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Podium lock-out for Audi in rain thriller at Nürburgring

- Dobitsch & Sandström win after Pepper & Thiim handed time penalty
- kfzteile24 MS RACING secure first win of season for Audi
- Newcomer Alexander Mattschull wins Gentlemen class in a Mercedes

Nürburg: Two downpours and a safety car deployment at the Nürburgring made for spectacular racing in the ADAC GT Masters. The Super Sports Cars League returned from its summer break to changeable weather which caused some thrills and spills. Jordan Lee Pepper (19, ZA) and Nicki Thiim (26, DK) in a C.Abt Racing Audi R8 had the best strategy in the tough conditions, caused by two showers of rain and a track that began to dry out in between the downpours. They were first to cross the finish line, but the Audi drivers were handed a 30-second time penalty for an infringement of the rules during a safety car deployment and assigned fifth place after the race. That gave victory in the ninth race of the season to Daniel Dobitsch (31, AUT) and Edward Sandström (36, S), who secured their first ADAC GT Masters race win together in the kfzteile24 MS RACING Audi R8. Rahel Frey (29, CH) and Philip Geipel (28, Plauen, both YACO Racing) stuck with slicks for the whole race and placed second ahead of Stefan Wackerbauer (19, GER) and Kelvin van der Linde (19, ZA) in the C.Abt Racing Audi R8.

Key facts, Nürburgring, Nürburg, Race 9/16

Track length: 3,629 metres

Weather: 17°C, rainy

Pole position: Martin Ragginger (GW IT Racing Schütz Motorsport, Porsche 911 GT3 R), 1:28.534 mins

Winners: Daniel Dobitsch/Edward Sandström (kfzteile24 MS RACING, Audi R8 LMS ultra)

Fastest race lap: Martin Ragginger (GW IT Racing Schütz Motorsport, Porsche 911 GT3 R), 1:28.602 mins

Ragginger throws away chance of win with late tyre change

The notoriously unpredictable Eifel weather once again caused high drama in the ADAC GT Masters. Martin Ragginger (27, AUT) in the GW IT Racing Team Schütz Motorsport Porsche 911 defended his lead against Clemens Schmid (24, AUT, Bentley Team HTP) in the Bentley Continental and Frey in the Audi after starting from pole position. A downpour nine minutes into the race was then the cue for the start of a tactical battle and everyone trying to outguess the rain. Ragginger remained out on slicks for a long time on the wet track, hoping for an improvement in conditions.

But it was a gamble that ultimately didn't pay off. The Porsche driver did indeed retain the lead before handing over to Klaus Bachler (24, AUT), but Thiim and Pepper came off best after the driver changeover. The Audi duo played a tactical race in the first stint and were one of the first teams to switch to wets, which gave Thiim the lead after the driver changeover. The Dane extended his lead with every lap, but a retrospective time penalty robbed him of the win. Dobitsch and Sandström took second place from championship leader Luca Ludwig (26, GER) with four laps to go and moved up into P1 after Pepper and Thiim were given the penalty.

An identical rule infringement led to championship leader Luca Ludwig (26, GER) & Sebastian Asch (GER, both Team Zakspeed 29) in the Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG, Nico Bastian (25, GER) & Stef Dusseldorp (25, NL) in the ROWE Racing Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG and Dominik Baumann (22, AUT) & Jens Klingmann (25, GER, both BMW Sports Trophy Team Schubert) in the BMW Z4 also receiving 30-second time penalties. Ludwig and Asch were ranked ninth, Bastian and Dusseldorp eleventh, while Baumann & Klingmann were assigned twelfth position.

MEDIA INFORMATION

This success in the Audi R8 is the first victory in the ADAC GT Masters for Sandström and Dobitsch. kfzteile24 MS RACING secured their first win since the season finale at Hockenheim back in 2012. The triple victory still goes to Audi even after the stewards' decisions.

Frey and Geipel turned in a strong performance. The Audi duo decided not to switch tyres despite two showers of rain during the race and stayed out on slicks, a brave strategy which secured them second place. Fellow Audi drivers Stefan Wackerbauer (19, GER) & Kelvin van der Linde (19, ZA, both C.Abt Racing) were allocated P3. Hari Proczyk (39, AUT) & Bernd Schneider (51, CH, both HP Racing) in the Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG moved up into fourth position.

Claudia Hürtgen (43, GER) & Uwe Alzen (47, GER, all BMW Sports Trophy Team Schubert) were ranked sixth ahead of Diego Alessi (43, ITA) & Patrick Assenheimer (23, GER, both Callaway Competition) in P7.

Bachler, who is currently second in the standings, was unlucky on Saturday. The Austrian was the hapless victim of a contact between the Corvette of Daniel Keilwitz (26, GER, Callaway Competition) and the Bentley of Fabian Hamprecht (20, GER, Bentley Team HTP) and had to park up his damaged 911.

Mattschull wins Gentlemen class on ADAC GT Masters debut

Alexander Mattschull (43, GER) and CarCollection Motorsport made a successful debut in the ADAC GT Masters. Making his first appearance, Mattschull took the Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG to victory in class and eighth place overall, aided by ex-DTM driver Renger van der Zande (29, NL). Marc Gassner (24, GER) in an MRS GT-Racing Nissan GT-R finished second, securing a podium in the Gentlemen standings for the first time since the season opener at Oschersleben. Jakub Knoll (24, CZ) in his Senkyr Motorsport BMW Z4 GT3 was third, while championship leader Remo Lips (32, CH) in the RWT Racing Team Corvette skidded into the tyre wall, having stuck with slicks on the wet track, an incident which brought out the safety car in the middle of the race.

Second chance for Bachler and Porsche on Sunday

Ragginger and Bachler in the Porsche 911 have a second chance on Sunday to take points out of championship leaders Ludwig and Asch. Bachler will start from pole, sharing the front row with Audi driver Geipel. Thiim in the Audi will line up in third place in front of Hamprecht in the Bentley. Championship leader Ludwig will have to tackle the race from the rear of the field after being excluded from qualifying. SPORT1 will broadcast the race live and in full on Sunday, starting its coverage at 13:00 CEST.

Rally action at the ADAC GT Masters with the ADAC Opel Rally Junior Team

The ADAC Opel Rally Junior Team is at the Nürburgring, giving fans a foretaste of ADAC Rallye Deutschland next weekend. Junior European Rally champion Emil Bergkvist from Sweden and ADAC Sports Foundation protégé Marijan Griebel are stopping off at the Nürburgring in their Opel ADAM R2s on their way to the German round of the World Rally Championship. The two Opel works drivers will sign autographs during the pit walk at 11.05am and will show fans a sample of their skill as cars line up on the ADAC GT Masters grid in the Mercedes Arena.

Tickets, including access to the paddock, start at 20 euros

Fans who want to experience ADAC GT Masters action live at the track can now purchase tickets in advance. Prices start at 20 euros and include access to the paddock. ADAC members can take advantage of the ADAC preferential scheme. Tickets are available online at www.adac.de/gt-masters and at www.eventim.de, from any ADAC branch office and from more than 20,000 Eventim outlets throughout Europe.

The eight events and 16 races of the 2015 ADAC GT Masters season are to be staged at venues in Germany, Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands. ADAC GT Masters races will again be shown live by ADAC new live-TV exclusive partner SPORT1, who will broadcast all 16 ADAC GT Masters races live and in their entirety in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Broadcasts will normally begin at 1pm on race weekends.

MEDIA INFORMATION

Race schedule and venues for the 2015 ADAC GT Masters:

24/04 – 26/04/2015	etropolis Motorsport Arena Oschersleben
05/06 – 07/06/2015	Red Bull Ring (A)
19/06 – 21/06/2015	Circuit Spa-Francorchamps (B)
03/07 – 05/07/2015	Lausitzring
14/08 – 16/08/2015	Nürburgring
28/08 – 30/08/2015	Sachsenring
18/09 – 20/09/2015	Circuit Park Zandvoort (NL)
02/10 – 04/10/2015	Hockenheimring Baden-Württemberg

Further information available at www.adac.de/gt-masters

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