certainly made life easier, but we also saw today how treacherous the conditions in Spa can be. The team did an amazing job with the pit stop."

Thrilling battle for fourth place between Müller and Rast

There was a hard-fought battle in the closing stage for fourth place. René Rast (26, Germany, Prosperia C. Abt Racing) produced a strong performance in the wet, putting fourth-placed Jörg Müller (43, Germany) in the PIXUM Team Schubert BMW Z4 under sustained pressure. The scrap came to an unhappy end, with contact between the two vehicles. Rast spun round and conceded fourth place to the Polarweiss Racing Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG driven by Andreas Simonsen (23, Sweden) and Sergey Afanasiev (25, Russia), while Müller was obliged to park his car with a shredded tyre. Rahel Frey had the satisfaction of posting her best result to date in the ADAC GT Masters. The former DTM driver from Switzerland and her co-driver FIA GT1 World Champion Markus Winkelhock (32, Germany) made a strong charge up the field to finish in sixth place after having started from 20th on the grid.

Second victory for Porsche driver Bourdeaux in amateur standings

René Bourdeaux (38, Germany) achieved his second amateur championship victory in a row at Spa-Francorchamps. Bourdeaux in the Herberth Motorsport Porsche 911 GT3 took the win from ADAC GT Masters newcomer Paul Green (20, Germany) in the Vita4One Racing Team BMW Z4. Despite two drive-through penalties for infringing pit stop regulations, Christina Nielsen (21, Denmark) brought the Farnbacher Racing Porsche 911 home in third place.

Ford team to start Race 2 from pole position again

Verdonck and Kechele have the best chance of another success in Sunday's second race. Kechele is in pole position on the grid ahead of Porsche driver Martin Ragginger (25, Austria / Tonino by Herberth Motorsport). Maximilian Götz in a Mercedes-Benz and René Rast in an Audi head up the second row.

Race 1: Result

1. Nico Verdonck / Frank Kechele (Lambda Performance, Ford GT), 23 laps
2. Maximilian Buhk / Maximilian Götz (Polarweiss Racing, Mercedes Benz SLS AMG GT3), +7.218 sec
3. Simon Knap / Jeroen den Boer (DB Motorsport, BMW Z4 GT3), +12.127 sec
4. Andreas Simonsen / Sergey Afanasiev (Polarweiss Racing, Mercedes Benz SLS AMG GT3), +35.703 sec
5. Christopher Mies / René Rast (Prosperia C. Abt Racing, Audi R8 LMS ultra), +40.134 sec
6. Rahel Frey / Markus Winkelhock (Prosperia C. Abt Racing, Audi R9 LMS ultra), +40.656 sec
7. Claudia Hürtgen / Dominik Baumann (PIXUM Team Schubert, BMW Z4 GT3), +44.558 sec
8. Diego Alessi / Daniel Keilwitz (Callaway Competition, Corvette Z06.R GT3), +49.803 sec

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.

Media information

Dates and venues: 2013 ADAC GT Masters

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.

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