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Van der Linde and Rast clinch ADAC GT Masters title in thriller

- Audi duo wrap up drivers' championship ahead of time
- Daniel Keilwitz and Andreas Wirth win penultimate race of season in a Corvette
- Herbert Handlos picks up 2014 Gentlemen trophy

Hockenheim: Kelvin van der Linde (18, ZA) and René Rast (27, Germany) are confirmed as champions for the 2014 ADAC GT Masters season. Driving a Prosperia C Abt Racing Audi R8, 18 year-old van der Linde from South Africa and 27-year-old Rast from Frankfurt only just squeezed into the Top Ten in the penultimate race of the campaign, but it was still enough to secure the title after main challenger Jaap van Lagen (37, NL) in a GW IT Racing Team Schütz Motorsport Porsche 911 botched his pit stop and finished outside the points. "That was an absolute thriller and an emotional rollercoaster," said the newly crowned champion Rast after the race. "On the first few laps, we were feeling down in the dumps, but then on the second stint, we breathed a huge sigh of relief, and by the end, we were in celebratory mood." The winners' trophy for the penultimate race of the 2014 ADAC GT Masters season went to the Callaway Competition Corvette partnership of Andreas Wirth (29, Germany) and Daniel Keilwitz (25, Germany) who came out on top in a dramatic three-way tussle with the BKK MOBIL OIL Zakspeed Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG driven by Luca Ludwig (25, Germany) and Latvia's Harald Schlegelmilch (26) and the TONINO Team Herberth Porsche 911 driven by Robert Renauer (29, Germany) and Martin Ragginger (26, A).

Key facts, Hockenheimring Baden, Württemberg, Hockenheim, Round 15/16

Length of track: 4,574 metres

Weather: 22 °C, sunny

Pole position for Race 1: Luca Ludwig (BKK MOBIL OIL Zakspeed, Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG GT3), 01:40.098 mins

Winner of Race 1: Andreas Wirth / Daniel Keilwitz (Callaway Competition, Corvette Z06.R GT3)

Fastest race lap: Luca Ludwig (BKK MOBIL OIL Zakspeed, Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG GT3), 01:41.130 mins

Pit stop mistake costs van Lagen chance of title

The battle for the ADAC GT Masters title at Hockenheim turned out to be a real thriller. Everything appeared to be going van Lagen's way after the start. His team-mate Christian Engelhart (27, Germany) was in third place behind Ludwig in the Mercedes-Benz, who started on pole, and Renauer in the Porsche, while van der Linde in the Audi was just outside the points in P11. As Engelhart handed over the car to van Lagen, the Porsche duo then made a mistake, failing to abide by the prescribed minimum standing time of 0.394 seconds. Van Lagen had to serve a stop-and-go penalty for the infringement. The Dutchman came home in eleventh place, just outside the points, ruining his title chances. That put a smile on the faces of van der Linde and Rast, who brought their Audi home in tenth place, giving them in an unassailable lead at the top of the standings ahead of Sunday's final race. "At the moment, it still feels incredible to me, knowing that we've got the title in the bag," said van der Linde with a chuckle. "I just don't know what to say. It will take me at least until tomorrow to get my head round this."

René Rast: "We began to worry about our lead in the standings after dropping outside the points during the starting phase and then realising that van Lagen was heading for the podium. I hoped that something might happen up front or that there would be a safety car period. And then something really did happen - the Porsche guys made a mistake. To win this championship, you have to do a perfect job all year round, and you can't afford to make any errors. That's why we are right up at the front now. I think that the ADAC GT Masters is the most competitive GT race series in Europe, and winning the title here makes me very proud."

Fifth win of season for Corvette man Daniel Keilwitz

The battle for the lead in the penultimate race of the season was just as exciting as the title fight. At the mandatory pit stop, Ludwig handed the gullwing Mercedes-Benz over to Schlegelmilch while in the lead. The Latvian then came under pressure from Ragginger and Wirth. Corvette driver Wirth, who made up a deficit of 14 seconds on the leader after the driver changeover, first overtook Ragginger and then Schlegelmilch after a determined but fair scrap with three laps left to secure his fifth win of the season. Keilwitz: "We set our car up so that we would be able to attack in the second stint of the race and be quick over the distance. We were simply faster than our competitors in the closing stages, and that was ultimately the decisive factor in our victory today." For local favourite Wirth, who grew up just a few kilometres from the Hockenheimring, this was a first ever win in his home race: "I've finally found my way onto the podium here in Hockenheim thanks to a terrific drive by Daniel and a perfect car."

Max Sandritter (25, Germany), and Jens Klingmann (24, Germany) placed fourth in the BMW Z4, thus keeping alive the chances of PIXUM Team Schubert coming out on top in the team standings. The winners will not be decided until Sunday. Audi specialists Prosperia C Abt Racing have a ten-point lead on the Oschersleben-based BMW outfit going into the finale.

Maro Engel (29, Germany) and Jan Seyffarth (28, Germany) in a ROWE Racing Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG took fifth place ahead of Claudia Hürtgen (43, Germany) and Dominik Baumann (22, A) in a PIXUM Team Schubert BMW Z4. Hürtgen and Baumann will still be battling van Lagen and Keilwitz for the championship runner-up trophy on Sunday. Sebastian Asch (28, Germany) and Switzerland's Philipp Frommenwiler (25) in a Porsche 911 finished eighth ahead of the HTP Motorsport Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG driven by Luca Stolz (19, Germany) and Maximilian Götz (28, Germany). The remaining championship point was picked up by Nico Bastian (24, Germany) and Spain's Jaime Alguersuari (24) in a ROWE Racing Mercedes gullwing.

Handlos secures Gentlemen title

The title in the Gentlemen class was awarded on Saturday, also before the end of the campaign. Second place was enough to give championship leader Herbert Handlos (31, A) of TONINO Team Herberth an unassailable lead at the top of the Gentlemen standings. The Austrian also found that the road to the championship was not without its dramatic moments. Handlos and partner Alfred Renauer (29, Germany) finished the race in second place after being spun round in a scrap with Australia's Nathan Morcom (22) in a Farnbacher Racing Porsche. The win went to Dominic Jöst (36, Germany) and Florian Scholze (41, Germany) in the second TONINO Team Herberth Porsche 911, a maiden victory for them in the Gentlemen category.

Outcome of team championship to be decided on Sunday

In tomorrow's final race of the season (shown live on kabel eins, coverage commencing at 11.45am CEST), Daniel Keilwitz and Andreas Wirth have an excellent opportunity to round off their campaign with a fourth shared race win. The Corvette duo start from pole position ahead of Sweden's Andreas Simonsen (24) in a sister Callaway Competition Corvette. Van Lagen starts from third on the grid alongside Dominik Baumann in a BMW. The result of Sunday's race will decide the destination of the team title.

Press Information

Result: Race 1 (Top Six)

1. Andreas Wirth / Daniel Keilwitz (Callaway Competition, Corvette Z06.R GT3), 35 laps
2. Luca Ludwig / Harald Schlegelmilch (BKK MOBIL OIL Zakspeed, Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG GT3), +0.564 sec
3. Robert Renauer / Martin Ragginger (TONINO Team Herberth, Porsche 911 GT3 R), +1.182 sec
4. Max Sandritter / Jens Klingmann (PIXUM Team Schubert, BMW Z4 GT3), +2.428 sec
5. Maro Engel / Jan Seyffarth (ROWE Racing, Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG), +7.606 sec
6. Claudia Hürtgen / Dominik Baumann (PIXUM Team Schubert, BMW Z4 GT3), +7.925 sec

All 16 ADAC GT Masters races will again be broadcast live and in full throughout Germany, Austria and Switzerland during 2014 in 'ran Racing on kabel eins (at 11:45 am, Saturday and Sunday).

Calendar for the 2014 ADAC GT Masters

25/04/ - 27/04/14	etropolis Motorsport Arena Oschersleben
09/05/ - 11/05/14	Circuit Park Zandvoort (NL)
23/05/ - 25/05/14	Lausitzring
06/06/ - 08/06/14	Red Bull Ring (A)
08/08/ - 10/08/14	Slovakia Ring (SK)
29/08/ - 31/08/14	Nürburgring
19/09/ - 21/09/14	Sachsenring
03/10/ - 05/10/14	Hockenheimring Baden-Württemberg

For further information, visit www.adac.de/gt-masters

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